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CHRISTOPHER TUGENDHAT

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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31 July 1984

Prime Minister ②
I think he is very optimistic in suggesting that we might be able to get our hands on agriculture.
CDP 2/8
[reply commissioned]

Dear Prime Minister

Now that the future Presidency of the Commission has been settled, I thought it might be helpful to let you have some reflections that you might wish to take into account when considering who the British Commissioners should be.

My first point concerns status. The new Commission will probably contain at least four ex-finance ministers: Delors and Christophersen, who have already been named, and De Clercq and Andriessen who are expected to be. This is the criterion by which the British Commissioners, and notably the senior British Commissioner who may expect to be one of the Commission's Vice-Presidents, will be judged: the extent to which they measure up to this level of experience will play a significant part in deciding what portfolios they secure.

As so many Members of the present Commission are leaving, I imagine Delors will wish - and his colleagues insist - on changing the nationality of the holders of the various portfolios. This is likely to be particularly true of those portfolios which have remained in the same hands for more than the lifetime of one Commission. As you know, the allocation is made by the Commission itself on a proposal from the President and cannot be pre-arranged, though you will no doubt make your preferences known. It is important therefore that both British Commissioners, but especially the potential Vice-President, should be capable of doing a variety of jobs. But if you have a preference for a particular portfolio, the British candidate should be personally particularly suited to it.

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP

.../...

I will not burden you here with all the various arguments for and against different portfolios. My own experience has confirmed my view that the ones which count most are those in respect of which there is a clear Community policy, and a specific Commission competence for executing it, not least insofar as its execution involves the expenditure of Community money. On this basis, the portfolios which seem to me the most interesting, apart from my own, are Agriculture, External Relations, Development, Regional and Social Affairs, Competition, the Internal Market, and, on a smaller scale, Fish.

It is by no means certain however that the actual content of portfolios in the next Commission will be the same. Certain ideas are afoot, for example, regarding the creation of a specific portfolio for Trade in Services, in which there would be an obvious British interest. It is likely in any event that Mr. Davignon's current empire of Industry and Energy will be broken up. A portfolio linking the Internal Market to Competition is a possibility and one which would offer considerable opportunities.

Agriculture and Development are two portfolios which will undoubtedly remain the same as they are at present, and I would like to say a word about both.

If a really well-qualified British candidate for Agriculture was available, I believe it could be obtained, but his qualifications would have to be beyond question. Although there will be a widespread reluctance to allow a Briton to take on Agriculture, our case would be strong if we no longer had the Budget and cannot go for External Relations, where there is a British Director-General, or Economic and Monetary Affairs, because of the EMS. In the past, Agriculture has always gone to a Commissioner from a smaller country. This time however I think the Danish, Dutch and Belgian Commissioners will all want something else. I do not see it being given to an Irishman or a Greek, but the Italians may mount a strong challenge and it would not be in our interest for them to succeed.

Development is less attractive than agriculture but, as you know, is a field in which the Commission plays an important rôle. Real interests are involved in the way policy is conducted towards the developing countries in general and those of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in particular. In addition, the way in which contracts are arranged and signed is a matter of acute interest to the relevant British industrial and commercial interests.

There is one final point I should like to make. Whatever the political affiliation of the second British Commissioner may be, it is absolutely essential that he should be prepared to work closely with his colleague in all matters directly affecting the British interest. The same applies to their Cabinets.

With best wishes
Yours ever
Chris Patten

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
10 Downing Street

GB - LONDON SW1

7/8

cc HMT
MAFF
DTI
Energy
FCO.

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 August 1984

Thank you for your letter of 31 July about the next European Commission and the portfolios we might go for. I found this most interesting and valuable, and will have your reflections very much in mind.

(SD) M. THATCHER.

Christopher Tugendhat, Esq.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 August 1984

CR

Be sym for PM's sig.

DMB 7/8

Dear David,

EC Commission: Portfolios

In his letter of 2 August enclosing a letter to the Prime Minister from Christopher Tugendhat, Charles Powell asked for a draft reply. I enclose one which follows his advice: no more than a friendly acknowledgement. Because it is not substantive we have not cleared it with other Departments.

Incidentally, Sir Geoffrey Howe, who saw Charles Powell's letter before his departure, agreed that the only surprise in Mr Tugendhat's letter as far as he was concerned was the suggestion that we had a serious chance of obtaining the Agriculture portfolio.

I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure to David Peretz (HM Treasury), Ivor Llewelyn (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), Callum McCarthy (Department of Trade and Industry), and Michael Reidy (Department of Energy).

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

David Barclay Esq
10 Downing Street

DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: ~~minute~~/letter/~~telegram~~/~~despatch~~/~~note~~

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

TO:

Mr Christopher Tugendhat
Vice-President of the Commission
of the European Communities
rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Your Reference

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

SUBJECT:

Thank you for your letter of 31 July about the next European Commission and the portfolios we might go for. I found this most interesting and valuable, and will have your reflections very much in mind.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

EURO Pol: Appt of Pres Pt 2

File

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 August 1984

EC COMMISSION: PORTFOLIOS

I enclose a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from Christopher Tugendhat containing his thoughts on the portfolios which we should go for in the next Commission. I think I am right in saying that the only surprise in it is the suggestion that the UK has a serious chance of obtaining the agricultural portfolio.

BFI

I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply. I do not think, at this stage, that we need do more than thank Christopher Tugendhat for his advice and say that the Prime Minister will have this very much in mind while considering candidates for the British Commissioners posts and, later on, in deciding which portfolios we ought to bid for.

I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure to David Peretz (H.M. Treasury), Ivor Llewelyn (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), Callum McCarthy (Department of Trade and Industry), and Michael Reidy (Department of Energy).

CHARLES POWELL

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HH

From the Minister's Private Office

Colin Budd Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Downing Street
London SW1

9 August 1984

Dear Colin,

PR 9/10

EC COMMISSION: PORTFOLIOS

My Minister has read with interest the letter from Mr Christopher Tugendhat which was attached to Charles Powell's letter to you of 2nd August.

He very much agrees that we ought not to rule out altogether the possibility of obtaining the agriculture portfolio. It is not strictly correct to say that this has always been occupied by one of the smaller countries since there was an Italian Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr Scarascia-Mugnozza, although only for a relatively short period. More importantly, it seems likely that the Italians will make a strong bid again this time and in Signor Natali they have a strong candidate. It would be disastrous if this were to happen. It does not seem likely that the Germans will come up with a suitable candidate and clearly the French are ruled out so long as they provide the Director General. The Danes have had their turn and our information is that Mr Andriessen is not particularly seeking the agriculture portfolio.

It is clearly highly desirable that we should secure one of the principal portfolios for the UK vice president. Mr Jopling believes that Sir Henry Plumb would be an extremely strong candidate given his background as past President of the NFU and COPA as well as his role in the European Parliament. We should be able to count on support from other northern countries and even from the French if we put forward the right man.

I am sending copies of this letter to Charles Powell, (No. 10) David Peretz, (HM Treasury) Callum McCarthy (DTI) and Michael Reidy (Department of Energy).

Yours ever,

David Harbourne

DAVID HARBOURNE

EUKs Pol: Appt. of Res
Pt 2