

Subject: matters

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 July 1984

PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Taoiseach telephoned the Prime Minister at 1020 this morning to discuss the Presidency of the EC Commission.

Dr. FitzGerald said that it seemed virtually certain that the Germans would not put up an candidate for the Presidency. The French were likely to put forward the names of Delors and Cheysson. Other names on the table would be Davignon, Andriessen and Christophersen. The Prime Minister said that she was astonished at the Germans for not putting up a candidate of their own. The French had had the Presidency quite recently. The claims of others could not just be ignored. Had Dr. FitzGerald checked that the Germans were really not going to put up a candidate? Dr. FitzGerald said that he had first had the news from Dumas but had not accepted this as sufficient evidence. He had therefore spoken to Genscher who had confirmed that Germany would very probably not put forward a candidate, though a decision would be deferred until Kohl's return. However surprising this might seem, there seemed no option but to accept it as a fact.

The Prime Minister said that, in that case, she felt that Davignon was by far the most effective candidate. It would not be right to overlook someone of his ability who had already done such good service to the Community. Dr. FitzGerald said that he had heard - though indirectly - that the Germans would not accept Davignon. The Prime Minister said she thought this was because of some of the decisions he had taken on steel. We had not liked all his decisions either. But this did not mean that we would overlook his ability on those grounds. She very much hoped that nothing had been arranged between the French and Germans. Dr. FitzGerald said that he thought the French probably had got an assurance of German support, though he could not be sure about this.

/The Prime Minister

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The Prime Minister said that Andriessen was also a strong candidate, though Davignon was better still. If at the end of the day we had to have a French candidate, Delors would be good, though she was surprised that he could be spared. But Cheysson would not do at all. Leadership was not his forte: Dr. FitzGerald knew that as well as she did. Dr. FitzGerald said that he did not disagree, but as President he had, of course, to reserve judgement. The Prime Minister repeated that Cheysson was positively not the man. She also wished to leave Dr. FitzGerald in no doubt that it would not be good for Europe if the French and Germans appeared to be ganging up to impose a candidate of their choice.

Dr. FitzGerald commented that it was rather strange that the Benelux countries had not been able to agree on a single candidate. The fact that the Dutch had put up Andriessen seemed to suggest that they might have reservations about Davignon. He understood, however, that they were meeting today to try to settle on a single candidate. The Prime Minister repeated that she could agree to Andriessen but Davignon was better.

Dr. FitzGerald then raised the question of the two ad hoc committees established at Fontainebleau. He was sceptical whether they would achieve a great deal. He thought the Committee on Institutional Affairs should be at political level and he intended to appoint Senator Dooge as the Irish representative. The Germans would be nominating a political State Secretary. The Prime Minister agreed that this Committee should have political representation. She thought that Malcolm Rifkind would be a very good representative for the United Kingdom. The Committee on "A People's Europe" was more appropriate for officials. Dr. FitzGerald said that its agenda was a curious mixture of political and technical subjects. Maybe the answer was to refer the more political items to the Committee on Institutional Affairs. The Prime Minister said that she had an open mind on this but that our representative would be David Williamson who would do it very well.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Peretz (HM Treasury) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. POWELL)

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.