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cc: Tsy
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From the Private Secretary

14 April 1987

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 13 April about the Turkish application for membership of the European Community. She has asked what is meant by the suggestion that the Community should respond in a 'low key'. She has also commented that the two or three years you suggest it would take for preparation of a Commission Opinion is far too long, even given the excessive bureaucracy of the Commission. Finally, she has commented that she would prefer Turkey to be in the Community, since it is of supreme strategic importance.

I am copying this letter to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

(P.A. BEARPARK)

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 April 1987

*Prime Minister*²

Dear Andy,

Turkish Application for Membership
of the European Community

We understand from Brussels that Mr. Bozer, the Turkish Minister with responsibility for relations with the EC, is likely to bring with him the formal Turkish application to join the Community when he calls on M Tindemans tomorrow.

It has been apparent for some weeks that the Turks were likely to apply once Ozal returned to Ankara. The Community is in no condition to absorb Turkey. But we need to handle the application in a way that protects our interests and promotes Turkey's relations with the West. There has been no formal discussion in the Foreign Affairs Council but most member states believe that the Community should respond in a low key. *What does that mean?* Article 28 of the EC-Turkey Association Agreement envisages a possible Turkish application for membership. Article 237 of the EEC Treaty sets out the procedure for handling an application: it should be referred to the Commission for an Opinion. The Presidency and most other member states will want to follow this course. It would be difficult for the Greeks to impede it - though they may try to do so - as it is a purely procedural step. It does not imply that any view is being taken on the merits of the application.

Preparation of a Commission opinion can be expected to take a long time (two or three years); and the Commission are likely to be extremely cautious in their eventual Opinion both because of the cost to the existing Community and its policies and because of doubts about Turkey's ability to comply with EC Obligations. (Turkish per capita income is much lower than that of Portugal and one seventh that of the Community average.) The Greeks will seek to block progress. The European Parliament will continue its criticisms about human rights. The Germans are extremely concerned about the free movement of labour. No member state is in favour of Turkish membership.

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The line we propose to take on the record in response to press enquiries will be simply to state that the Turkish application should be dealt with in accordance with Article 237 of the Treaty ie reference to the Commission for an Opinion. Unattributably we will refer to the Prime Minister's remarks to the press after the London European Council that the Community has yet to digest Spain and Portugal.

I am copying this letter to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L Parker', with a wavy underline.

(L Parker)
Private Secretary

P A Bearpark Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

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