

RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS AND THE FRENCH MINISTER OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS AT THE QUAI D'ORSAY ON 28 MAY 1981

[The meeting, which started at 7.30 and continued over dinner, was preceded by a private conversation between the two Ministers.]

Present:

The Rt Hon Lord Carrington
KCMG MC

Sir M Palliser GCMG

Sir R Hibbert KCMG
HM Ambassador, Paris

Mr B J P Fall
Private Secretary

M. Claude Cheysson

M. E Jacquin de Margerie
French Ambassador to London

M. Dufourcq
Director for Europe, Quai d'Orsay

M. S Boidevaix
Director for Middle East,
Quai d'Orsay

M. F Scheer
Directeur de Cabinet

Community

1. M. Cheysson welcomed Lord Carrington to Paris and pointed out that he was the first Foreign Minister to visit since the new French Government had taken office.

2. Lord Carrington said that he wanted our bilateral relations to improve. There would no doubt be differences of opinion but he hoped that they would be differences in friendship. M. Cheysson said that there was no Bonn-Paris axis. There were very close relations between France and Germany but the French Government wanted very close relations also with others and France and Britain had the same points of view on many questions. He noted that both countries were nuclear powers, and permanent members of the Security Council and that they had a global point of view. There was every reason to have regular exchanges and close cooperation. We might differ at times but there were many subjects, including the development of Europe, where we would agree. We had a common interest in giving Europe its full dimension. It was at present too limited and a European dimension was needed on a wider range of subjects. This might or might not have budgetary implications. There was no French blue-print although they had ideas which they would want to discuss with us and with others (he made specific mention of the Germans and Belgians).

3. Lord Carrington recalled that in their private conversation they had spoken of the timetable for the restructuring of the budget. M. Cheysson had said that France would need two or three months delay but had agreed that a solution should if possible be found before the end of the year. M. Cheysson intervened to say that the 'if possible' was not necessary. He went on to say that in order to gain public support for the development of Europe we would also have to discuss matters other than the budget and agriculture. The French would be approaching us and others to suggest that the mandate should not be considered immediately but should be left until say September. Meanwhile, they would hope to start bilateral discussions of other subjects. The consideration of these would go beyond the end of this year and he accepted that a decision on the budgetary and agricultural questions could not be left until the other subjects had reached the stage of firm proposals. He hoped that it would be possible also to solve the question of fish. Lord Carrington said that the best way to make progress would be for us to have bilateral discussions. We would be willing to do so whenever the French were ready. M. Cheysson expressed great interest in this idea which he undertook to pass on to the Minister for the Sea.

4. There was a brief discussion of political cooperation, during which M. Cheysson emphasised the need for a system to allow immediate Community discussion in times of crisis. Lord Carrington said that the Political Directors' paper had not yet been discussed by Ministers and might usefully be put on the agenda for the informal weekend during the British Presidency.

Poland

5. Lord Carrington and Sir M Palliser described the very serious state of the Polish economy and the prospects for further deterioration. Lord Carrington added that the economic situation was not only very serious in itself but made it more likely that the political situation would get worse. We could do nothing about the internal political situation but had been able to provide a certain amount of help on the economy; but the problems were such that it was difficult to see what more we could do in the future. M. Cheysson agreed that it was right to start from an analysis of the internal situation, which would be the trigger of a graver crisis. The reports the French had had (including those from their recent talks with the Germans) were contradictory. There was talk of anarchy, particularly at the grass-roots level, but also evidence of a more responsible attitude at the higher levels. M. Dufourcq said that it was possible that the elections to the Polish Party Congress might not result in such dramatic changes as some expected. Some 20-30% of the leadership

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might survive but it remained to be seen whether this would be enough for the Russians.

CSCE/CDE

6. In connection with Poland, M. Cheysson mentioned the German view (which the Germans had said the Americans supported) that we should now seek to multiply contacts with the Soviet Union (Brezhnev's visit to Bonn, the continuation of the Madrid meeting until agreement had been reached on a CDE). Lord Carrington said he thought that the US administration were fairly luke warm about the CDE. They would go along with it, but would not be prepared to make significant concessions in order to get one. But it was important that the West should not appear to dismiss the possibility of a disarmament conference. If we failed to get a CDE, it must be in circumstances where the blame was seen to rest on the Soviet Union. It was however important that we should get the terms of reference right. We supported the French position. M. Cheysson said that we should keep in close touch on this subject.

Arab-Israel

7. M. Cheysson said that the new French Government had made it clear that they regarded themselves as bound in all respects by the previous Government's commitments. He made specific mention of the UN, the EC (including the Venice Declaration) and contracts in which the previous government had been involved. They were not happy with all these contracts and might not have signed them themselves (he cited the nuclear contract with Iraq) but the contracts were there and would be implemented. The President would shortly be sending emissaries to some of the main Arab countries. The starting point would be French policy where it now stood, including the recognition of Israel and recognition of the rights of the Palestinians. M. Mitterrand had talked in the past of a Palestinian state, but he would say nothing about this at the moment as France was a member of the Community and an ally of the United States. For the future, the new French Government had contacts with Israel and might be able to do things which could not have been done before. This could prove useful to the European initiative. In some, France would start on the same position, but would start afresh. The next step would be the British Presidency.

8. Lord Carrington said that he did not see how there could be another round of Presidential visits to the region. A lot would depend on the Israeli election, and if Begin were elected there would be little that Europe could do, though it might be able to suggest some ideas for the future. Peres was a very different character; and, although his under-

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lying feelings might not be very different, he understood that there would have to be a settlement and had said within five years. The US government's position would probably be Camp David plus a bit, but Haig's domestic room for manoeuvre on Palestine and the PLO was almost nil. We did not want a row with the United States but we did want to push things forward. M. Cheysson agreed about the importance of the Israeli elections. Peres and Allon were people who knew Israel belonged to the region and must find its future there. Begin on the other hand would be content to live behind barbed wire for ever, and, like the Old Testament, saw the region only in terms of Egypt and Israel. He took up Lord Carrington's reference to ideas for the future and suggested that we should give further thought to how the region would look and work after a settlement.

9. Lord Carrington said that the Community would not remain credible if it did nothing. We must look for something constructive which was not in opposition to the United States. M. Cheysson agreed. Lord Carrington suggested that when M. Cheysson went to the United States he should try to get across the point that the world should not be seen purely in east-west terms: the more one did so, the more the prophecy was likely to prove self-fulfilling.

Lebanon

10. M. Cheysson said that Habib's mission had appeared to have some effect. Lord Carrington agreed that it would now be much harder for Israel to try to take out the Syrian missiles, but he doubted whether the problem of the Lebanon could now be solved until progress had been made on Arab-Israel. Sir M Palliser said that this was one of the consequences of Israeli involvement. M. Boidevaix said that there was not much that we could do but that the Lebanese army would need equipment if it was to be able to establish control and play a useful political role thereby. We might be able to help in this way, which fitted well with the aims of the Habib mission. The Syrians might be prepared to accept this, and it would in any case be hard for them to oppose measures designed to strengthen the authority of the Lebanese army.

Southern Africa

11. M. Cheysson said that his speech at the UNESCO Conference on apartheid had not changed the international position which France had established with us and with others. Namibia was now a first priority and he was very pessimistic about it. There seemed to be no future in the US position and we would all have to consider whether we could support it. Sanctions were absurd and irresponsible, but it was more important than ever that we should make some progress.

12. Lord Carrington said that if we did not get a negotiated settlement the war would intensify, the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba would increase their aid to SWAPO, South Africa would hit at SWAPO in Angola and the general escalation might take on an east-west dimension. To avoid such a catastrophe we needed a negotiated settlement and this required the agreement of South Africa. The present South African line was not sellable to SWAPO, but safeguards and something to provide an assurance of UN impartiality might be. At the worst, something on this line would serve to fish the South Africans out - if they had decided against a negotiated settlement there was in any case nothing we could do. But we should explain to Haig that we could go only a certain way down the road indicated by the latest South African proposals. He added that he would be seeing Mr Nujoma on 29 May. M. Cheysson made it clear that he had a low opinion of Nujoma's ability.

13. M. Cheysson asked whether the South Africans had not been almost ready to agree before the US elections. The Germans were now very worried and the question would be a very difficult one for the French Government. It would perhaps be the first occasion when changes in policy would appear. President Mitterrand was likely to see this as an issue of principle and 'we won't be able to be diplomatic for very long on apartheid'. M. Cheysson said that he would wish to avoid surprises, but that it was more difficult on this question than on the Middle East for the French Government to stick to the policies of their predecessors. Lord Carrington said that there was no disagreement between us on the principles, including the independence of Namibia and universal suffrage, but the question was how to get there. In his view, we should keep trying to find a negotiated settlement. The consequences of giving up were horrifying. Sir M Palliser explained the differences concerning Mr Crocker and Mr Haig in Washington. M. Cheysson said that France would be very firm about the Atlantic Alliance but that the United States could not ignore points of concern to others who also had political pressures to take into account. He asked whether we should not all be doing more to put our views across to Americans outside the State Department. Lord Carrington agreed that we should express our views but we should do so in such a way as to be helpful to Haig in Washington. The struggle between him and others was a crucial factor in the short term. M. Cheysson concluded by saying that French would behave as very reliable partners.

Chad

14. M. Cheysson said that the French Government would have to consult neighbouring countries in Africa and it would probably be about a month before they had formed a view. They would be ready to support their friends where the need arose, but they would not impose. They would keep their

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troops in Africa until they had found a better way. Egypt had to be brought into the discussions on Chad. It had not been wrong for Giscard to send troops to Ndjamena but he should have assured himself in advance of African support. If there had been even token African participation (especially by the Egyptians) Qadhafi would not have dared to move.

Afghanistan

15. Lord Carrington mentioned in general terms our thinking about an initiative of the Ten and said that Mr Goodison would be coming to explain our thinking in more detail to M. Robin. M. Cheysson took note.

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