



PM/82/103

PRIME MINISTERPrime Minister

Yes - however should
be first to
raise the
reappointment
not

Prime Minister
Agree that we should not
attempt to block Thorn's
appointment?

A. J. C. $\frac{23}{11}$

Reappointment of M. Thorn

1. Commissioners are appointed for four years but the appointments from within the Commission of the President and the Vice Presidents are for two years. Gaston Thorn has now nearly completed his initial two-year term as President. It is normally Community practice for this to be renewed for a further two years, and the Presidency have suggested that this should be done as an 'A' point - that is to say without discussion - at the Foreign Affairs Council on 13/14 Decmeber.
2. Thorn's performance, both from the UK and the Community points of view, has been patchy and at times inadequate. He is erratic, varies what he says according to whom he is speaking to, is over-influenced by the French, and more inclined to rhetoric than action. But he has also, on important occasions, done his best to be helpful. The Commission's paper on the UK budget problem for 1983 and later, for example, reflects Thorn's ideas and could have been much worse from our point of view. He was also generally helpful over implementation of the agreement on 1982 refunds.
3. Although Thorn's reappointment formally requires the unanimous agreement of member governments, it would be unprecedented for a member government to decline to give its approval. Nor do I think there is anything to be gained from attempting to block his reappointment. We could expect little or no support from the other Member States who would see our action as small-minded and vindictive. If we tried and failed, we should have antagonised Thorn and no doubt

/some of



some of the other member governments, to no purpose. This would hardly help us to achieve our objectives on the UK budget problem or in the Community generally. Even if we succeeded, the most likely successor would be Davignon, who would undoubtedly be more efficient but who would be little better inclined to take account of our interests.

4. On balance, therefore, I recommend that we should agree to Thorn's reappointment, despite his undoubted shortcomings.

5. I am copying this minute to Geoffrey Howe and to Peter Walker.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'FP', written in a cursive style.

(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
23 November 1982

EUROPEAN POLICY

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JP



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 November 1982

REAPPOINTMENT OF M. THORN

The Prime Minister has seen the minute of 23 November by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on the above subject. Mrs. Thatcher agrees that we should not attempt to block M. Thorn's reappointment but has commented that we should not be the first to raise this question.

I am copying this letter to John Kerr (HM Treasury), Robert Lawson (MAFF) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

E. I. COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

By

Euro Pd



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 June 1982

[Handwritten mark]

Prime Minister

MR 25/6.

Dear John,

Presidency of the Commission

Thank you for your letter of 17 June confirming the Prime Minister's agreement to the line we proposed on the question of M Thorn's reappointment.

I attach a short brief for the European Council. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject, we have thought it best not to circulate the brief in the normal way, nor to list it in the Index of Briefs.

Yours ever,

[Handwritten signature]

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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22 JUNE 1982

EUROPEAN COUNCIL, BRUSSELS

28/29 JUNE 1982

PRESIDENCY OF THE COMMISSION

Brief by Foreign and Commonwealth Office

OBJECTIVE

1. If this question is raised, to have left open until the December European Council the question of M Thorn's re-appointment as President of the Commission.

POINTS TO MAKE

2. No need to take a decision at this meeting. Practice in the past has been to hold over such decisions until later in the year - eg Ortoli re-appointed on 19 December 1974, Jenkins on 19 December 1978. December meeting of European Council would be more appropriate.

BACKGROUND

3. Commissioners are appointed for 4 years, but the President and Vice-Presidents are chosen for only 2 years at a time. M Thorn's first 2 years will be up at the end of this year. It is possible, although we have no indication of it, that the Belgian Presidency may seek, at the European Council, a quick decision to re-appoint him.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

22 June 1982

23 JUN 1982





Ans to [unclear]

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

17 June, 1982.

Presidency of the Commission

Thank you for your letter of 14 June. The Prime Minister agrees with the line which you propose should be taken in respect of any move to re-appoint M. Thorn as President of the Commission. I take it that this line will be reflected in the briefs which you are preparing for the European Council.

A. J. COLES

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F.N. Richards, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 June, 1982

Prime Minister

Content with this approach?

Dear John,

Yes no

A.S.C. 16/6

Presidency of the Commission

I think the Prime Minister should be aware, before the meeting of the European Council on 28-29 June, of the position over the Presidency of the Commission. Commissioners are appointed for 4 years, but the President and Vice-Presidents are chosen for only 2 years at a time. M. Thorn's first 2 years will be up at the end of this year.

It has been the practice on the last two occasions (M. Ortoli and Mr Jenkins) to reappoint Presidents of the Commission for a second two year term and Thorn will no doubt be looking for that. The decision is one for the Member States to take by consensus. It is possible, although we have had no indication of it, that the Belgian Presidency may seek, at the European Council, a quick decision to reappoint him.

If the Belgian Prime Minister does raise the subject we think that the Prime Minister would be well-advised to take the line that there is no need to take a decision at this meeting. She could point out that the decisions to re-appoint Ortoli and Jenkins were taken in 19/12/74 and 19/12/78. She might suggest that the matter be settled at the December meeting of the European Council.

Thorn has not been a good President and has been unhelpful to us. He is much more likely to be accommodating over the next few months if the question of his reappointment is left open. Whatever our intentions in November, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is inclined to think that we should not agree to give M. Thorn another term of office, it is important that no hint of our attitude is given until nearer the time.

Yours ever

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street

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