



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 March 1982

Dear John,

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Monsieur Cheysson and European Defence

There has been renewed reference in the Press recently to French ideas about the importance of the Western European Union (WEU) in the context of European defence. The Prime Minister may be interested to know that when Lord Carrington had discussions with Monsieur Cheysson at Chevening on 15 March the latter made a clear distinction between 'European discussion of defence' and 'European defence'. The former, which was necessary, should take place bilaterally, in NATO and in the WEU. The latter, on the other hand, was undesirable, as there was a major danger in decoupling Atlantic defence and European defence. He added that it had never been the French intention to discuss specific ideas for European defence in WEU (although he did see some scope for using that organisation to improve public understanding of defence issues). From this it appears that Monsieur Cheysson shares the Prime Minister's views, as expressed in the House on 16 March, that we should be wary of schemes in Europe that could prove divisive in wider Alliance terms.

We also noted the statement in the Times of 15 March (in an article datelined Paris) to the effect that Chancellor Schmidt saw no objection in principle to French ideas about the WEU and that Bonn's attitude toward this organisation is reported to have become warmer. The Embassy in Bonn confirms however that, from the context of his remarks, the Chancellor did not commit himself to anything more than a polite readiness to examine any French idea. German officials have since told us that the FRG attitude to the WEU remains unchanged and that they are conscious of the need for extreme caution about initiatives in this area.

Yours ever,

(F N Richards)  
Private Secretary

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*Defence*

26 March 1982

Monsieur Cheysson and European Defence

Thank you for your letter of 24 March,  
the contents of which the Prime Minister has  
noted.

AJC

F.N. Richards, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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