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Strasbourg/et

cc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

PREPARATIONS FOR STRASBOURG

The Prime Minister has considered your note of 16 November about preparations for Strasbourg. On reflection, the Prime Minister has reached the conclusion that it probably will not be possible to fit in a full OD before Strasbourg. There would be no point in a meeting until after the Foreign Affairs Council on 27/28 November and the Social Affairs Council on 30 November, at which the preparations for the European Council will be completed. But she will now have to be in Brussels on 4 December for the NATO Heads of Government meeting, and the remainder of that week is already very full.

On reflection, the Prime Minister would therefore prefer to have a general discussion in Cabinet on 7 December on the approach which she and the Foreign Secretary will take at the European Council. This would not be a substantive item, but would be raised under EC affairs, and would enable colleagues to raise any points they may wish to make.

If, rather against the odds, President Mitterrand were to respond positively to the Prime Minister's message about the Social Charter, we might have to fit in an ad hoc meeting of Ministers to consider our tactics. The Prime Minister suggests that we cross that bridge when we come to it.

CHARLES POWELL
20 November 1989

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10 DOWNING STREET

Amade

M. speaks -

can we do this

or to send

after her return

in Munich?

a

Ref. A089/3005

MR POWELL

We shall
be at NATO
not

Prime Minister

Agree:

to hold OD on
4 December? This is really

the earliest practicable
date, when we shall know

Preparations for Strasbourg

for sure how the
issues will be presented.

to invite the Ministers listed

In the business note of last week, it was proposed that a meeting of OD should be held at the end of the month to discuss the line to be taken on matters likely to arise at the European Council in Strasbourg, particularly the Social Charter and EMU. I also warned that it might be necessary to hold an earlier meeting to discuss the line to be taken on the Social Charter if a reply was received from President Mitterrand proposing negotiations. The Prime Minister said that she would be prepared to have an earlier meeting of OD covering both the Social Charter and EMU.

2. In practical terms, there does not look to be much to be gained from discussing the approach to Strasbourg until after the agenda is finalised by the Foreign Affairs Council on 27-28 November. On the Social Charter, the Foreign Secretary has agreed that rather than discuss this in OD(E), the Cabinet Office should submit papers to you and that, together with any comments that the Secretary of State for Employment may have, they should be discussed either in the meeting of OD or in a separate meeting chaired by the Prime Minister following a reply from President Mitterrand.

3. Provided that the Prime Minister is prepared to wait until the end of the month for a discussion of the general approach to Strasbourg, all this seems satisfactory. Given that the Foreign Affairs Council is meeting on 27-28 November and there is a meeting of the Social Affairs Council on 30 November which Mr Fowler is attending, it may not be practicable to arrange this OD

meeting until Monday 4 December, but this should still give reasonable time before the European Council on 8-9 November. *December*

4. The remaining issue is the question of those who should be asked to the meeting of OD in addition to its regular members, who are the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Lord Privy Seal. I suggest that we should invite additionally:-

Secretary of State for Employment
Secretary of State for Social Security
Home Secretary
Attorney General and
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Depending on how the Strasbourg agenda develops, one or more of the following may also be needed:

Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Health
Minister of Agriculture

Could you let me know whether the Prime Minister would be content for us to invite additional Ministers to OD on this basis.

R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

16 November 1989