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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister.

You would not take on this chore on 15 December (Questions + Speech to the Board of Deputies of British Jews) but there is no insuperable obstacle to your doing it on 16 Dec - tho' it might be necessary to suggest that your meeting with the lobby be put back ~~to~~ from 16.00 to 16.30. The duties in Strasbourg are not arduous (see final para of letter). Agree?

I find it rather odd that Lord Carrington - who will be reviewing the whole of the Presidency - should speak the day before you. What will he say about the European Council? It would be more natural if he spoke on 17 December, tho' this would mean he would miss Cabinet. You may like to have a word with him.

Phyllis 4.9.87

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 September 1981

Dear Michael,

There is no point in my speaking the day after Lord C. There will be nothing more to say. ref

European Parliament: Attendance by President of the European Council

Clive Whitmore wrote to Brian Fall on 31 July confirming the Prime Minister's readiness, subject to her Parliamentary and other domestic duties at the time, to report to the European Parliament on the November European Council.

We would now like, if possible, to take our planning for this event a stage further. The Secretary of State believes that there is some urgency about this. Our chances of setting up the occasion in a way which would maximise its impact while minimising the demands on the Prime Minister will be much greater if we make some precise proposals ourselves rather than find ourselves having to resist what might be somewhat fanciful and demanding suggestions from the Parliament. Mr Hurd will be lunching with the President of the European Parliament, Madame Veil, on 16 September; and she has now also sent the Secretary of State a message that she would like a meeting with him in the course of September (in fact the only possible day would be 10 September). We should be most surprised if Mme Veil does not at one or both of these occasions raise again the question of the Prime Minister's attendance at the December session of the European Parliament and we should like to be ready with some proposals to put to her.

The December plenary session of the European Parliament runs from 14-18 December, with 15, 16 and 17 December being the only realistic dates to consider for any appearance by a member of the Council (the Monday of a Parliamentary week is preparatory and by the Friday MEPs are drifting away). An important consideration will be whether or not the Prime Minister wishes to separate the account of the November European Council which she gives the Parliament from the other two major statements to the Parliament which the Presidency, in the person of Lord Carrington, will need to make during the same December plenary session: the reports on the British Presidency and on Political Cooperation during 1981. Since the press is unlikely to give space on a single day to more than one Ministerial statement to the European Parliament, there could be advantage in separating by twenty-four hours the Prime Minister's statement from Lord Carrington's and thus keeping the media's attention for two days. I understand that it would not be convenient for the Prime Minister to make her statement on 15 December, with the Secretary of State making his on 16 December (a Wednesday, the normal day for Council statements in the European Parliament's week). The obvious solution would be for the Prime Minister to make her statement on 16 December, with Lord Carrington making his on 15 December.

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On the form the Prime Minister's appearance before the European Parliament would take, the Secretary of State recommends that we propose to Mme Veil that the account of the European Council be given towards the end of the morning of 16 December, leaving enough but not too much time before luncheon (which we can expect Mme Veil to offer): for her to remain in the Chamber to hear the main statements from the leaders of the Political Groups in response to her account. This would not involve her in answering questions, though it would certainly be greatly appreciated by the Parliament if she were to make a second short intervention before leaving in order to demonstrate an interest in the Parliament's own deliberations (as the Secretary of State did after his programme speech at the July session). The account of the European Council can be largely based on the one she will already have given to the House of Commons.

*It need
last no
more than
15 minutes.*

Yours ever.

Francis Richards
(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

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