



FM/84/158

PRIME MINISTER

A People's Europe

1. In view of your interest in the line to be taken in the post-Fontainebleau Committees you may like to see the enclosed note on a proposed UK initiative on frontier facilitation.
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2. The background to this is that it was agreed at OD(E) on 12 September that officials should pursue work on a possible initiative in this field. This note may be suitable for tabling in the Committee on a People's Europe. Some of the proposals may also be suitable for discussion in the Committee on Institutions; this will doubtless become clearer as work in the two Committees gets under way.
3. I am copying this minute to OD(E) colleagues.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
15 October, 1984

Prime Minister (2)

CDP
15/10

PROPOSED UNITED KINGDOM INITIATIVE ON FRONTIER FACILITATION

1. It is proposed that the United Kingdom should put forward a paper in the Committee on People's Europe proposing that the following should be endorsed by the Committee as matters which should be pursued within the appropriate specialist Council and groups, with a view to simplifying frontier procedures and easing the movement of both goods and people across Community frontiers. Some of the measures proposed are already the subject of Community discussion but this need not prevent the United Kingdom raising them again in the context of the ad hoc Committee.

1. Taxes, Customs and Excise duties and other charges levied at the frontier

i. Tax-free allowances for personal travellers can be a significant practical demonstration to the individual citizen of the benefits of the Community, since there are higher allowances for goods bought tax-paid in a member state than for goods bought in other circumstances (ie in a third country or a duty-free shop). Consideration should therefore be given to a substantial increase - eg doubling - in the value of the allowances on goods not subject to limits of quantity, which are bought tax-paid in the Community.

ii. Duty on fuel in vehicles. The imposition of such duties on fuel in the tanks of heavy vehicles crossing frontiers is an irritant and a cause of delay. There should be no restrictions on the amount of fuel in standard vehicle tanks allowed in without extra charges.

iii. Eurocheque Payments Insofar as customs and other charges have to be paid at frontiers, the means of their payment should be as simple as possible. It is proposed that all such charges should be payable by Eurocheque in the currency of the country in which they are payable.

2. Documentation and Checks

The Single Administrative Document (SAD) should make a major contribution to the simplification of frontier procedures. To do so, it must represent a real improvement from the traders' point of view on the documentation currently required. There should be wide consultation of the industry and the form should be tried out in practice before it is finalised.

i. Supplementary documents. The permissible supplementary documents required by member states should be kept to a minimum. Member states should be required to notify the Commission with justification of any extra documents they require.

ii. The collection of statistics adds to the administrative problems of goods traffic across Community frontiers. A group should be set up with the express task of ensuring how current duplication in member states' requirements - eg statistics required both by the exporting and the importing states - could be eliminated.

iii. Computerisation could be an important contribution to simplifying frontier procedures. Some pilot programmes have already been mounted. It should be considered whether further pilot programmes could be initiated, for instance under the European Strategic Programme for Information Technology (ESPRIT).

iv. Differing standards and labelling requirements cause endless problems at frontiers. Work on the harmonisation and mutual recognition of standards is already a Community priority. Consideration should also be given to moving the enforcement of standards and labelling requirements for imported Community goods from the frontier to the market place wherever possible.

3. Easing transport restrictions

The Frontier Facilitation Directive already provides for a number of improvements. But other measures should now be examined. Road haulage is in particular subject to delays and problems.

i. Permits It makes a nonsense of the common market to maintain a system of restrictive permits for lorry traffic, and such permits should be phased out as a matter of urgency.

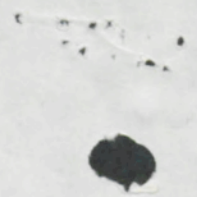
ii. Frontier facilitation should be further improved for lorries. In particular, arrangements should be made so that lorries not selected for full checks are not held up while waiting for the inspection of lorries in front.

4. Easier circulation of people

The recent Community resolution on easing frontier formalities is to be welcomed. Consideration should, however, be given not just to facilitating passage across frontiers, but also to making it easier for Community travellers to benefit, for instance from health insurance arrangements, wherever they may be. The present reciprocal system of health care is cumbersome, and should be simplified. There may also be other areas where there should be similar simplification.

Cabinet Office

1 October 1984



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 October 1984

A PEOPLE'S EUROPE

The Prime Minister has noted your Secretary of State's minute of 15 October with its enclosed paper on a proposed UK initiative on frontier facilitation.

CHARLES POWELL

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.