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MR COLES

When I saw Monsieur Attali on 17 January, he said that, when the President and the Prime Minister next meet, the President would be proposing to the Prime Minister that there should be closer co-operation between the British Government and the French Government on a wide range of strategic issues. Monsieur Attali was not very specific, but it was clear that the issues to be discussed included strategic nuclear issues. The President would also wish the discussions to extend to the possibilities of greater co-operation between the British and French Governments and, as appropriate, between British and French industries, on the development of new weapons and weapons systems, including nuclear submarines but extending also to other advanced technological military equipment. The President saw a need for closer co-operation in these matters with France's principal European allies, and was making a similar overture to the Federal Chancellor.

2. I asked Monsieur Attali how it was envisaged that discussions of these possibilities might be pursued after the President and the Prime Minister had had a first discussion. Monsieur Attali said that he envisaged discussion in the first instance between the Secretary of State for Defence and the French Minister of Defence; but he envisaged the possibility of this broadening out to a more formal organisation going (as Monsieur Attali put it) right down the line, in the industries concerned as well as between the Governments.

3. I am sending copies of this minute on a strictly personal basis to Sir Antony Acland and Sir Clive Whitmore, in consultation with whom I will prepare a brief for the Prime Minister's next meeting with the President.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

17 January 1984