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From the Private Secretary

13 May 1980

Visit of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr. de Koster paid a brief courtesy call on the Prime Minister this morning. Much of the discussion was taken up with a justification, on predictable lines, by Mr. de Koster of the value of the Council of Europe's work. Naturally enough he laid particular stress on the Council's function in providing a forum for meetings between the members of the Community and those European countries which do not belong to it. The Prime Minister agreed on the importance of this wider co-operation. She referred particularly to the help the Council of Europe could give in reducing Turkey's feelings of isolation following the accession of Greece to the Community.

Mr. de Koster raised two specific points. Firstly, he expressed the hope that Britain's contribution to the Council of Europe's budget would be maintained. He noted that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had only 46 officials to service it whereas the European Parliament had over 2,000 officials. He argued that the British contribution of £2 million was small - particularly compared with our contribution to the Community budget. The Prime Minister gave no commitment.

Secondly, Mr. de Koster asked the Prime Minister whether she would be prepared to come to Strasbourg to address the Parliamentary Assembly. He said that a speech of 20-30 minutes would suffice. It would also be normal for the Prime Minister to answer a few questions afterwards. Mr. Priestman, who was accompanying Mr. de Koster, suggested that the January session might be a good time for the Prime Minister to visit Strasbourg. The Prime Minister said she would look into the matter but, again, gave no commitment.

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