



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 May 1984

Prime Minister

To use

JH  
25/5President Mitterrand's Ideas on Community Institutions

In an address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg this morning President Mitterrand gave some guarded support to the European Parliament's proposed Treaty on European Union. That part of his speech was summarised in the background note which we sent you earlier, for the Prime Minister's use in Question Time. I enclose a copy.

President Mitterrand is looking for initiatives for the European Council at Fontainebleau. There have been recent indications that the French may be planning to suggest more frequent recourse to majority voting. They have also referred to an idea, which they have canvassed in the past, for a small permanent Secretariat to prepare meetings of the European Council.

We have already suggested the line we might take on President Mitterrand's remarks to the European Parliament. For tactical reason, we doubt whether we should be too dismissive. We shall however point out in briefing that President Mitterrand stopped a long way short of any specific endorsement of the federalist proposals in the Parliament's draft Treaty and there is no likelihood of the French supporting the proposals substantially to enhance the power of the Parliament or to abolish use of the veto.

In a recent interview, President Mitterrand called for majority voting to be used for most decisions in the Community. M Dumas has made similar remarks (Paris telno 646, copy enclosed). French thinking on this score will probably not give us major problems. In a recent press briefing, M Dumas said that 'wherever possible, and wherever it is so laid down in the Treaty' the Council should return to the majority vote. This is perfectly consistent with our own policy. We are prepared to support use of the Treaty provisions on voting subject to a Member

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State continuing to be able to have a majority vote deferred where it considers its very important interests to be involved. It is not true to suggest that decision-making has in practice been much impaired by Member States invoking the Luxembourg compromise.

The idea of a small permanent Secretariat to prepare the work of the European Council will need very careful consideration. On the face of it, it is difficult to see what such a body could do that is not done already by the Council Secretariat, by Coreper or by the Foreign Affairs Council. Much would depend upon how formal and permanent a body the French have in mind.

In the time available Sir Geoffrey Howe has not seen this letter. I shall be showing him a copy as part of his briefing for this weekend's informal meeting of EC Foreign Ministers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R B Bone', with a flourish at the end.

(R B Bone)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

29 May 1984

President Mitterrand's Ideas on Community  
Institutions

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The Prime Minister has noted the contents  
of your letter of 24 May.

A. J. COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME: 24 MAY

PRESIDENT MITTERRAND'S SPEECH ON EUROPEAN UNION

Line to Take

I have seen reports of President Mitterrand's speech. The Community as a whole has already said that it will review the need for a new treaty in 1988. We shall look carefully at what President Mitterrand has said. He made clear that the existing treaties should not be replaced. We believe those treaties already provide plenty of scope for the further development of the Community. Our first task is to complete the negotiations initiated at Stuttgart last year.

BACKGROUND

In a speech to the European Parliament this morning (24 May), President Mitterrand referred to the Parliament's recent adoption of a draft treaty of European union (the Spinelli proposal). President Mitterrand said that those, like himself, who wanted this development would examine the draft treaty carefully. Each situation required a new treaty. The new treaty should not replace the existing ones but should serve as an extension. For an undertaking on this scale, France was ready to help. "France is prepared to examine and defend this approach". President Mitterrand suggested that preparatory talks be held among the Member States. The Stuttgart Declaration should serve as a basis as well as the draft treaty proposed by the Parliament.

Under the Solemn Declaration (Genscher/Colombo) signed in June 1983, the Community is already committed to examining the need for a new treaty within five years of the Declaration's signature, ie by June 1988. We have consistently maintained that, while the European Parliament is entitled to express its views, the Community should consider implementing the existing Treaties before we start drafting a new one.

For tactical reasons we do not wish to dismiss President Mitterrand's proposal. But we will need to make clear that the Community's first task is to complete the undertakings it made at Stuttgart.

The French are also believed to be thinking about an initiative to promote greater use of majority voting within the Council of Ministers. We have always said that we favour majority voting where the Treaties so provide, subject to a Member State continuing to be able to have a majority vote deferred where it considers its very important interests to be involved. We would not accept extension of voting to new areas where unanimity is at present required, but this does not appear to be what the French have in mind.