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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

To note.

12 September 1983

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John T. ...

Spinelli Committee: Treaty on European Union

You will wish to be aware that on 13 September, at its session in Strasbourg, the European Parliament will debate and almost certainly adopt a resolution containing the 'principles and guidelines' for a treaty on European Union.

The resolution is the work of Parliament's Institutional Affairs Committee, usually known as the 'Spinelli Committee' after its 'coordinating rapporteur' Altiero Spinelli, the former Italian member of the Commission who, though not himself a member of the Italian Communist Party, is a member of the European Parliament Communist Group. Spinelli is well known for his federalist views. Derek Prag is the EDG spokesman on the Committee. Other EDG Members on the Committee are Christopher Jackson and Stanley Johnson.

The Committee does not expect Member Governments to adopt the Treaty in the immediate future, but it is quite likely that the Parliament will press for its adoption in the context of the review of the Genscher/Colombo Solemn Declaration, which is supposed to take place 'not later than five years from signature' (which took place on 19 July 1983).

The Committee's proposals are less ambitious than had earlier seemed likely and the EDG members of the Committee have worked hard to help bring this about. The emphasis on the 'evolutionary nature' of the unification process and the need for a 'flexible and gradual approach' is welcome. Nevertheless there are numerous points in the draft treaty which we do not find acceptable. These include the provision that a Member State's right to have a majority decision deferred on grounds of 'vital national interest' should be phased out after ten years, and an expanded role for the European Parliament. As we made clear during the negotiation of the review clause of the Solemn Declaration, we are not in any case prepared to commit ourselves to a future treaty on European Union.

Malcolm Rifkind made our views clear to Derek Prag when he saw him on 31 August, and Lady Young took the same line at

/the EDG Group

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the EDG Group meeting in Biarritz on 7/8 September. The EDG are therefore in no doubt that the Government does not favour the report or the resolution. The EDG seem to be divided between the more 'integrationist' members such as Derek Prag, who will probably vote for the resolution, and those who are inclined to share our views and who will probably abstain.

Although we remain opposed to a treaty and dislike many of the Committee's specific proposals, we do not think we need to go further than we have already in being openly negative about the Committee's proposals or in encouraging, and probably failing to get, the EDG to oppose them en bloc. There is no obligation on Member States to pay much attention to the resolution and it is clear that the proposals are not intended for immediate adoption. Our reaction could give them greater authority than they deserve. It is also desirable to avoid unnecessarily antagonising the Parliament, since we shall need its cooperation over our 1982 and 1983 refunds.

In reply to any press enquiries following adoption of the resolution, Ministers have agreed that we should take the line that it is merely an expression of the Parliament's views about the future development of the Community; that Member States are not obliged to follow it; that we do not at present see the need for a new Treaty; and that there are a number of specific proposals in the resolution which are not acceptable to us.

Sir G Howe has not seen these papers: I shall be showing him a copy of this letter on his return. I am also copying this letter to the Private Secretary to Sir Robert Armstrong.

[Handwritten signature]
 (R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
 10 Downing Street

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15 September 1983

SPINELLI COMMITTEE: TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 12 September.

A. J. COLES

R. B. Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.