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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

6 April, 1984.

Bilateral Meeting between the Prime Minister and
President Mitterrand

This is to record the developments this morning over the suggestion of a bilateral meeting between the Prime Minister and President Mitterrand.

As you will know, Monsieur Cheysson telephoned the Foreign Secretary during the meeting on Hong Kong, and the Foreign Secretary came out of the meeting to speak to him. M. Cheysson said that the Press appeared to be under a misunderstanding about the prospects of a meeting between the President and the Prime Minister. In reply to a question from the Foreign Secretary, M. Cheysson said that he agreed that there was no question of a meeting taking place on Monday. Such a meeting would be difficult to fit into the arrangements of the President and the Prime Minister on that day, and he agreed with the Foreign Secretary's view that it would not be profitable to arrange such a meeting while the Foreign Ministers were meeting in Brussels. But he thought that it should be made clear on both sides that there was the prospect of an early meeting between the President and the Prime Minister.

I then spoke to Pierre Morel who confirmed that, as recorded in John Coles' letter of yesterday, this was indeed the line on which the Elysee were briefing the Press. I said that we were following the same line. I added that the French suggestion of an alternative on Monday, 16 April, was difficult for the Prime Minister since she was going to Portugal the next day, and had a number of engagements on that Monday. I asked Morel whether the French Government would like to consider alternative dates after Easter.

M. Morel subsequently telephoned back and said that the French Government would be glad to consider alternative dates, and asked what dates the Prime Minister might be able to manage. I said that we would consider this, but that it might be better not to settle a date until we could see what business the President and the Prime Minister would have to discuss. Since the Foreign Affairs Council was clearly going to be a very important meeting, it would be easier to judge this following that meeting. In the meantime, it was sufficient to be able to take the line with the Press that the Prime Minister and the President were hoping to meet in the next few weeks, and dates were being discussed. Morel agreed that "substance should determine timing", and said that, unless he contacted me again, we should assume

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that we would discuss the timing of a meeting between the President and the Prime Minister again next week following the Foreign Affairs Council.

I am sending copies of this letter to Sir Robert Armstrong, David Peretz (HM Treasury), and, in view of the fact that the Secretary of State for Energy will be meeting the President on Monday, Michael Reidy (Department of Energy).

E. E. R. BUTLER

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