

FRANCE



10 DOWNING STREET

Mr. Alison

NAH
7/2

Thank you. Prediction of

agricultural violence in France have
been commonplace for some years
now. The French are not above
exploiting the prediction in their
attempt to win concessions in the
EC negotiation.

I should have thought talk
of a "new peasants' war" in
France was wildly exaggerated.
but I am sure there will be
violence from time to time. There
has been to as long as I can
remember.

A.S.C. 72.



10 DOWNING STREET

John Coles

I found this rather a disturbing report on French internal social difficulties. Are FCO keeping the Prime Minister alert to this dimension, or Mr Curry's analysis is realistic? MA 2/2



EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC GROUP

BRITISH CONSERVATIVES, DANISH CONSERVATIVES,
ULSTER UNIONIST.

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There would soon be serious bloodshed and even deaths as a result of riots among French peasants if the present disturbances in France continued.

The violent protests in Brittany and northern France showed how close violence was beneath the surface in French farm politics. But even that violence was nothing compared to the dangers of an explosion in the French wine-growing south that could easily result in serious fighting between farmers and police.

This warning was given by David Curry, chairman of the European Parliament Agriculture Committee, speaking to farmers at the Kimbolton Agricultural Discussion Society, near Huntingdon, today (January 31).

He commented: "The English seem to think that when French peasants get into an ugly mood it is enough to send the village copper along and ask them all to disperse quietly to the local for a pint. It is just not like that in France. French social protest is violent, and the recent decision of the French Government to clamp down on rioters could lead to pitched battles in the countryside."

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2) Curry

Mr Curry, who is MEP for Essex North-East, said that this was not an excuse to allow the French to block imports and interfere with trade. If the French Government were not careful it was going to face a "furious coalition" of European Governments all of whom were under pressure to end the "wholly illegitimate interruption of their perfectly legal trading activities."

But he appealed to people in Britain to recognise the "desperate pressures" the French Government was under. "It faces a virtual impossible task in trying to get the dismantling of the border taxes and subsidies which French farmers blame for imports which undercut their own prices. It will get no change at all from the Americans on its demand for a limitation of imports of raw materials like soya and corn gluten feed. The EEC budget situation means it will be able to secure almost no price increase for French farmers many of whom are not growing fat and lazy on EEC subsidies but are imprisoned at the bottom of the earnings league.

"The whole EEC agriculture policy is geared to benefit the big, the efficient, the highly capitalised, the northern producer.

"The French Government, in trouble with the voters, imposing an unpopular austerity programme, with its glorious socialist promises hanging round its neck like so many clay diamonds, is on a terrible hiding to nothing," Mr Curry stated.

On top of all that, Mr Curry added, the French held the presidency of the EEC and were "handcuffed" to compromises which would be bitterly unpopular.

"There is every reason why the British should insist firmly that our legitimate exports should reach their destination without threat to the driver or the product. But we should realise that the French bloody-mindedness is born of desperation, and that violence could erupt into a new peasants war in France."

Ends+

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