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NOTE OF DISCUSSION DURING THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL DINNER FOR HEADS OF GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION AT THE PALAZZO BARBERINI ON FRIDAY 25 MARCH 1977

Community Representation at the Downing Street Summit

*[Handwritten signature]*  
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In an account of what he described as a "long and ridiculous argument" about Community representation at the Downing Street Summit, the Prime Minister said that both the Belgian and Dutch Prime Ministers had taken extreme positions. M. Tindemans had been slightly more extreme than Mr. den Uyl. Chancellor Schmidt had been "on a white charger" repeating several times that he wished to maintain his right to meet whom-ever he wished, whenever and wherever he wished.

The Prime Minister said that he had himself sided with President Giscard's arguments, by describing the origin of the Economic Summits. He had made it clear that there was no question of a vendetta against the Commission, and that the objections which had been raised on this occasion about the Commission's attendance had also been raised on every previous occasion. The meetings had started with four at Helsinki, but the Italians had first been added and then the Canadians. The main objection to adding the Commission was that further additions were likely to destroy the informality of these meetings. President Giscard had said that, with enlargement, he was becoming less enamoured of these Conferences. If the view was taken that the Commission had to attend, as of right, he would not himself go. President Giscard had then suggested that the President of the Council should be present, and not the President of the Commission, and had developed his argument on familiar lines. He had then suggested that Foreign Ministers could study the question further but that Mr. Callaghan, who could attend in his double capacity as Prime Minister and as President of the Council, could perhaps be accompanied by the President of the Commission so that the latter could express an opinion on Community matters. The Prime Minister had then argued that this would be an undignified role for Mr. Jenkins, and that the Heads of Government should try to find a satisfactory formula. The Prime Minister commented that he was the only one present at the Dinner who did not lose his temper (though he later commented that Mr. Cosgrave had not been ill-tempered).

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/Chancellor Schmidt

Chancellor Schmidt then said that he could accept what he described as "the Giscard formula", which President Giscard then disavowed. At this point Mr. Jenkins had made a helpful intervention and said that he recognised that there were certain political items for discussion at the Downing Street Conference at which he could not be present, and that this might apply to possibly more than one session of the Conference.

M. Tindemans had then made an impassioned oration, saying that he could not possibly be represented at the Conference by Mr. Callaghan! The Prime Minister then read out a possible formula. It was later agreed that the Prime Minister would call on President Giscard on the following morning to get his agreement to a precise formula for further discussion at the European Council on 26 March.



26 March 1977

Distribution

Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary

