

## Prime Minister

### CONVERSATION WITH JACQUES CHIRAC

I saw Monsieur Chirac at my request for a three-quarters of an hour interview at the Hotel de Ville on January 4th, the arrangements being very well made by the Embassy.

M. Chirac said that he and his party were deeply disturbed about three things: the  
① growth of Soviet power; the apparent mis-  
② understanding between the United States and  
③ Western Europe; and Western Europe's  
preoccupation with minor matters such as fish,  
lamb and butter, in the face of the greatest  
military threat that civilisation had faced  
since the collapse of the Roman Empire.

On the European Community, M. Chirac said that he recognised that the Community was a system whose rules did not suit Britain. Either Britain had to leave the Community or the rules had to be changed. If Britain were to leave the Community, it would ruin the solidarity of Western Europe, so painfully achieved. It would seriously damage the West. The rules therefore should be changed.

M. Chirac said that he was determined to create some kind of real European security in his lifetime: "We cannot forever rely on the Americans. We in Western Europe are at the moment as rich as the United States. It does not make sense for us to have to rely on the United States in perpetuity. We must make common cause about defence. The trouble is the Germans. We have, of course, to do all to prevent them from being upset. I have already done my bit in this respect. For example I was just about to launch the idea

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for a new look at European defence not long ago. I showed the text of my speech to the Chancellor Kohl. He was horrified and said that if I put that section into the speech he would be ruined. So I cut two pages in the interest of Franco-German friendship. All the same, one day I must make that speech".

"As for Russia, it is said that they are in trouble. Economic trouble, political trouble, and trouble with their nationalities. Allright, but that does not comfort me. They might so easily seek solace in international adventure". This really worried him. He was not an alarmist but sometimes he thought that an international adventure was the obvious thing for them to do at a time when the West must seem to them so divided.

M. Chirac seemed to be exceptionally fit and lively, and sent his very best wishes to you in tones of great enthusiasm. He was extremely kind to me as well, placing his car at my disposal etc.

#### CONVERSATION WITH MONSIEUR REGIS DEBRAY

The ~~Councillor~~ of the Embassy, Mr. Peter Ford, kindly invited me to join him for ~~the~~ lunch he had previously arranged with M. Debray, President Mitterand's adviser on Latin America and, to some extent, cultural matters. It was interesting to meet M. Debray having heard so much about him as the sometime companion of Guevara in Bolivia. M. Debray did not strike me as so formidable an individual as I had assumed. The news of his appointment to the Elysée had suggested to me, in my

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ignorance, that here was a real revolutionary bacillus in a position of influence and I confess that my attitude to the Mitterand regime as such had been affected by this judgement. M. Debray is, however, no more than a Jacobin nationalist, as he puts it; his friendship with Castro would seem to be one based on a shared contempt for the United States rather than on any participation in a common conspiracy. He has even something of a sense of humour.

Our conversation was chiefly about Latin American affairs. In the course of this, he explained that he thought Britain was being unhelpful over Central America (I was relieved to hear this) and he also thought that we had caused France a good deal of trouble and loss of markets in Argentina and elsewhere. He would not, however, be drawn as to what markets had been lost and would not reply when I talked of rumours of new deliveries of étendards and exocets. He did not see the illogicality of wishing to trade with Argentina and not wishing to have anything to do with Chile. I told him that I had been invited to go to Chile shortly. He expressed his horror at this thought and said that I should be careful not to go at the moment of the successful coup d'état against General Pinochet which he personally expected to occur soon.

*I also asked him about France's attitude to the European Community's future; he affected to have no interest in the subject.*

CONVERSATION WITH FERNANDO MORAN, the Spanish Foreign Minister, Wednesday January 12th.

I lunched alone with Fernando Morán, the new Foreign Minister of Spain, at the Ritz Hotel, Madrid. He is a friend of mine from the time when he was Consul-General here. He was a member of the diplomatic service under Franco, and a novelist, but was always a Socialist, having been influenced when

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still at the Diplomatic School by Professor Tierno Galván, "the old professor" who is now Mayor of Madrid. Señor Morán is one of those perplexing characters, rather like Michael Foot, who in private can be charming, but on platforms sound like Robespierre.

In the past Señor Morán was a passionate opponent of Spanish entry to NATO and therefore I could not help having some forebodings when I heard he had been appointed Foreign Minister. Nevertheless, as so often is the case, power has altered his vision. He told me that he, and the Government of Spain, had no wish to press ahead with the referendum promised on the Spanish membership of NATO but as far as he knew it would have to take place before the next election. Meantime he did not think there would be much in the way of Spanish military integration into NATO until after that referendum.

On Gibraltar, he said that all he asked for at this stage was that the issue of sovereignty should be "on the table" and that nothing ought to be excluded from the conversations, & that thus we should return to the situation as it was before the Falklands Crisis. After I had said how glad I was that the frontier had been opened, he said that the most serious difficulty, in what he called a transitional period, would be the question of the airport. It would be very difficult for him if we were to make the Gibraltar airport available for charter flights for tourists at our domestic fares. This would cause the arrival of vast numbers of tourists for the Costa del Sol thereby undercutting the airport at Málaga. I said that I thought that airfares in Europe were so scandalously high that anything that brought this fact to public notice was desirable!

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Sr. Morán had just been to France, and the press on the day that I saw him was full of glowing accounts of his new friendship with Cheysson. Sr. Morán said he had had a good conversation in Paris about both Spanish entry to the European Community and collaboration over terrorism in the Basque country. The following day, however, the press in Spain began to suggest that the wool had been pulled over Sr. Morán's eyes. His remarks about a new "Family Compact" between two Socialist governments (to echo the eighteenth century compact between two different branches of the Bourbon family) caused derision. Several people pointed out that, in the unlikely event of France being really helpful over Basque terrorism, it was only because at long last ~~he~~ he was aware that such terrorism might be unhelpful to them in south-west France, following press stories in France that the Corsican terrorists had connections with the Basques.

Notwithstanding the new "Family Compact", Sr. Morán thought that once Spain was in Europe she could have a very close friendship with Britain because of our joint attachment to different parts of the Americas. Sr. Morán did not seem at all disposed to talk about the Falklands and I had the feeling that, like many Spanish Socialists, his hostility to Argentina was greater than any sense of hispanic brotherhood. But this was merely an impression.

When I asked him why the Spaniards had felt that they had to send a representative to the then current meeting of non-aligned countries at Managua, he pointed out that it was at a lower level than when his predecessor had sent a representative to another such meeting. He and M. Cheysson were determined to try and influence the non-aligned movement, with which they had many friendships (particularly from the Second Socialist International), towards genuine non-alignment. He recognised that it was "too late for Castro to abandon his friendship

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with the Soviet Union" (was it not always so? H.T.) Nevertheless it does seem possible that Castro will visit both Spain and France sometime next year. The consequences of this are likely to be rather adverse for the Socialist Government, in my judgement, as there has been a great deal of publicity in the Spanish press on the plight of political prisoners in Cuban jails.

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 Sr. Moran told me that he had invited you (through the Foreign Secretary) to make a return visit to Spain, following Sr. Calvo Sotelo's visit to England last year.

Sr. Moran did not seem to have ~~come~~ come to terms with his bodyguards. He complained that they were always with him and that he could not shake them off in any circumstances. He seemed more perplexed by this than anything else. He said that they became very annoyed if he made any changes of plan. It was not, he felt, that they were afraid that he might be assassinated; that would be a relatively minor setback. What particularly troubled them was the possibility that he might be kidnapped and subsequently exchanged for two Basque revolutionaries currently in prison!

#### CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR PEDRO SCHWARTZ

Professor Schwartz, the President of the Liberal Club in Madrid, became a member of the Parliament for Madrid in the last elections as part of Sr. Fraga's party. Sr. Fraga has asked him to be the main economic spokesman. This seems a good move since Professor Schwartz (whom you may remember from your visit to Madrid in 1978 and from his subsequent membership of the tri-lateral commission) is, as it were, the Ralph Harris of Spain: a very articulate economic liberal. With his

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admirable <sup>command of</sup> English, he has been, until recently, secretary of the Bentham Institute in London.

Professor Schwartz also made a strong request that HMG should invite Sr. Fraga as its guest on the same lines as Sr. Felipe González was invited two years ago when he was leader of the opposition. Sr. Fraga was, of course, ambassador to London and is, in his own mind anyway, a strong anglophile (he has written an unreadable book about the British constitution) and is now incontestably the leader of the opposition. I think this would be a good thing. As you know his party is likely, I think, to join the European Democratic Group.

SPAIN: GENERAL

It is too soon to say how the present Socialist Government is going to work out but I had the following brief impressions:

(1) The real power in the Government is Sr. Alfonso Guerra, rather than the Prime Minister, Felipe González. Sr. Guerra is a bleak Socialist of humble origins but is looked on as an anti-communist. Perhaps he has the same views on Socialism as Attlee had in 1945;

(2) The prices are already much higher as a result of devaluation;

(3) The Government have ruthlessly taken over the radio and television so that it expresses their views almost exclusively, just as it did in the past express the views of the last government. There is no independent television in Spain;

(4) The general supposition is that the Government will not press the NATO

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question at all quickly, as Sr. Morán told me was his anticipation too; and

(5) Spain still plainly wants to join the EEC but if they do not get in soon, because of what most people think of as the "intransigence of the French for political reasons", they will withdraw their application in a huff. This will mean a certain amount of eating of words and perhaps could cause difficulties with the army who will say "we told you so".

Hugh Thomas  
January 20, 1983