



MR COLES

A.S.C. 12/10

h.e.

French Counter Strike in Lebanon

As I told you on the telephone on 19 November, Monsieur Attali spoke to me on the telephone from Paris during the morning of 19 November.

2. He said that the President of the Republic had been "very upset" by the Foreign Office "statement" on the French counter strike in Lebanon (by "statement" I think he must have meant the message which the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary sent to Monsieur Cheysson).
3. Monsieur Attali reminded me that the French had lost some 60 lives in the bombing outrage against their MNF contingent. They had had to take retaliatory action. They had deliberately not forewarned us and other allies so as not to put us in the embarrassing position of fore-knowledge and perhaps feeling obliged to comment. The President hoped that from now on we would play down the line in the Foreign Office statement and he particularly hoped that the Prime Minister would not feel it necessary to make any public comment condemning the French action.
4. I promised to convey this message, which Monsieur Attali stressed came from the President himself: he had thought of speaking to the Prime Minister on the telephone but for ease of communication had decided to use this channel.
5. I recalled that the Prime Minister had been extremely grateful to the President for French abstention on the Falklands resolution at the United Nations: this had been most valuable not only in its own right but for the lead that it had given to other members of the Community.
6. I am sending a copy of this minute to Mr Fall.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

23 November 1983