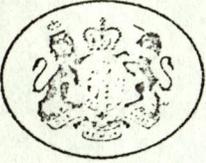


R. Ryder

Top copy sent to PM's party.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

29 June 1979

BB 20/6
 Sally (F)
 EDU

Dear Mike,

You asked for our written advice on whether the Prime Minister should see M. Jacques Chirac, the leader of the French RPR Party, who I understand has asked to call on her during the meeting of the European Democratic Union in London next month.

It would be normal practice for the Prime Minister, if she wished to, to see a leading figure in the political life of one of our major allies. However, there are some special considerations in this case. Although the RPR is allied with President Giscard's UDF Party - together they make up the major part of the so called "Majority" in the National Assembly - M. Chirac is the President's most bitter, and until recently it seemed most dangerous, political rival. He sees himself as the natural heir to de Gaulle and has made no secret of his Presidential ambitions. The very clear advice of the Embassy in Paris is that, whatever might be the equivalent practice in other countries, in Giscardian France if we were to show conspicuous attention to M. Chirac, there could be unfavourable reactions in the Elysee which could have an effect on the excellent relations which followed the Prime Minister's visit to Paris.

Having said this, we certainly should not advise that the Prime Minister should not agree to see M. Chirac; at the same time, it would be advisable:

- a. in any statement issued from No 10 to let it be known that the meeting had taken place at M. Chirac's request; and
- b. if possible to present the meeting as only one among several that the Prime Minister was having with leaders of EDU parties.

This raises the question of which other leaders the Prime Minister would in fact wish to see. If M. Lecanuet, whose Reformers Movement forms part of the Giscardian Group (UDF), were to accept the invitation to come to London, it would clearly help to balance a call by M. Chirac if he too could have a brief talk with the Prime Minister. We do not yet know who else will attend the EDU meeting, but understand that among others Herr Strauss and Herr Albrecht, respectively leaders of the CSU and CDU in the FRG, may come. Their cases are not quite analogous to that of M. Chirac, in that they both lead opposition parties, but in general the same considerations apply. Assuming they come, they - and indeed most other EDU leaders - will probably wish to pay private calls on the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister may therefore wish to consider from the outset whether it would be better to see all the EDU leaders individually, or none.

/An informal

Mike Pattison Esq
 10 Downing Street



An informal dinner at No 10, to which all the leaders were invited, would of course present no such problems.

Yours *aw*

Paul
(P Lever)

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