

Visit of M. Chaban-Delmas  
President of the French National  
Assembly on 20 March 1981

FRANCE

S  
805

March 1981

| Referred to       | Date | Referred to | Date | Referred to | Date | Referred to | Date |
|-------------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| 3.3.81<br>20.3.81 |      |             |      |             |      |             |      |
| PREM 19/468       |      |             |      |             |      |             |      |



SUBJECT



35  
C. K. Koster

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

20 March 1981

France

CALL BY M. CHABAN-DELMAS

M. Chaban-Delmas called on the Prime Minister this afternoon as arranged. Most of the conversation was of a general kind relating to the present political situations in France and the United Kingdom. But three points which came up may be worth recording.

M. Chaban-Delmas said that he believed President Giscard would do worse in the first ballot than he had done in the election seven years ago. He thought President Giscard would poll less than 30 per cent of the votes, M. Mitterrand well over 20 per cent and the other main candidates between 10 and 20 per cent. In the second round of voting, on the other hand, the President might do rather better than last time. In the view of M. Chaban-Delmas, M. Mitterrand did not have more than one chance in five of securing a victory.

M. Chaban-Delmas said that it was certain that M. Barre would be replaced as Prime Minister immediately after the elections. He had already made all his dispositions. However, it would be quite wrong to suppose that M. Barre would give up politics. In fact he "thought of nothing else" but his political future. His plan was to spend the next two years building up his political base in Lyons with a view to winning a place in the National Assembly in the legislative elections in 1983. He would then aim to emerge as M. Chirac's leading rival in the next Presidential elections.

M. Chaban-Delmas refused to be drawn on the likely candidates for the succession to M. Barre. However, in his view, the choice made by President Giscard, assuming he was re-elected, would be crucial to the success of the President's next period in office. If a member of President Giscard's entourage, however able, was chosen, it would be a bad sign and would suggest that the President intended that the new septennat should be a continuation of the previous one. If, on the other hand, he chose a political figure, a Gaullist, (M. Chaban-Delmas said that he had proposed a suitable candidate) this would be a positive sign and would indicate that the President intended to make a new start. This was essential.

Francis Richards, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

W. S. A. DANDER

B





Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 March 1981

Dear Michael,

Call by M. Chaban-Delmas

M. Chaban-Delmas, President of the French National Assembly (ie Speaker) is calling on the Prime Minister tomorrow at 4.30 pm. I attach a short background brief. This concentrates on the French Presidential Election campaign, which must inevitably dominate the conversation. The brief includes the latest reporting telegram from Paris. I also attach a personality note on M. Chaban-Delmas and a revised list of Facts and Figures on France.

M. Chaban-Delmas is in Britain primarily on a private visit to play in a golf competition on 19 March and attend the France/England International Rugby match on 21 March. He had a private supper with Lord Soames on 18 March and, in addition to the Prime Minister, will be seeing Lord Carrington, the Lord Privy Seal and the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Yours ever,

(F N Richards)  
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq  
10 Downing St

CALL BY M. CHABAN-DELMAS, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1. The French political scene is dominated by the Presidential elections to be held on 26 April (First Round) and 10 May (Second Round run-off). President Giscard declared himself a 'citizen candidate' on 2 March. His main rival from the governing Majority is his former Prime Minister the Gaullist, M. Jacques Chirac. His main opponent is the Socialist, M. François Mitterrand, who will share the vote of the Left with the Communist, M. Georges Marchais. The results of the latest polls on the candidates' standing are contained in Paris telegram no 195 attached.

2. M. Jacques Chaban-Delmas, a Gaullist, appears to have decided that, as President of the National Assembly, he cannot give his formal support to any of the candidates, but has made no secret of his sympathy for M. Debré's candidature. (M. Debré, another Gaullist, was in London on Tuesday, 17 March, and saw Lord Carrington.) He was himself a strong presidential candidate against M. Giscard in 1974 Presidential elections but was deserted by M. Chirac. He has no interest in seeing M. Chirac do well at these elections. By discreet support for M. Debré, he maintains his Gaullist credentials at the First Round of the elections while leaving open the possibility of supporting M. Giscard in the Second Round.

3. If M. Chirac fails to make creditable showing in the First Round (say 18% of the vote) some observers believe that the Gaullist Party will split. M. Chirac would probably

/remain





remain as leader of the major faction, composed of the younger generation of parliamentarians, while the older Gaullists could coalesce to form a new independent grouping in the National Assembly. It is unlikely that M. Chaban-Delmas would wish to resign as President of the National Assembly to head such a grouping, but he could well act behind the scenes to bring it into being.

4. M. Chaban-Delmas, as Mayor of Bordeaux, was the Prime Minister's host on her visit there for the Franco-British Council Conference in September 1980. The next Conference is due to take place in Edinburgh on 14-16 May.



CONFIDENTIAL

CHABAN-DELMAS, JACQUES, GCMG CBE

President of the National Assembly and  
Mayor of Bordeaux

Born 1915. Chaban-Delmas played a prominent role in the Resistance. Since the late 1940's he has been Mayor of Bordeaux, and has also represented the City in the National Assembly. This has provided him with a solid local political base. Under the Fourth Republic he held various Ministerial posts. With the return of General de Gaulle in 1958, he became President (Speaker) of the National Assembly, a post he held until appointed Prime Minister by President Pompidou in 1969. He resigned in 1972 following allegations of personal financial impropriety.

In 1974 Chaban-Delmas' national political career suffered a further set-back when, as the official Gaullist candidate he was forced into third place in the Presidential election. Since Chirac took over the Gaullist movement in 1976, Chaban-Delmas has moved closer to President Giscard with whom he has good and close relations. With the support of the Giscardians, Chaban-Delmas was re-elected President of the National Assembly in 1978.

Chaban-Delmas' political philosophy is based on the need to reconcile political, economic and social differences through dialogue rather than through confrontation. He remains cool towards Chirac whom he has never forgiven for having supported Giscard in the 1974 Presidential election. In 1981 Chaban-Delmas has supported Debré's candidature, although he has not played an active part in the campaign. There has been speculation that Chaban-Delmas hopes to put himself in a good position to succeed Barre as Prime Minister. Some political observers consider that this might be his reward for helping to rally Gaullist voters behind President Giscard in the Second Round of the Presidential election. On the whole this seems unlikely. He is an ageing man.

Personally, Chaban-Delmas' charm and panache are off-set by his vanity and touchiness in face of criticism. He is an

/indifferent

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

indifferent orator with an ugly voice, but a good manager of human relations. He used to be a rugby international and still plays tennis of high quality. He speaks some English.

He was divorced from his first wife. His second, by whom he had two boys and two girls, was killed in a car accident in 1970. He married his present wife, Madame Micheline Chavelet, in 1971.

CONFIDENTIAL

FRANCE: FACTS AND FIGURES - UPDATE

|     |                                       |   |                           |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1.  | <u>Population</u> (1979)              |   | <u>Land Area</u>          |
|     | 53.5 million                          |   | 551,000 km <sup>2</sup>   |
| 2.  | <u>GDP Growth</u>                     | 3.4% 1979 )<br>2.2% 1980 )<br>1.6% 1981 ) | Official French Forecast  |
| 3.  | <u>Rate of Inflation</u>              | 1979 10.7%<br>1980 13.6%                  | (Consumer Price Index)    |
| 4.  | <u>Exchange Rate</u>                  | F11.05 = £1                               | (9 March 1980)            |
| 5.  | <u>Unemployment</u>                   |   |                           |
|     | Growth in unemployment                | 7.6%                                      | (1980 on 1979)            |
|     | % of total working population         | 6.4%                                      | (1980 estimate)           |
| 6.  | <u>Investment</u>                     |   |                           |
|     | 2.0% in volume 1979                   |   |                           |
|     | 2.5% forecast 1980                    |   |                           |
|     | 2.5% forecast 1980                    |   |                           |
| 7.  | <u>Budget Deficit</u>                 |   |                           |
|     | 1979 F40 bn (forecast F15bn)          |   |                           |
|     | 1980 F33-37 bn (forecast F31bn)       |   |                           |
|     | 1981 F29.4 bn (forecast)              |   |                           |
| 8.  | <u>Balance of Payments</u>            | <u>1980 est</u>                           | <u>Jan-Sept 1980 prov</u> |
|     | Current Account                       | -F31.0 bn                                 | -F24.1 bn                 |
|     | Trade Balance                         | -F48.0 bn                                 | -F36.2 bn                 |
| 9.  | <u>French Exports</u> (Jan-Sept 1980) | F345.1 bn                                 |                           |
|     | FRG                                   | 16.3%                                     |                           |
|     | Italy                                 | 12.6%                                     |                           |
|     | Bel/Lux                               | 9.6%                                      |                           |
|     | UK                                    | 7.2%                                      |                           |
|     | Switzerland                           | 4.6%                                      |                           |
|     | USA                                   | 4.4%                                      |                           |
| 10. | <u>French Imports</u> (Jan-Sept 1980) | F419.1 bn                                 |                           |
|     | FRG                                   | 16.3%                                     | Bel/Lux 8.3%              |
|     | Italy                                 | 9.5%                                      | Netherlands 5.4%          |
|     | USA                                   | 8.1%                                      | UK 5.3%                   |
|     | Saudi Arabia                          | 6.2%                                      |                           |



11. Principal French Exports

No available figures for 1980

12. Principal French Imports

No available figures for 1980

13. Trade with the UK                      1980

|                 |                                      |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| British Exports | £3,651.5 million (up 19.0% on 1979)  |
| British Imports | £3,899.2 million (down 3.9% on 1979) |
| French Surplus  | £247.7 million                       |

January 1981

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| British Exports | £245.2 million (down 13.2% on January 1980) |
| British Imports | £261.7 million (down 32.1% on January 1980) |
| French Surplus  | £16.5 million                               |



GRS 47φ

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FM PARIS 161635Z MAR 81

TO ROUTINE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 195 OF 16 MARCH 1981

INFO SAVING EC POSTS, HM CONSULATES GENERAL FRANCE

VISIT OF M DEBRE AND M CHABAN-DELMAS

1. AS YOU WILL BE SEEING M DEBRE, ONE OF THE GAULLIST PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, AND M CHABAN-DELMAS, THE PRESIDENT (SPEAKER) OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THIS WEEK, YOU MAY FIND IT USEFUL TO HAVE AN UPDATING ON THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

2. PRESIDENT GISCARD'S ENTRY INTO THE LISTS HAS CHECKED A DECLINE IN HIS PUBLIC STANDING. THE LATEST OPINION POLLS, PUBLISHED ON 13 MARCH, WERE CARRIED OUT BEFORE THE PRESIDENT'S GOOD TELEVISION BROADCAST ON 1φ MARCH. THEY CREDIT HIM WITH BETWEEN 26% AND 29% OF FIRST ROUND VOTING INTENTIONS. THIS IS LESS THAN THE 33% THAT HE SCORED IN 1974 BUT IT PUTS HIM AHEAD OF THE OTHER CANDIDATES.

3. THE POLLS SUGGEST THAT M CHI RAC HAS INCREASED HIS PROBABLE FIRST ROUND SUPPORT FROM 11% TO 16% SINCE FEBRUARY. THIS MAY BE AN UNDERESTIMATE. M CHI RAC'S ADVANCE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN WON LARGELY AT THE EXPENSE OF M GISCARD AND M DEBRE. M DEBRE REPEATS THAT HE HAS NO INTENTION OF WITHDRAWING HIS CANDIDATURE BUT IT LOOKS INCREASINGLY LIKELY THAT HE WILL GET LESS THAN 5% IN THE FIRST ROUND. HE IS RESPECTED BY THE OLDER GENERATION OF GAULLIST VOTERS AND INDEED BY ALL WHO ADMIRE THE ANTIQUE VIRTUES, BUT TO THE AVERAGE FRENCH VOTER HE SPEAKS FROM ANOTHER AGE AND WORLD AND IS MARGINAL TO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

4. AT AN EARLIER STAGE M CHABAN-DELMAS, WHO IS NOT HIMSELF A CANDIDATE, INDICATED HIS PREFERENCE FOR M DEBRE OVER M CHI RAC, WHICH IS NOT SURPRISING AS HE WAS ABANDONED IN 1974 BY M CHI RAC. MORE RECENTLY HE HAS SEEMED MORE NON-COMMITTAL. M CHABAN-DELMAS' AIM APPEARS TO BE TO REMAIN AVAILABLE FOR A ROLE IN GOVERNMENT UNDER A RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT GISCARD. M CHABAN-DELMAS' SUPPORT IN THE SECOND ROUND WILL BE VALUABLE TO THE PRESIDENT, BUT IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL IF IT WILL BE REWARDED WITH HIGH OFFICE. M CHABAN-DELMAS HAS RETAINED HIS CHARM BUT LOST HIS FIRE.

CONFIDENTIAL

/s.



## CONFIDENTIAL

5. ON THE LEFT, M MITTERRAND, THE CANDIDATE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS), IS RUNNING WELL AHEAD OF M MARCHAIS, THE CANDIDATE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF). ACCORDING TO THE LATEST OPINION POLLS, HE WILL HAVE 25% OF FIRST ROUND VOTES IN COMPARISON WITH 16% FOR M MARCHAIS. IF THIS RESULT WERE CONFIRMED ON 26 APRIL, IT WOULD BE A DISASTER FOR THE PCF. IT WOULD ALSO ADD TO THE INTEREST OF THE SECOND ROUND RUN-OFF BETWEEN PRESIDENT GISCARD AND M MITTERRAND, ALTHOUGH ONE WOULD STILL EXPECT THE PCF TO BE ABLE TO PULL OUT THE NECESSARY STOPS TO PREVENT THE LATTER FROM WINNING.

6. THE OPINION POLLS SHOW THAT BETWEEN 20% AND 30% OF THOSE INTENDING TO VOTE FOR M CHIRAC OR M MARCHAIS HAVE NOT MADE UP THEIR MINDS HOW THEY WILL VOTE ON THE SECOND ROUND. BOTH PRESIDENT GISCARD AND M MITTERRAND HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO CONCENTRATE ON THESE VOTERS, EMPHASISING THE NEED FOR SECOND ROUND SOLIDARITY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CAMPS.

FOO PLEASE PASS SAVING TO ATHENS, BONN, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN, THE HAGUE, LUXEMBOURG, ROME AND UKREP BRUSSELS

HIBBERT.

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

LIMITED  
WED  
ECD  
PS  
PS/LPS  
PS/PUS  
MR DAY  
MR AGLAND  
MR FERGUSSON  
MR HANNAY

THIS TELEGRAM  
WAS NOT  
ADVANCED



MFJ

3 March 1981

Visit by M. Chaban-Delmas

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 2 March about the visit to this country by Mr Chaban-Delmas. She will be prepared to receive him for a courtesy call at 1630 on Friday 20 March. I should be grateful if you could let me have a brief the previous day.

MODBA

Francis Richards Esq  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office





Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

You would fit him in  
for 30 minutes on 20 March  
(at 1630). Agree?

2 March 1981

Ans. 21/3

Yes no.

Dear Michael,

The French Embassy have asked us whether the Prime Minister would agree to see M. Chaban-Delmas, President of the French National Assembly, on 20 March when he is coming to London for the France-England International Rugby match. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has agreed to see him and hopes that the Prime Minister will also be prepared to receive a courtesy call by M. Chaban-Delmas.

M. Chaban-Delmas, a Gaullist, is close to President Giscard but is not in the government. However, he is a possible candidate for the office of Prime Minister after the French presidential elections in May. The Prime Minister will recall that he was her host when she visited Bordeaux to address the Franco-British Council Conference there in September 1980.

HM Embassy Paris have recommended that M. Chaban-Delmas be invited to visit Britain officially and, were the Prime Minister to see him now, the objects of such a visit would be largely achieved.

Yours ever,

Francis Richards

(F N Richards)  
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq  
10 Downing St