

Extract from minutes of the 166th meeting of the WEU Permanent Commission: Anglo-Egyptian negotiations (20 October 1953)


Caption: On 8 October 1953, at the 166th meeting of the Permanent Commission of Western European Union (WEU), Sir Frank Roberts, Deputy Under-Secretary of State in the British Foreign Office, gives a progress report on the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations on the future of the Suez Canal bases. René Massigli, French Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, pays tribute to British efforts in the region and emphasises the importance of the principle of free transit through the Suez Canal. The Permanent Commission also discusses French policy in Tunisia and Morocco.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Minutes of the 166th Permanent Commission, held on Thursday 8th October 1953 at 2, Eaton Place". Document n°A/2114, Exemplaire N°27; 20.10.1953. pp.1-2; 5-6; 8-10 Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Brussels Treaty Organization (BTO). 26th Meeting of the Permanent Commission. Year: 1953. 08/01/1953-29/04/1955. File BTO-032. Vol. 1/1.

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BRUSSELS TREATY ORGANISATION

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20th October, 1953.

MINUTES OF THE 166TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COMMISSION,
HELD ON THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER 1953 AT 2, EATON PLACE

Present:

BELGIUM

H.E. the Marquis du Parc
Locmaria, C.V.O.

Ambassadeur Extraor-
dinaire et Plénipo-
tentiaire.

Comte G. d'Aspremont Lynden

Directeur Général des
Affaires Politiques
a.i. au Ministère des
Affaires Etrangères.

M. de Bassompierre

Premier Secrétaire.

M. J. Bourgaux

Deuxième Secrétaire

FRANCE

H.E. M. René Massigli
G.C.V.O., K.B.E.

Ambassadeur Extra-
ordinaire et Pléni-
potentiaire.

M. de la Tournelle

Directeur Général
des Affaires Poli-
tiques au Ministère
des Affaires Etran-
gères.

M. Boegner

Chef des Services
des Pactes.

M. Gérard André, C.V.O.

Premier Secrétaire.

LUXEMBOURG

H.E. M. André Clasen

Envoyé Extraordi-
naire et Ministre
Plénipotentiaire.

M. J.P. Kremer

Conseiller de Léga-
tion, Ministère des
Affaires Etrangères.

NETHERLANDS

H.E. M.D. Stikker, G.B.E.

Ambassadeur Extra-
ordinaire et Pléni-
potentiaire.

Dr. H.F. Eschauzier

Directeur Général
des Affaires Poli-
tiques au Ministère
des Affaires Etran-
gères.

Baron W.J.G. Gevers, C.V.O.

Conseiller

Jonkheer J.L.R. Huydecoper

Deuxième Secrétaire.

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<u>UNITED KINGDOM</u>	Sir Frank Roberts, K.C.M.G.	Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office.
	The Viscount Hood, C.M.G.	Head of Western Organisations Department.
	Miss J.C. Petrie	Western Organisations Department.
<u>SECRETARIAT- GENERAL</u>	Baron M.F. de Selys Longchamps	Secretary-General
	Mr. P.B. Fraser	Deputy Secretary-General

The Meeting was held under the Chairmanship of SIR FRANK ROBERTS, who welcomed the senior officials who had come to take part at his invitation.

It was agreed to restrict the agenda to items I, II, IV and VI of Document A/2114 (Final), and to postpone the other items to a future meeting.

I - MINUTES OF THE 165TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COMMISSION
(A/2080)

The Minutes were approved.

II - POLITICAL QUESTIONS

1) and 2) Problems relating to Germany and the proposed Four-Power Conference

SIR FRANK ROBERTS considered that points 1) and 2) of item II on the agenda could be taken together. He proceeded to review the present situation. The Russian reply to the invitation sent by the Three Powers had been somewhat disappointing, and the three Governments had already begun to draft a new Note to Russia, renewing their invitation to take part in a Four-Power conference which might be held some time during November. Although the drafting of the Note would not be completed for another few days, agreement had already been reached on the contents, an agreement which, moreover, was shared by Dr. Adenauer.

The new Allied Note, whilst ignoring the lengthy arguments in the Soviet reply and avoiding all polemics, would concentrate on interpreting as favourably as possible the last part, where it is not stated as an essential condition for the Four-Power talks that there should first be a meeting to discuss Far-Eastern problems, nor that the East German Government should take part, as such, in any conference on Germany.

Readiness .../

Readiness would be expressed to discuss any and every aspect of the German question, and there would be no insistence, at any rate in the Note itself, on priorities with regard to the agenda; this did not, however, imply any change in the attitude of the Western nations towards the question.

As soon as the Note had been dispatched to the Russians, and without waiting to know the outcome, the Three Governments U.K. proposed to call a meeting of experts in Paris, including amend.: representatives of the three Allied Commissioners, to discuss the German problem; the meeting had been planned for some time and would in any case be necessary.

The three Western Powers were considering the best way of providing Russia with security guarantees, but their U.K. consultations were still in the preliminary stage. Member amend.: States of the Brussels Treaty and of the E.D.C. would of course be kept informed, and their advice sought, at the appropriate time.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom was most anxious for an U.K.: early entry into force of the Bonn agreement and the agreement amend.: between the six E.D.C. countries.

M. MASSIGLI observed in this connection that, without in any way wishing to prejudge the outcome of the E.D.C. project, it would scarcely be possible to submit it to the French Parliament for ratification until, firstly, the Saar problem had been solved, and secondly, it could be proved that there was no hope of any détente between East and West.

M. DE LA TOURNELLE supplemented the CHAIRMAN'S statement by declaring that the French Government was quite ready to admit that there were other causes of international tension besides the German and Austrian problems. It would be wise, however, to tackle the most urgent questions first, and to keep them separate. It would be inadvisable, for instance, to invite China to attend discussions of European problems. The French Government nevertheless hoped that a political conference might meet later to consider the Far Eastern situation, including such aspects as the internationalisation of the war in Indo-China, with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement. The MARQUIS DU PARC asked whether the new Western Belg.: Note would contain any reference to the East German Government. amend.: Sir FRANK ROBERTS replied that it would not. The BELGIAN Ambassador reiterated his Governments's desire to be kept informed of any discussions likely to be held between experts in Paris.

Mr. STIKKER was delighted that the statements just made confirmed the fact that the Three Powers had already reached agreement on the general terms of their reply to the Soviet Note. It was indeed a wise move to stress that we were prepared to examine all aspects of the problem. As regards the political situation in Western Germany, however, he was not so sure that it was really as favourable as had generally been considered since the elections. Although we had every reason to be glad of Dr. Adenauer's continued presence at the head of the Government, we should not lose sight of the probability that his advancing age might, in the not-so-distant future, raise the problem of the furtherance of his policy.

The children .../

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The children of Bonn were already being taught songs in school which expressed a longing for a united Germany, and
 Neth. : it had doubtless been noted how Dr. Adenauer, since the
 amend. : 17th June, had been laying stress on the unification of
 : Germany. It was for this reason that the Netherlands were
 : particularly anxious that the E.D.C. plan should go through,
 : thus enabling Western Germany to be closely associated
 : with the future of Western Europe as a whole.

In this connection, he drew the attention of the Meeting to the statements made at Strasbourg by M. Guy Mollet and Mr. Nutting on the subject of the association of the United Kingdom with the E.D.C. Any move towards the political strengthening of the E.D.C. was extremely important.

M. MASSIGLI observed that at the present time it had to be admitted that there was much uncertainty, although some progress had been made; clauses allowing for "consultations" often turned out to be disappointing when put into practice, and he hoped that the wording of the documents in question would prove satisfactory in the eyes of the French Parliament.

SIR FRANK ROBERTS agreed with the opinions expressed
 : by the Meeting on the future of Germany. He pointed out,
 U.K. : however, that the situation was perhaps more encouraging
 amend. : than we had hoped, since the elections had eliminated
 : the extremist elements of the Right and Left. The most
 : important consideration today was to bind Germany more
 : closely to Western Europe. As for British cooperation with
 : the E.D.C., the United Kingdom had made her position
 : clear on several occasions. Desirous of helping in
 : every possible way towards the success of the enterprise,
 : though unable to take part on the same conditions as
 : the Six countries, she had endeavoured to devise a form
 : of association which would constitute a definite commitment
 U.K. : with regard to the proposed Community. The proposals
 amend. : submitted for consideration to the Interim Commission of
 : the E.D.C. represented a much closer form of association,
 : however, than that which existed with the Coal and Steel
 : Community and they laid down the limits beyond which
 : the United Kingdom was not prepared to go.

COUNT D'ASPREMONT said that the Belgian Parliament
 Belg. : would shortly be studying the draft treaty of the
 amend. : European Defence Community. This would probably be
 : approved before the end of the year, by a constitutional
 : two-thirds majority.

M. CLASEN stated that the ratification of the E.D.C. treaty was unlikely to raise any major difficulties in Luxembourg.

In conclusion, the Commission agreed that the Five countries should stay in close touch on all these matters and should keep each other informed of progress.

3) Middle .../

3) Middle East Questions

a) Anglo-Egyptian Negotiations

In the course of a progress report on the present negotiations, SIR FRANK ROBERTS stressed the following points:

The United Kingdom was most anxious to conclude an agreement with the Egyptian Government on the subject of the Suez Canal bases, but not at any price. Great Britain was acting not only in her own interests, but in those of all her allies and of the whole free world. On the Egyptian side, it would seem that there was a genuine desire to reach a settlement; the new Government, though facing internal difficulties raised by extremist national elements, were in a more favourable position from the point of view of negotiations. Conversations were proceeding on the basis of the three following conditions:

i) evacuation of British troops;

ii) maintenance on the spot of some thousands of technicians, whose numbers would be progressively reduced as more Egyptians were trained to take their place;

U.K. : iii) possibility for Great Britain to re-activate the
amend. : Base in case of a major war with the Eastern
: Powers;

: iv) the agreement (which the British had proposed
: should last for 10 years, whereas the Egyptians
U.K. : wanted it reduced to 3) would be finally
: concluded for 7 years, with provision for
amend. : consultations on the next phase.

: The United Kingdom negotiators also hoped to get the
: Egyptians to agree to the insertion of a statement in the
: Preamble re-affirming the right of free transit for shipping
: through the canal.

: The main stumbling-block was caused by the conditions
: essential for re-activating the Base in time of war. Egypt
: desired that the right to use the Suez Canal Zone as a
: military base should be confined to cases where the Arab
: League States were involved, whereas the United Kingdom
U.K. : wanted this guarantee to be extended to cover Turkey
: and Persia. Although the Egyptians were being extremely
mend. : difficult, the United Kingdom had reason to believe that
: Egypt wished to reach agreement. The British Government,
: however, would make no more concessions; if no agreement
: were possible, it would remain firm; the British forces
: were fully able to meet an Egyptian attack. In the
: meantime, the United Kingdom was sending no military
: equipment to Egypt, and it was hoped that the other
: Brussels Treaty countries would keep up the embargo they
: had themselves imposed until such time as an agreement
: was signed.

M. MASSIGLI .../

M. MASSIGLI paid tribute to British efforts in this field, emphasising the importance of the principle of free transit through the Canal, the recognition of which by the Egyptian Government would constitute a vital factor when the question came to be studied at the international level after the expiry of the present concession, which had only fifteen more years to run.

b) Iran

The United Kingdom, said SIR FRANK ROBERTS, naturally welcomed the recent change of government which had taken place in Persia; there appeared to be good prospects for the resumption of normal diplomatic relations. The Shah's government had taken vigorous action against the Tudeh party and had driven it underground. The new Government was not yet very firmly established, however; both the administrative machinery and social conditions were far from satisfactory, and Dr. Mossadeqh still had supporters amongst certain conservative groups. Nevertheless, the financial aid contributed by the United States had forestalled the threat of any crisis in the immediate future, and it might be hoped that the situation would gradually become stabilised. The British Government, whilst deeply grateful for the efforts made on their behalf and the services rendered during this time by the American diplomatic representatives on the spot, naturally wished to resume direct relations with the Persian Government.

U.K. : They did not want, however, to press General Zahedi in
amend. : the matter and would prefer the initiative to come from him.

4) and 5) General review of the situation in the large international organisations. Election of a European as President of the next United Nations Assembly.

COUNT D'ASPREMONT, taking items 4 and 5 of the agenda together, said he had been struck by the small part which Europe was able to play in the United Nations; this, as everyone knew, was due to the absence of a number of highly
: civilised European countries whose admission was opposed
B. : by the Soviet bloc. On the other hand, a two-thirds
amend. : majority lay with a group of nations, some of which could
: be said to have not yet attained to political maturity.

Belg. : When it was recalled that out of eight ordinary and two
amend. : extraordinary Assemblies of the United Nations only one -
: the first - had been held under the chairmanship of a
European, it might justifiably be considered highly desirable,
in order to make the most of the European representation, that
the President of the 9th United Nations Assembly (1954)
should be a European. With this end in view it would be
advisable to start preparing the ground straight away, that
is to say to persuade a number of influential nations of the
Belg. : need to approve the principle of a European candidate; the
amend. : importance of the United States in this connection could
: hardly be over-estimated. According to the various soundings
already taken independently by some of the Five countries,
it appeared that Canada would give her consent, as would Chile
and Peru (who hoped, in return, to be given support for their
candidate in 1955) and possibly India, who was presiding over
the Assembly this year; it would thus be useful if the
Brussels Treaty countries were to agreed on what action to
take in order to draw the best advantage, including possibly
diplomatic approaches.

After an .../

After an exchange of views, the Meeting supported the opinions expressed by the Belgian representative and agreed to further the election of a European President by requesting the representatives of the Five countries at the United Nations to work together to this end, and to make recommendations to their Governments. Although the choice of a candidate would have to be considered at a later stage, it was generally agreed that there was no reason to depart from the tradition whereby the President is chosen from a country other than those which are permanently represented on the Security Council.

Referring to item II - 4, the Secretary-General gave an account of the interviews he had had in Strasbourg with senior officials of the Council of Europe. In their message of the 7th May, 1953, addressed to the Consultative Assembly, the Council of Ministers recognised the need for a well defined programme of work for the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe Secretariat had circulated in June, to Governments, a memorandum on the subject which proposed that effect be given to two earlier recommendations of the Consultative Assembly which were designed to arrange for preparatory conferences to be held within the framework of the Council, and to put before the Assembly requests for guidance on certain questions being examined by international bodies.

It might thus be possible for the voice of the whole of free Europe to be heard within these organisations.

The Council Secretariat wished to know if the Five could agree with these proposals. If so, could the choice of questions about which a request for guidance would be addressed to the Assembly be first of all studied by the Brussels Treaty Organisation?

M. MASSIGLI stressed the importance of these proposals
 U.K. : which would make it possible, through the Council of Europe,
 amend. : for the views of certain European countries not members of
 : the United Nations to be put forward in that Organisation.

The Commission, realising the significance of the
 : proposals made to the Secretary-General, requested him to
 Meth. : prepare a paper on this question, so that it might be
 amend. : discussed at one of the forthcoming meetings.

6) Indo-China

M. DE LA TOURNELLE explained that French policy could be divided into three aspects :

- a) Relations between France and the Associated States;
- b) the military effort;
- c) the patient search for a peaceful solution to the war.

a) Relations between France and the Associated States

In 1949, a Treaty was signed acknowledging the sovereignty of the three States. In July 1953, France decided to complete the granting of independence and sovereignty by a series of negotiations for the transfer of power. These talks resulted in the conclusion of interim agreements with Cambodia and Laos. They will be resumed with Vietnam as soon as the Emperor has appointed a delegate, after the Nationalist Congress has been held. The

difficulties.../

difficulties encountered along the way had not solely arisen from the relationship with France. the latter was striving to convince the Associated States of their mutual interdependence and of the common peril which threatened them all.

b) The military effort

The Viet-minh forces had hitherto consisted only of a very mobile and aggressive infantry, weak in artillery support and wholly deficient in aircraft. It was to be feared that a new and delicate situation would shortly arise if the enemy were to acquire air support. The new Commander-in-Chief was successfully applying offensive tactics, and would soon be receiving reinforcements in the shape of nine battalions, as well as further supplies of equipment. The United States had recognised the importance of this effort and had contributed a further large financial grant of \$ 385,000,000 for the year 1953.

France was aware that the affirmation of her supremacy, as well as the pursuance of her declared policy, represented the best guarantee of success in her endeavours towards peace.

c) Search for a peaceful solution

Certain statements recently made in Moscow appeared to indicate a wish to negotiate in Indo-China. France, speaking through her Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had re-stated before the United Nations Assembly her willingness to enter into peace negotiations; no word had come, however, from the Viet-minh side to support those earlier encouraging statements. French policy therefore remained firm:

- the process of granting independence to the Associated States was to continue.
- the military effort was being intensified.
- the search for a peaceful solution continued, emphasis being placed on the international character of the struggle.

7. a) Tunisia

Difficulties had increased continually over the past two years under the influence of the extremist party. The acts of terrorism which had resulted had been condemned by the French Government regardless of the persons responsible. The arrival of a new Resident General, M. Voizard, seemed to have helped to improve the situation, and France intended to carry through the plans for reform which had been proposed in 1952 to the Government of the day. These proposals, whilst introducing a system of internal self-government, were nevertheless designed to ensure the safety of the French in Tunisia. They cover:

- Reorganisation.../

- Reorganisation of the Legislature and of the Executive.
- Reform of the administration, assigning most of the responsibility to Tunisian officials.
- Reform of local government, in particular of the municipal councils.

b) Morocco

In order to form an objective appreciation of French policy in Morocco an attempt should be made to review developments since the Protectorate was instituted in 1912. In order to ensure and to extend the sovereignty of the Sultan, France was obliged to take responsibility for direct administration. As a result, feudal Morocco was transformed in a quarter of a century into a modern country, and the ruler was duly grateful to the Protecting Power for having put an end to those traditional rivalries which had, in practice, made negligible his theoretically absolute powers. However, since the end of the second world war he had come under the influence of the extremist party Istiglal and of his son, who regarded the Nationalist party as a means to gain power. These agitators went so far as to use the United Nations as a spring-board, hoping to gain the support of all those who, in varying degrees and for different motives, profess an anti-colonial policy. At the same time, certain groups which remained faithful to France and to the traditions of the Koran, disapproved of their sovereign's political manoeuvres and began to proclaim their opposition more and more openly under the leadership of the Pasha of Marrakech. Three times in 1953, petitions were addressed to the French Government demanding that the Sultan be deposed. At first, France attempted to arbitrate between the ruler and the Glaoui whilst at the same time putting forward a programme of liberal reforms.

The Sultan approved them on the 13th August but, on learning of the demonstrations against him, which were becoming more violent, he subsequently refused to carry them out. Anxious to fulfil her commitments under the 1912 Treaty, to preserve peace whilst maintaining the dynasty in power, France had no other recourse but to request the abdication of the sovereign and the appointment of a new Sultan (his first cousin) in accordance with the musulman law. The latter, who was acclaimed by a large majority of the Arab population, was to cooperate with the Protecting Power in carrying out the reforms rejected by his predecessor. These included:

- The Council of Viziers and Directors is to be enlarged and its powers increased, enabling the Sultan's veto to be over-ruled where necessary by a two-thirds majority vote.
- A Government Council is to be set up, having two sections, French and Arab, each controlling three departments: agriculture, industry and other matters.

A reform .../

- 10 -

- A reform of the judiciary, an essential step towards the democratisation of the country through the abolition of the rights hitherto reserved for the Sultan.

- Finally, the recognition of the natives' right

For. The setting-up in 1947 of a Joint Assembly, responsible for
 amend. the administration of the three Départements, had thus
 ensured the conditions for harmonious cooperation between
 the French and the Moslems, and nationalist agitation in
 this area had practically ceased since that date.

8) Trieste

SIR FRANK ROBERTS told the meeting of the decision which had just been taken on Trieste. The United States and Great Britain had to-day informed the Italian and Yugoslav Governments that they proposed to withdraw their occupation troops. The time had come to lance the abscess; it was to be hoped that the crisis likely to result from this decision would be confined to verbal protests.

III. FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE BRUSSELS TREATY ORGANISATION (A/2080, item 2) and BELGIAN PROPOSAL (A/2081)

COUNT D'ASPREMONT recalled that Belgium would join
 : the general movement towards European integration. The
 Belg.: Belgian Government was, nevertheless, very anxious to
 : maintain close political contacts with her traditional
 amend.: allies who were not committing themselves to this policy
 : like Great Britain, and also with those who were adopting
 : it, like France. The Brussels Treaty Organisation
 : would appear to be well suited for maintaining and
 : fostering such contacts. It was for this reason that the
 : Belgian delegation proposed that the Political Directors-
 : General should hold regular meetings within this
 : Organisation. It had been objected that these officials
 : were extremely busy and that it would be difficult to
 : find a date when they could meet. It had also been
 : objected that these new meetings would diminish the
 : importance of the Permanent Commission - which was not
 : at all what the Belgian Government had in view. The
 : Belgian Government therefore submitted to the Commission
 : a modified proposal which took account of these objections.
 : Joint meetings, i.e. meetings attended by Ambassadors and
 : the Political Directors-General (or, in the event of the
 : latter being unable to be present, their assistants) should
 : be held in London every three months. The meetings should
 : take place automatically at these fixed intervals. Count
 : d'Aspremont stressed the value of the present meeting from
 : the Belgian point of view.

The Belgian proposal having met with the approval of each delegation in turn, it was formally adopted by the Commission on the understanding that both the ordinary
 U.K.: and joint meetings should take place in London. Joint
 amend.: meetings would be held, in principle, every three or four
 : months; the next one would take place in January 1954.

IV. DATE AND .../

The MARQUIS .../

: The MARQUIS DU PARC LOCMARIA thanked the Commission
Belg. : for this decision. He added that meetings such as the
amend. : present one had a two-fold value: they extended the
: political rôle of the Permanent Commission - as was
: desired by the Belgian Government.- and they enabled
: his Government to be kept informed on questions which
: were of special interest to Belgium. A typical
: example was provided by the statement made by Sir Frank
: Roberts on the general terms of the reply to the last
: Soviet Note.

IV. DATE, PLACE AND AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE
CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL (A/2080, item 3).

U.K. : Whilst expressing regret that it would not be possible
amend. : for Mr. Eden, who had only just returned from convalescence,
: to take part personally in the Consultative Council's
: forthcoming meeting, the Permanent Commission considered
: it advisable to keep to the proposal made on the previous
: occasion, that the meeting be held in Paris at the time of
: the next O.E.E.C. session, i.e. on the 29th or 30th October
: 1953.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Secretary-General to find out
M. Bidault's plans in this connection and to keep
delegations duly informed. In his opinion, the agenda
should be worded in very general terms, subject to any
special questions which the Secretary-General felt
should be considered by the Council.

V. PARTICIPATION OF GERMAN EXPERTS IN THE DISCUSSIONS
OF TECHNICAL PROBLEMS OF CIVIL DEFENCE (A/2053 and
(A/2080, item 4).

U.K. : SIR FRANK ROBERTS pointed out that the Secretary-
amend. : General of N.A.T.O. had included the question of how to
: obtain information from German sources in the agenda of
: a meeting due to be held on 14th October.

The Commission agreed that there would be no objection
to the United Kingdom paper, amended in the light of
observations made at the last meeting, and which proposed
the setting-up of a new ad hoc committee to include German
representatives, being circulated to N.A.T.O. It would in
any case not commit the other Brussels Treaty Governments,
who would be free to present their own views when the
matter was discussed by N.A.T.O.

U.K. : Mr. STIKKER was glad to note that the original text
amend. : had been amended to conform with the views expressed at the
: previous meeting, since, for his part, he felt strongly
: that such a committee should be responsible only to the
: Governments represented on it and not to any Interim
Neth. : Commission belonging to a non-existent organisation which,
amend. : should ratification take place, would not be competent
: to deal with Civil Defence matters.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Permanent Commission will
be held on Friday, 23rd October.

mek
2, Eaton Place,
S.W.1.

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W.E.U. 1st OCTOBER 1986