

MR COLES ✓

2. PRIME MINISTER

I find the arguments finely balanced. but if we announce some days in advance I fear mounting speculation, pressure to tell Mitterrand that you will withhold, demands by the press for photo-opportunities etc. I still favour an announcement on de Gaulle - and think the French may too.

A.S.C. 10.
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MITTERRAND MEETING - MEDIA

Your objective for this meeting is to have a serious talk with President Mitterrand free, if possible, from public pressures - ie. not to have the discussion conditioned in certain ways by any build up.

This objective would best be served by my revealing to the Lobby that the Prime Minister has flown to Paris for a talk with President Mitterrand at about the time she is arriving - ie. 11.00am here - backed up by briefing designed to avoid speculation about deals and playing down expectations.

If an announcement were made more normally, two or three days before, political and media interest would build up and it would be difficult to avoid the attention given to a conventional summit.

But:

- (i) we cannot guarantee the meeting will not leak in advance;
- (ii) by serving the objective of avoiding public pressures - ie. an announcement of the meeting on the day it takes place - we shall heighten the drama of the day and probably intensify the speculation about its purpose and outcome.

If the objective were to minimise the drama and speculation about deals etc - including likely speculation that the Prime Minister is caving in - there is no doubt that this would best be served by an announcement a few days in advance and by treating the visit in a routine way.

There is no way of avoiding some speculation about the purpose and outcome of the meeting. But the timing of an announcement turns on a precise definition of objective. My view is that the Prime Minister's

overall objectives would best be served by an announcement a few days in advance on the following terms:

On the record

"The Prime Minister has accepted an invitation to visit President Mitterrand for talks (followed by lunch) on January 23. She will fly to Paris ^{early} that morning and return ^{in the} immediately after ^{the} noon lunch."

Background briefing

"The meeting has arisen from the Prime Minister's ^{meeting} ~~breakfast~~ with the President in Athens. It was then agreed it would be useful to meet, ~~fairly informally~~, early in the French presidency of the EC.

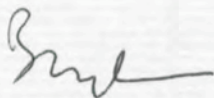
It is reasonable to assume that the European Community, including budget reform, will figure prominently in the discussions. But they are likely to range more widely, taking in such matters as the Middle East and the Lebanon.

No solutions on European Community, or other issues, are to be expected. The aim is simply to have a ~~relaxed~~ discussion of Community and other matters early in the French presidency.

It is expected that President Mitterrand will be having similar talks with other Community government leaders.

The Prime Minister will not be giving a press conference or interviews but we would hope to have a short briefing line for you later in the day."

Agree announcement two or three days in advance as outlined above?



B. INGHAM

10 January 1984

*Proposed President Mitterrand agrees.
I think this is much the best
course
not*