



PM/81/23

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister

You have discussed the issues in this Minute with Lord Carrington on a number of occasions in the past 12 months. Are you content that he should deploy the points in para 3 at Venlo this weekend? No decisions are

Political Co-operation likely to be taken.

Ant 6/5

1. One of the main subjects at the informal meeting of Foreign Ministers at Venlo on 9-10 May will be the development of Political Co-operation. Foreign Ministers will have before them a paper drafted by officials. I expect Herr Genscher to pursue his theme that Europe needs a new political impetus.

2. As you know, I have long held that cooperation among the Ten on foreign policy matters can and should be strengthened. The Community is still far from realising its full potential in foreign affairs. Political Cooperation has been one of the most successful, least criticised and least expensive elements of Europe and we should build on this. I made some suggestions in my speech in Hamburg on 17 November last year.

3. I do not expect that the meeting at Venlo will take any decisions, since it will coincide with the second round of the French Presidential election and M. Francois-Poncet's position will be uncertain. I should nevertheless like to set down what my objectives in this discussion will be. I propose the following:

If we are to  
consult all Ten  
we shall never  
be able to move  
quickly.

a. To seek a strengthened political commitment to consultations among the Ten on foreign policy matters. Political Cooperation is currently based on the Luxembourg (1970) and Copenhagen (1973) Reports. The commitment to Political Cooperation in these is qualified. The French still frequently fail to live up even to the cautious commitment of these Reports. Repeating or strengthening the commitment will make it more difficult for the French or others to ignore

No - easier  
to agree

because it will be irreversible.

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their obligations. The sort of language I would envisage would have no effect on our sovereignty in Foreign Affairs. I would resist any language or procedures which would reduce this.

b. To agree on procedures which would make consultations more rapid and effective. In particular I should like to see a system set up for calling meetings rapidly in an emergency. The Nine's failure to meet until three weeks after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan exposed the weakness of the present system.

c. To agree on the formation of a small support staff for the Presidency. I have in mind a 3-5 man team. I would oppose anything that smacked of a further international bureaucracy. However, if co-operation in foreign policy among the Community countries is to be strengthened, a more solid base is needed than the current arrangements, which are dependent on the government holding the Presidency. It is important that we should have this organisation in place and working before the second round of enlargement takes place. The Presidency's task in a 12 country Community will be all the more important; and the new members of the Community are likely to need more assistance in fulfilling it. There are a number of ways in which a support staff could be set up. I would work for one based on secondment of officers from Foreign Ministries of the Ten. This would avoid the problems of budgets and administration. At least at first it would probably have to be peripatetic, ie moving with the Presidency. But

*The small countries have little to contribute on the Af. Affairs - that is helpful - we can help at our European Council during*



later it might establish a permanent office in Brussels, attached to the Council Secretariat.

- d. To promote greater cooperation in the handling of "security policy", ie politico-military questions. Political Cooperation has traditionally avoided defence questions proper, and it would continue to do so, for obvious and excellent reasons. However, in discussions of the CSCE process, for example, it inevitably deals with some aspects of security matters, and it is artificial to maintain a rigid distinction between foreign policy, where there is vigorous cooperation between the Ten, and security questions, where there is none at all.
- e. To resist any suggestion of giving a treaty basis to Political Cooperation. One of the reasons why Political Cooperation has been successful is that it has developed by consensus and has not been tied to a rigid legal formula. We might, in any case, have parliamentary difficulties in ratification of a treaty. I expect some other partners at least to adopt a similar attitude. Instead we might work for a common Declaration, to be agreed at the European Council under our Presidency in November, which would record the strengthening of Political Cooperation along the lines I have set out.

4. The last two ideas above (greater cooperation over security policy and a new treaty) are among those which were put forward by Herr Genscher in a speech in Stuttgart on 6 January. Herr Genscher's objective is to give a renewed political impetus to Europe. This is welcome, and I have told Herr Genscher so in my recent talks in Bonn. I have, however, stressed that a new treaty of "European Union",



even if it did no more than take note of what already exists, would cause difficulties for the United Kingdom. I have also emphasised that we should prefer this to continue as a German initiative; it would not be helpful for us if it became a joint Franco-German project. If you agree, I shall continue to give broad support to Herr Genscher's aims, while steering him away from a treaty. I believe that the most effective use we can make of Herr Genscher's energies would be to channel them into practical and concrete improvements in the machinery of Political Cooperation.

5. I am copying this minute to our colleagues in OD and to Robert Armstrong.

(CARRINGTON)

6 May 1981

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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OD:- HO  
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L.Pres  
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Trade

*Eno Pd*

8 May, 1981

Political Co-operation

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute to her of 6 May on this subject. She agrees that he should speak at the informal meeting of Foreign Ministers at Venlo along the lines set out in that minute.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

G G H Walden Esq CMG  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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MR. ALEXANDERPolitical Co-operation

In his minute to the Prime Minister of 6th May, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has set down his proposed objectives for the discussion of the development of Political Co-operation at the informal meeting of Foreign Ministers at Venlo on 9th-10th May. The meeting is unlikely to take any decisions; but this will be a good opportunity to work for the strengthening of co-operation among the Ten on foreign policy matters.

2. In particular Lord Carrington proposes that he should seek a stronger political commitment to consultations among the Ten, while resisting any language or procedures which would reduce our national sovereignty in foreign affairs. This is aimed mainly at the French, who pay lip service to political co-operation procedures but too often go their own way when it suits them. In addition, he would seek improved procedures to make consultations more rapid and effective, especially in emergencies. On providing the Presidency with suitable support to improve continuity and help the smaller member states discharge the functions of the Presidency, Lord Carrington envisages the secondment of a few national officials. This task cannot be given to the Council Secretariat since it falls outside the Treaties, but the hope is that in due course some integration will be possible. The Foreign Secretary further suggests relaxation of the artificial distinction at present maintained between foreign policy, where there is active co-operation, and security questions, where there is none. He would resist any proposal to give a more rigid Treaty basis to Political Co-operation but work instead for a common Declaration, incorporating the agreed improvements, which might be adopted at the November European Council under our Presidency.

3. Finally Lord Carrington proposes that he should continue to give broad support to Herr Genscher's aims for imparting a new political impetus to Europe, while steering him away from a formal Treaty requiring ratification by the Parliaments of the Ten. There have been some indications that the



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Germans would be content to see their ideas advanced as a Franco-German initiative, or even taken over by a newly-elected President Giscard. This would not serve our interests, especially during our Presidency. The best way to ensure that it does not happen is to work closely with the Germans and have ideas of our own.

4. Our Presidency will coincide with intensive and difficult negotiations on budget restructuring. At times it may not be easy either to convince our partners that we have the good of the Community as a whole at heart or to persuade the outside world that the Community is other than dangerously divided. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's proposals for a forthcoming United Kingdom attitude over the political development of the Community would, if properly handled, help to offset these negative effects. The Prime Minister may accordingly wish to endorse them.

Robert Armstrong

7th May 1981



LAPOR... ..

SECRETARY...

RECORD NO. ....

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Faint, mostly illegible text, possibly a letter or official communication, containing some words like 'The Government of India' and 'Secretary'.

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