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From Minister

MR. ALEXANDER

*You will wish to hear this
with your own eyes.*

*Full
28/11*

Seat of the European Parliament

At the dinner for M. Werner, the Prime Minister expressed a wish for more detailed information about the conference of member states which is considering the seat of the Community institutions. A note by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is attached.

D. J. Wright

(D. J. Wright)

28th November 1980

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SEAT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Introduction

1. At the initiative of the French Government a conference of Member States has been set up to discuss fixing the seat of all the Community institutions under Article 216 of the Treaty establishing the Economic Community.
2. The Parliament's Secretariat is in Luxembourg, its sessions are held there and in Strasbourg and its Committees meet in Brussels. Besides the waste of time and energy this peripatetic existence adds at least 10% to the Parliament's budget. Since direct elections pressure has been mounting among its Members (MEPs) for a single seat or working place. At its November session the Parliament passed a Resolution which said that if the Member States had not taken a decision by 15 June 1981 it would have to take the necessary steps to improve its working conditions.
3. The French aim is to head off this pressure from the Parliament; their declared objective is to see Strasbourg, Luxembourg and Brussels established as, respectively, the parliamentary, judicial/financial and executive capitals of the Community.

Progress in the Conference

4. It has met once, at Permanent Representative level, and reached agreement on its own rules of procedures. Otherwise the main discussion centred on a French proposal that there should be a 3 power steering and drafting group of France, Belgium and Luxembourg. This was strongly resisted by other Member States (particularly Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands). A copy of UKREP telno 4665 reporting the meeting is attached; its next meeting will be in December. The French have been asked to put in a paper.

Position under the Treaties

5. The Treaties require the Governments of the Member States to determine the seat of the institutions by common accord. Since Member States have never been able to agree on a single seat (and

have not tried to do so since we joined) the location of all the Community institutions is based, on a provisional basis, on a share-out agreed in 1965. Thus, in addition to the Parliament's several working-places, most of the Commission and the Council Secretariat are in Brussels and the Community's financial and legal institutions, together with certain DGs of the Commission are in Luxembourg. All Member States have a veto on the final decision.

Position of other Member States

6. Luxembourg has prestige and money at stake. It invested in a new building for the Parliament and derives considerable benefit from the presence of the Secretariat. It is determined to do all it can to keep its share.

7. Belgium's position is delicate; their best interest is to maintain the status quo in the hope that pressure from the Parliament will lead to a decision in favour of Brussels.

8. Germany will probably try to avoid a row with the French but SPD MEPs are likely to press the Chancellor not to accept Strasbourg. Denmark and the Netherlands would probably opt for Brussels on the merits of the question but have so far avoided saying so; they have, however, raised awkward questions for the French about the ownership and cost of permanent buildings and the need to consult the Parliament before taking any decision. Italy, Ireland and Greece have a clear interest in Brussels (better communications) but also in keeping their heads down.

United Kingdom

9. Before the Conference of Member States was set up the Prime Minister agreed with Lord Carrington's recommendation (attached) that while our objective should be to see the Parliament located in Brussels we should avoid taking any initiative; our aim is to eliminate the waste of money and inefficiency caused by working in three places.

Tactics

10. We have no interest in seeing an early decision on the seat (if there is one, it would probably be in favour of Strasbourg). Ministers may in due course need to consider further how we should press our objective of getting the Parliament to Brussels, or whether we should be prepared to accept some alternative solution, possibly in return for a concession in some other area. However, this will depend on the course of the discussion and there is no need for an immediate decision. Meanwhile, our best tactic in the Conference of Member States is probably to agree to the Dutch suggestion that the Parliament should be consulted before any decisions are taken since:

- (i) this will delay a decision;
- (ii) the Parliament will probably opt for Brussels and thus increase pressure on the French;
- (iii) it would be a way of preventing an early decision in favour of Strasbourg without our needing directly to oppose the French;
- (iv) we would earn credit with the Parliament and UK MEPs for taking into account the Parliament's interests while, if it is not consulted, Council/Parliament relations would certainly be soured.

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TO ROUTINE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 4665 OF 28 OCTOBER.

AND TO CABINET OFFICE (FOR FRANKLIN AND WENTWORTH)

MWZ 362/2
29 OCT 88

SEAT OF INSTITUTIONS : CONFERENCE OF MEMBER STATES 28 OCTOBER

SUMMARY

1. THE PRESIDENCY TODAY CONVENED A FIRST, ORGANISATIONAL, MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF MEMBER STATES TO DISCUSS THE SEAT OF THE INSTITUTIONS. THE RULES OF PROCEDURE WERE ADOPTED. RESTATEMENT OF FRENCH POSITION. THIS FOLLOWED BY A SHORT DEBATE CENTERED MAINLY ON THE IDEA OF ESTABLISHING A STEERING GROUP OF FRANCE, BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG. FURTHER MEETING IN MID-NOVEMBER.

DETAIL

2. THE PRESIDENCY (DONDELINGER) PROPOSED A SIX POINT LIST OF RULES OF PROCEDURE (REPRESENTATIVES SAT AS REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER STATES ; MEETINGS COULD ONLY BE AT AMBASSADORIAL OR MINISTERIAL LEVEL ; MEETINGS WERE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL ; THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL AND ONE OFFICIAL WOULD CONSTITUTE THE SECRETARIAT OF THE CONFERENCE ; DOCUMENTS WOULD BE CIRCULATED TO HEADS OF DELEGATIONS ONLY ; THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY WOULD NOT ATTEND MEETINGS BUT WOULD BE CONSULTED AS APPROPRIATE). THE RULES WERE AGREED (RUTTEN) NETH) PROPOSED A MAXIMUM OF 3 MEMBERS PER DELEGATION, WHICH WAS ACCEPTED BY THE PRESIDENCY SUBJECT TO JUSTIFICATION AND PRIOR WARNING. IT WAS ALSO AGREED AT RUTTEN'S SUGGESTION THAT THE PRESS WOULD BE TOLD THAT THE CONFERENCE HAD BEEN SET UP, BUT NO MORE.

3. AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRESIDENCY, NANTEUIL (FRANCE) INTRODUCED THE 16 SEPTEMBER FRENCH MEMORANDUM ON THE SEAT, PREFACING HIS REMARKS WITH A REPORT THAT WHEN FRANCOIS PONCET ASKED (AT LUNCH AT ECHTERNACH ON 25 OCTOBER) WHETHER ANY GOVERNMENT OTHER THAN BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND FRANCE HAD ANY PROPOSALS TO MAKE ON THE MATTER OF THE SEAT, THERE HAD BEEN NO REPLY. HE WENT ON THE STATE THAT FRANCE SOUGHT TO FIX THE SEAT OF ALL THE INSTITUTIONS AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE RECOGNITION OF STRASBOURG AS THE SEAT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND, EVENTUALLY, OF ALL THE OTHER PARLIAMENTARY ORGANISATIONS. STRASBOURG SHOULD BE THE HOM OF ALL THE PARLIAMENT'S BODIES AND SUBORDINATE BODIES EG ITS SECRETARIAT, ITS PLENARY SESSIONS, ITS COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND ITS POLITICAL GROUPS. THE FRENCH OBJECTIVE WAS TO ESTABLISH STRASBOURG AS THE PARLIAMENTARY CAPITAL, WITH BRUSSELS AS THE EXECUTIVE CAPITAL AND LUXEMBOURG AS THE JUDICIAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL OF THE COMMUNITIES. ON

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TIMING, HE HOPED THAT THEIR WORK MIGHT BE COMPLETED BY THE DECEMBER COUNCIL. AT NOTERDAEME'S (BELGIUM) REQUEST IT WAS AGREED THAT THE FRENCH POSITION SHOULD BE RECORDED AND CIRCULATED.

4. THERE THEN ENSUED A DEBATE REGARDING THE PROPRIETY OF BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND FRANCE CONSTITUTING THEMSELVES AS A SEPARATE STEERING AND DRAFTING GROUP WITHIN THE CONFERENCE. RUGGIERO (ITALY) - SUPPORTED BY RIBERHOLDT (DENMARK) AND RUTTEN - SAID THAT THE ISSUE CONCERNED NOT JUST 3 GOVERNMENTS BUT 9. RIBERHOLDT ADDED THAT A SILENCE AT ECHTERNACH DID NOT MEAN THAT A MEMBER HAD GIVEN UP ITS RIGHT TO SUGGEST SOLUTIONS OUTSIDE THE 3 STATES AND IF A MEMBER DID NOT PROPOSE ITSELF AS A NEW CANDIDATE FOR A SEAT, IT DID NOT IMPLY A LACK OF VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT. IT MIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, WISH TO SEE ALL THE INSTITUTIONS LOCATED IN ONE PLACE. THE IDEA OF A 3-POWER STEERING GROUP WAS UNACCEPTABLE. RUTTEN SAID THAT WHAT WAS AT STAKE WAS NOT MERELY GEOGRAPHY BUT THE GOOD FUNCTIONING OF THE INSTITUTIONS, AND ALL MEMBER STATES HAD VIEWS ON THAT. REPLYING, DE NANTEUIL SAID THAT VIEWS OF THE 3 MEMBER STATES INVOLVED COULD ENLIGHTEN THE CONFERENCE DEBATE. WAS WAS UNDER DISCUSSION WAS A REDISTRIBUTION OF EXISTING SEATS AND THREE MEMBER STATES WERE THE CURRENT HOLDERS OF THESE SEATS. FRANCOIS PONCET HAD UNDERSTOOD FROM THE SILENCE AT ECHTERNACH THAT NO OTHER MEMBER STATE WAS GOING TO ASK TO HOST AN INSTITUTION. RIBERHOLDT RETORTED THAT THE CONFERENCE WAS NOT LIMITED TO A DISCUSSION OF THE REDISTRIBUTION OF CARDS AMONGST EXISTING PLAYERS. THE CONFERENCE SHOULD TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THE QUESTION OF WHETHER A CARVE-UP BETWEEN THE 3 MEMBERS WOULD SUIT THE 9. ALL MEMBER STATES WOULD HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE RESULTS. THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS, WHETHER FOR THE COUNCIL, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OR ANY OTHER INSTITUTION, WERE VERY DISRUPTIVE. NOTERDAEME UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PROJECTED CONFABULATION BETWEEN THE 3 MEMBER STATES WAS NOT CONCEIVED AS A BYPASSING OF THE CONFERENCE BUT AS A MEANS OF PROVIDING IT WITH A SOLUTION AND WOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF IT.

5. ON TIMING, RUTTEN STRESSED THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD AVOID IMPOSING A SOLUTION ON THE INSTITUTIONS. THEY WOULD NEED TO BE PROPERLY CONSULTED. IT WAS THEREFORE UNLIKELY THAT A CONCLUSION COULD BE REACHED BY DECEMBER; EVEN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HAD CONSIDERED JUNE 1981 AS A REASONABLE TIME FRAME. NOTERDAEME AGREED, BUT DE NANTEUIL PREFERRED TO REMAIN OPTIMISTIC ABOUT DECEMBER. I ASKED RUTTEN WHETHER HE WAS SPEAKING PURELY PERSONALLY AND WHETHER HE ENVISAGED A FORMAL PROCESS OF CONSULTATION. RUTTEN SAID HE WAS SPEAKING PERSONALLY BUT EXPECTED HIS GOVERNMENT TO AGREE WITH HIM WHEN HE SAID THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY THE CONFERENCE SHOULD

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NOT THEN BE BITTERLY CONTESTED BY THE INSTITUTIONS THEMSELVES. RUGGIERO ADDED THAT WHILE INFORMAL CONSULTATION WAS NECESSARY, FORMAL CONSULTATION SHOULD BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS.

6. IT WAS ALSO AGREED, (WITH SOME SLIGHT HESITATION ON THE PART OF FRANCE) THAT THE GREEKS WOULD BE INVITED TO ALL MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE TAKING PLACE BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. THE PRESIDENCY ALSO CONFIRMED THAT ONLY THE SEAT OF THE COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS WAS TO BE DISCUSSED, NOT THE LOCATION OF SUBORDINATE BODIES.

7. RUTTEN REQUESTED THAT MEMBER STATES, IN MAKING PROPOSALS, SHOULD INCLUDE THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS THEREOF AND SUGGESTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT IF THE PARLIAMENT WERE TO BE LOCATED PERMANENTLY IN STRASBOURG A WHOLE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSTRUCTED FOR THEM THERE. HE WONDERED HOW THIS WOULD BE PAID FOR. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE FINANCING OF THE BUILDINGS IN BRUSSELS HAD BEEN PREMISED ON THE INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED BEING THERE ONLY PROVISIONALLY, AND THAT, IN FIXING THE SEATS OF THE INSTITUTIONS, NEW METHODS FOR FINANCING RELATED CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION MIGHT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED.

8. IN CONCLUSION, THE PRESIDENCY SAID THAT THE NEXT MEETING WOULD TAKE PLACE IN MID-NOVEMBER WHEN THE PROBLEM WOULD BE AIRED IN DETAIL. SPEAKING FOR LUXEMBOURG, DONDELINGER SAID THAT HE HAD TAKEN NOTE OF THE FRENCH POINT OF VIEW AND WOULD PUT FORWARD HIS OWN GOVERNMENT'S IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

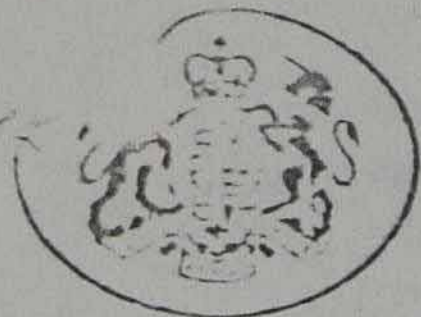
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Mr Henny
Mr Elliott, Cabinet Office
Mr Gove, UKIP EC Office

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THE PRIME MINISTER

Seat of the European Parliament

1. OD(E) Ministers have agreed to a proposed policy towards the location of the European Parliament. This is that the UK's interests are best served by taking no initiative ourselves. The agreement of all Member States is required before a decision can be taken and France and Luxembourg in particular have strong interests at stake. Until Member States are forced to consider the issue we should continue to avoid taking up a position; but our longer term aim, which we should not reveal, should be to see the Parliament located in Brussels to eliminate the waste of money and inefficiency caused by the present pattern of working in three places.

2. Ministers have further agreed that in discussion we should continue to maintain the view that the decision on the permanent seat is for the Member States, not the European Parliament, to take. But, until that permanent seat is fixed, we should take the line that we have no objection to the Parliament continuing the established practice of choosing itself which plenary session to hold in Luxembourg and which in Strasbourg.

3. I should be grateful to know if you are content with this proposed policy. The subject may come up in the margins of the European Council.

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(CARRINGTON)	hs De

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

10 April 1980

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