



THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO PARIS: 19-21 MAY 1971

SUMMARY OF PARIS DESPATCH EP6/79 OF 9 JUNE 1971

1. The Prime Minister visited Paris, as the guest of President Pompidou, from 19-21 May. The bulk of his full programme was spent in tête-à-tête talks with the President. The Prime Minister and the President discussed the future of Europe in all its aspects and established the closeness of their thinking on many points (paragraph 1).
2. The preparations for the meeting. By an early stage in the resumed negotiations for Britain's entry to the Communities, it had come to seem very likely that a meeting between the Prime Minister and the President offered the best hope of achieving both success in Brussels and a broader reconciliation between Britain and France. But the failure of such a meeting would have been disastrous. Detailed preparation was needed. There were the problems of strategic and tactical timing. On the substance, President Pompidou wished to be sure about our attitude on the broader European issues. The Prime Minister wished to expound his whole concept of united Europe; and it would also be unthinkable not to have a discussion of the detailed problems outstanding in Brussels (paragraph 2-3). The President entrusted the preparations exclusively to his own personal staff at the Elysée. The Quai d'Orsay were kept in ignorance. There were, and are, risks for us in this method of work. Nevertheless the discussion led to the decision that a meeting was timely and would have every chance of success (paragraph 4).
3. The reasons for the President's decision. He had agreed at The Hague summit to the opening of negotiations with Britain. At that time he was probably already coming to the conclusion that the negotiations ought to succeed, provided French interests were adequately protected. It was clear from the start that he did not want to be blamed for the negotiations' failure (paragraph 5). The arguments for success were reinforced by outside developments, such as the failure of France's negotiations with Algeria, and the ructions within the Community over economic and monetary union (paragraph 6).
4. Physical arrangements for the meeting. The French could not have been more co-operative. The President, exceptionally, arranged to entertain the Prime Minister twice at the Elysée and accepted an invitation to a meal at the Embassy. We reciprocated, emphasizing the "European" spirit of the visit (paragraph 7).
5. The Prime Minister's programme. 19 May. Welcome at Orly by the French Prime Minister. Statements by the two Prime Ministers (paragraph 8). 20 May. First two sessions of talks between the Prime Minister and the President. The Prime Minister

lays a wreath on the tomb of the French Unknown Soldier, followed by a talk at the Matignon with Monsieur Chaban-Delmas (paragraphs 9-11). Formal dinner at the Elysée, with toasts by the President and the Prime Minister (paragraph 12). 21 May. Third session of talks. Luncheon at the Embassy, with toasts by Her Majesty's Ambassador and the President. Fourth session of the talks. Joint press conference at the Elysée by the President and the Prime Minister. Monsieur Pompidou's carefully chosen words designed both to reassure Britain as to France's intentions, and to warn his own diehards that the President did not share their interpretation of Britain's intentions (paragraphs 13-14). The Prime Minister's departure (paragraph 15).

6. Conclusions. On the negotiations it would be superfluous and inappropriate to add to the Prime Minister's statement in the House of 24 May, except to say that by the way he handled the talks the Prime Minister dispelled Monsieur Pompidou's doubt and disbelief about Britain. The latter's expressed desire to proceed with the building of a united Europe on the basis of an enlarged Community has already begun to be translated into practice at the Luxembourg meeting of 7 June. Her Majesty's Ambassador believes that the President intends these meetings to succeed, and that enough was said during the Elysée conversations to enable agreement to be reached in Brussels before the end of the summer. As regards Anglo-French relations, the improvement since December 1967 has established the necessary infrastructure for the closest degree of co-operation between our two countries. This co-operation will be an indispensable condition of the future progress of Europe which can follow success in the negotiations. The Prime Minister's visit to Paris has ensured that this co-operation can be fruitfully developed (paragraphs 16-18).

BRITISH EMBASSY

PARIS

9 June 1971

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The Right Honourable
Sir Alec Douglas-Home KT MP
etc etc etc

Sir

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1. The Prime Minister paid an official visit to Paris, as the guest of the President of the French Republic, from 19-21 May. He was accompanied by members of his personal staff and by a team of senior advisers concerned with European questions (their names are recorded at Annex A). He carried out a full programme, the bulk of which was devoted to four sessions of talks with President Pompidou. During these four meetings, which lasted about eleven hours and were almost entirely tête-à-tête, apart from the presence of interpreters, the two Heads of government discussed the future of Europe in all its aspects and established the closeness of their thinking on many points. I have the honour in this despatch to recall briefly the preparations for this meeting; to describe the Prime Minister's programme while he was here (the detailed timetable is at Annex B); and to offer some comment, tentative as this must necessarily be while we are still negotiating in Brussels, on the results which the Prime Minister's visit has achieved.
2. "The President of the French Republic and the Prime Minister," said the communiqué announcing the visit on 8 May, "consider that a meeting to discuss matters of common interest would now be useful" - a delightfully bland formula to describe so momentous

