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SRWAMO

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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

18 November 1986

You wrote to me on 4 November to convey an indirect request for the Prime Minister to receive François Léotard.

I fear that this is not going to be possible. He falls below the level at which the Prime Minister is normally willing to receive foreign visitors and seeing him would set an unwelcome precedent. He does not appear to have the sort of star quality which one could use to justify making an exception for him. I am also concerned that Mitterrand or Chirac might take it amiss if she were to appear to intervene in the French domestic political debate by seeing him in his capacity as Secretary General of his party.

I hope that you can explain gently to Wajsman that the pressures on the Prime Minister's timetable prevent her from agreeing to receive Léotard. Incidentally, she has no recollection of saying that she would welcome a meeting.

(C.D. POWELL)

Sir John Fretwell, K.C.M.G.

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cc PG



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 November 1986

Dear Charles,

Possible Call on the Prime Minister by M. Francois Leotard,
French Minister of Culture

You wrote on 10 November seeking advice on a letter from Sir John Fretwell conveying an indirect request for M. Francoise Leotard, French Minister of Culture, to call on the Prime Minister.

Leotard is a prominent but not outstandingly successful Minister, and currently Secretary General of one element of the centrist UDF alliance. He is moving to put his party's support behind Chirac, and may, as John Fretwell says, be rewarded with more senior Ministerial positions if Chirac's star remains in the ascendant. This does not, however, add up to a strong case for the Prime Minister to see him.

There are two further disadvantages. For the Prime Minister to receive Leotard would set a precedent which any number of middle-rank Ministers and leaders of small parties worldwide might seek to follow. It would also be seen in France very much in a domestic political context. Both Mitterrand and Chirac might take offence at the Prime Minister's appearing to single out Leotard for approval. Receiving Leotard is not comparable to receiving Giscard D'Estaing (as the Prime Minister will do again on 26 November): the latter of course has a distinguished past, and is an ex-colleague of the Prime Minister's. Moreover he is not perceived by Chirac and Mitterrand as presenting much of a threat.

I attach a draft reply which you might send to Sir John Fretwell.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

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DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

C D Powell Esq

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

Sir John Fretwell KCMG
HM Ambassador
PARIS

Copies to:

B. J. M.

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

SPWAMO

.....In Confidence

You wrote to me on 4 November to convey an indirect request for the Prime Minister to receive Françoise Leotard.

CAVEAT.....

I fear that this is not going to be possible. Frankly he falls rather below the level at which the Prime Minister is normally willing to receive foreign visitors and seeing him would set an unwelcome precedent. He does not appear to have the sort of star quality which one could use to justify making an exception for him. I am also concerned that Mitterrand or Chirac, the Prime Minister's real interlocutors, might take it amiss if she were to appear to intervene in the French domestic political debate by seeing him in his capacity as Secretary General of his party.

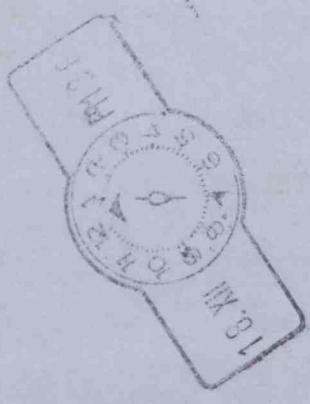
Enclosures—flag(s).....

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no recollection of saying for she would
before a meeting.

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FRANCE, Relations, Pt 4





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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

10 November 1986

From the Private Secretary

I enclose a copy of a letter which I have received from HM Ambassador in Paris about the possibility of the Prime Minister seeing M. François Léotard.

I was not aware that the Prime Minister had told M. Wajzman that she would welcome such a meeting. I suspect that she was just being polite. In any event, I would be grateful for the Department's advice on whether there is a strong case for the Prime Minister to find time for M. Léotard in the diary. It could not be before the early part of next year.

Charles Powell

Colin Budd Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

DA

C/DC

BRITISH EMBASSY,
PARIS.

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

4 November 1986

Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1*Dear Charles,*

PROPOSED CALL BY LEOTARD ON PRIME MINISTER

1. Patrick Wajsman, a political commentator on Le Figaro and editor of Politique Internationale, telephoned today in his capacity as a personal adviser to François Léotard, Minister of Culture and Communications, to ask whether Léotard could call on the Prime Minister. Wajsman said that when he interviewed Mrs Thatcher in January, he had mentioned this idea and the Prime Minister had appeared to welcome it. There had not however been time to make arrangements on the spot.

2. Wajsman said that Léotard would be delighted to meet the Prime Minister either in London or Paris. I said that Paris might present some difficulty: the programme for the next bilateral summit was already fairly tight; and to include in it a call by Léotard would attract a lot of media speculation. He agreed that London would be more suitable and said Léotard would be happy to go over for a meal (even a breakfast) or a call at any time. He thought that although it might appear a little odd for a French Minister to be calling on Mrs Thatcher, it should be acceptable for Léotard to call in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Parti Républicain. It was on this basis that he was calling on President Reagan this week. I suggested that if Léotard were to visit London it might be useful for him to have talks with his British opposite numbers in the arts and communications. Wajsman agreed this would be desirable, if such meetings could be built around a call at Number 10.

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3. In putting forward Léotard's claims, Wajsman hinted strongly that he could be expected to go on to greater things. He referred to Léotard's deep interest in foreign affairs and his potential for rising to higher office after the next presidential elections which, Wajsman thought, might well come earlier than generally expected.

4. Léotard is certainly an up-and-coming man. As Secretary-General of the Parti Républicain he will play a role in determining where the UDF throws its weight in the next presidential elections. He might stand for the presidency himself, although he would have no chance of winning in 1988 and would in effect only be putting down a marker for 1995 or later. It is sometimes suggested that he might run in 1988 in order to attract votes away from Barre and hence help Chirac on the first round; and some speculate that his reward for this could be to be chosen as Prime Minister if Chirac wins the presidency. He continues to score highly in the opinion polls. But he has not actually performed very well as a Minister and I am not convinced that his prospects in the next five years are quite so outstanding as his closest supporters - including Wajsman - evidently believe. However, he is likely to obtain ministerial office and is a possible candidate for Foreign Minister or Defence Minister at some stage (Mitterrand in effect blackballed him from the Defence Ministry when Chirac proposed it in March). One cannot entirely exclude his chance of emerging as Prime Minister. Added to which he is young, energetic, bright and buoyant and would talk interestingly about French internal politics.

5. Could you let me know whether the Prime Minister would wish to see him and, if so, approximately when?

*Yours very,
John*

John Fretwell

cc: A C Galsworthy Esq CMG
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CGPC



FROM THE AMBASSADOR

BRITISH EMBASSY,
PARIS.

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Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

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*Yours ever,
John*

John Fretwell

cc: A C Galsworthy Esq CMG
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