

PRIME MINISTER

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY: UK PRESIDENCY

The attached letter gives the Foreign Office's advice on your contacts with other EC Heads of Government in the run up to 'our' European Council in December. Their plans are clearly too ambitious and would involve you seeing every EC Head of Government, either home or away, in the three months before the Council.

I think we want to get away from the notion that the President of the European Community automatically has to have bilateral meetings with every one of the other eleven Heads of Government in the run up to a European Council, even if there is no really burning issue on the agenda. It is in danger of becoming a routine: and of course the smaller ones love it.

Anyway, the basic task of travelling round to canvass views and promote solutions belongs properly to the Foreign Secretary. You should do only the most important.

You have already agreed to a bilateral Summit with Chancellor Kohl in September; and we shall be due for another Anglo-French Summit anyway in November. This will take care of the two principal Heads of Government.

You ought to see Delors as President of the Commission shortly before the European Council. But he can come to London.

The Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, Portuguese, Danes, Irish and Luxembourgers should be covered by the Foreign Secretary travelling round capitals.

The only question mark is over Lubbers and Martens. You had them both over to Chequers early last year. Both have invited you back, but you have been unable to go. There is a case for a brief visit to The Hague and Brussels, covering both in one day. But in that case the Italians and Spanish will probably be miffed.

My recommendation is that at this stage anyway we should tell the Foreign Office that you intend to leave most of the travelling to the Foreign Secretary, and your only firm plans will be to attend the Anglo-French and Anglo-German Summits and have Delors here. But we might have to revise this nearer the time if some exceptionally difficult item seems likely to dominate the December Council, on which you will need personally to obtain the support of fellow EC Heads of Government.

Agree?

Yes not

CDP

Charles Powell

3 January 1986

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

20 December 1985

Dear Charles,

European Community: UK Presidency

In your letter of 11 December you asked for advice about contacts with other EC Heads of Government next autumn, particularly in the run-up to the European Council.

It is well established practice that the President of the European Council (including President Mitterrand during the French Presidency) sees the other members of the European Council including Delors during the preparatory weeks. Obviously it is not possible at this stage to forecast the main subjects for discussion next December. We shall be aiming to get away from detailed negotiation and revert to the original concept of European Council meetings. It is certainly the Foreign Secretary's view that we should seek to simplify the proceedings and reduce paper to a minimum. But we shall aim to use the European Council to further important objectives (eg on the internal market). In any event all the other Heads of Government will expect to have an opportunity to meet the Prime Minister at some point in the three months before the European Council.

We need to use the regular pattern of bilateral summits in such a way as to reduce the burden on the Prime Minister, in particular as regards foreign travel. The autumn summit with Chancellor Kohl has already been fixed for September in Germany. Nearer the time of the European Council, the Foreign Secretary might visit Bonn to see Chancellor Kohl on the Prime Minister's behalf. President Mitterrand will not be able to fix a date for the Prime Minister to visit France until after the elections on 16 March. We should aim for the last two weeks of November. This will enable the Prime Minister also to meet the new French Prime Minister if, as is probable, there is a change after the French elections.

The Prime Minister will be seeing Signor Craxi in Florence on 12 March. He could, therefore, be invited to London - perhaps in mid-November. An Anglo/Irish summit meeting may well need to be scheduled during the autumn anyway, though details of timing and location obviously can not be settled at this remove. In the case of Spain Senor Gonzales' invitation to the Prime Minister to visit

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Spain, repeated during Sir Geoffrey's recent visit to Madrid, is a complicating factor. It may be difficult to insist on Gonzales coming here. In any event we should ensure that any meeting with him is set firmly in the context of our Presidency.

M. Martens could be invited here. He has however been to Chequers this year and has not received a return visit. The Prime Minister may like to consider making a short visit to Brussels fairly close to the European Council.

Mr Lubbers will of course be President of the European Council during the first half of 1986. He may well himself wish to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister next June, as part of his preparations for the European Council in The Hague on 26-27 June. Such a meeting would in any event be most useful, in the Presidency handover context. As regards preparations for our own European Council, the Prime Minister could either invite Lubbers to London, or seek to combine a visit to The Hague in late November with a visit to Brussels.

For M. Delors and the other Heads of Government it would be reasonable to think in terms of inviting them to London, limiting their visits to a meal preceded by an hour or so of formal talks. This would produce the following rough schedule:

Early September to
10 November

Kohl - summit in Bonn.
Schluter, Santer, Papandreou,
Cavaco Silva, Fitzgerald,
Craxi - all in London.
Gonzales ?London.

Last 3 weeks of
November

Mitterrand - summit in Paris;
further contact with Kohl.
Delors (London). Lubbers and
Martens (Brussels and The Hague).

If the Prime Minister agrees to this general plan, perhaps you could let me know your preferences about dates.

Yours ever,
Colin Budd

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