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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

25 February 1986

*Dear Charles,*London European Council

Thank you for your letter of 17 February. To take your points in order: *at 11ap*

(i) Timing

Subject to the Prime Minister's views, we think it should be feasible to confine the main sessions of the European Council to the afternoon of 5 December and the morning of 6 December, plus the informal discussion between heads of government before or after dinner. This would be in keeping with the general attempt we shall be making to simplify the agenda, make the proceedings more businesslike and, above all, avoid lengthy discussion of unnecessarily elaborate draft conclusions. Furthermore, the Prime Minister's lunch on the second day would be held in a room in the Conference Centre where discreet interpretation facilities can be provided. If absolutely necessary, therefore, discussion could continue through that lunch. We suggest that we should plan on that basis, but that we should not rule out the possibility that we might need to add a short session (say from 11.00 am) on the morning of the first day if, nearer the time, it was apparent that there are more matters to be dealt with than could be discussed in the time available.

(ii) The Prime Minister's Dinner

We have given thought to alternative venues for the Prime Minister's dinner. But we thought that the other heads of government would appreciate being entertained at No 10; and that it would be convenient also in terms of the informal discussion before or after dinner. Should the Prime Minister wish to consider other options, we will of course submit recommendations.

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(iii) Afternoon of 5 December

The reason for proposing informal discussion over drinks before or, alternatively, after dinner was that we understood the Prime Minister's view to be that general discussion is very difficult to sustain during dinner. Should she prefer, nevertheless, to hold it over dinner, we could adjust timings accordingly.

(iv) Family Photograph

On reflection we think that the best place for the family photograph might be in No 10 Downing Street, if the Prime Minister agrees to hold her dinner there, when the guests have arrived.

Yours ever,

Len Appleyard

(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary

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EURO POL
London Council Meeting

