



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister.

do you wish to raise
the issue with Chancellor

2 November 1983

Kohl?

A.B.C. 4/11

Yes [signature]

John [signature]

The next President of the European Commission

We promised to let you have a note about the next President of the European Commission.

Gaston Thorn will complete his term of office in December 1984 unless, as has been rumoured, he retires early in order to run for the Presidency of the European Parliament. The next President should be chosen at least six months before. This points to selection at the European Council in June 1984. We need to begin thinking about whom we might support for this office.

Theoretically all Ten Member States could aspire to offer a successor to Thorn. In practice though, several can be ruled out. The situation can be summarised as follows.

Member States which have never held the Presidency

- (a) Ireland. No obviously suitable candidate springs to mind.
- (b) Denmark. The Danes are not in the Community main-stream and it is hard to envisage a Danish candidacy being generally welcomed though Elleman-Jensen would be personally an attractive candidate were the Danes to put him forward.
- (c) Greece. No obvious candidate and probably ruled out by residual uncertainty over their membership of the Community.

Member States which have held the Presidency before

(See attached list for names and dates)

- (a) Luxembourg Cannot expect to provide a successor to a Luxembourger.
- (b) Belgium Have an obvious and able candidate in Davignon. But in the latter stages of the selection last time Thorn was put forward as the preferred Benelux candidate. We see no reason why the Benelux

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second choice on that occasion should succeed Thorn this time. Too close perhaps to the French position in some respects to suit us.

- (c) Netherlands Held the Presidency only briefly in 1972 and could have a claim if they were to put forward someone of stature. According to some circles in Brussels, their present Commissioner, Andriessen, is in the field. We doubt whether he carries enough weight.
- (d) UK Probably ruled out by the fact that Mr Jenkins was the most recent President before Thorn.
- (e) France Also recently held the Presidency (Ortoli preceded Jenkins).
- (e) Italy Pandolfi, the present Italian Minister of Agriculture, was much canvassed in 1980 before Thorn was selected. In the end his name was withdrawn as a result of a dispute within the Italian coalition. Italy could mount a strong challenge were they to put him forward again, or someone as well qualified. Natali, whose hat is, we believe, in the ring, does not qualify under this heading. Colombo, also we believe a potential candidate, would carry more conviction, but would not suit us. He is said to regard us with some rancour as a result of differences over UK refunds, new own resources and our attitude to the Genscher/Colombo Solemn Declaration.
- (f) Germany It is even longer since the Germans held the Presidency. A good German would stand a strong chance.

The next President of the Commission will take over at a critical moment for the Community. He will have to guide the Commission on its new course after the post-Stuttgart negotiations. This will require a person of stature and Community experience. If he is to carry the necessary weight, he should probably come from one of the Big Four. A British President being ruled out, a good German would probably be best for us because he would correct the growing tendency of the Commission to adopt protectionist positions.

The Embassy in Bonn have reported that a senior CDU official has told them that the CDU have already begun to consider this question and have concluded that Germany can aspire to the next Presidency. They have even begun to consider possible candidates. The Embassy's information is that three candidates are short-listed.

/The first



The first of these is Kiep, CDU Federal Treasurer. Kiep was Foreign Policy Spokesman of the CDU from 1973 to 1976, after which he became Finance Minister of Lower Saxony. He has widespread business experience, is a Director of ICI and extremely well disposed to the UK. He has recently led the CDU in two regional elections in Hamburg from which he emerged beaten. In the judgement of the Embassy in Bonn, Kiep is charming but is a light-weight, better at publicising policies than thinking them out or putting them into effect. He lacks both intellectual and managerial skills and above all the essential experience of the European Community, without which any President will spend the first year or so of his term finding his way round.

The second short-listed candidate is Biedenkopf, a former General Secretary of the CDU. Biedenkopf is by contrast an intellectual heavyweight who is making an interesting contribution to the Party's debate on economic policy. He has written books on cartels, Labour Law and energy policy. But he has fallen out with Chancellor Kohl and was recently ousted, largely at the latter's instigation, as CDU leader in North Rhein Westphalia. He lacks experience of international financial issues and foreign policy and is notoriously bad at running a team.

The third short-listed potential candidate is Ernst Albrecht, whom the Secretary of State mentioned to the Prime Minister during their conversation on 28 October. The Embassy consider that Albrecht would be a valid candidate. He has political experience, a considerable reputation as a manager and his views on economic policy are tough and market orientated. Moreover, he has the essential background of experience of the Commission, having held various posts with the European Communities between 1954 and 1970, finishing as Director-General for Competition, 1967-70.

The Secretary of State believes that there would be advantage in offering British support for a well-qualified German candidate and that it might be useful to raise the issue with Chancellor Kohl at the Anglo-German Summit on 8/9 November. We think it probable that an approach which stressed the importance of Community experience might well lead Kohl to mention Albrecht.

Yes
Sir Geoffrey Howe would be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister shares the view that it would be helpful to raise this with the Germans. The Embassy in Bonn believes

/that



/ that Albrecht is probably the best candidate, although he can give an impression of coolness and aloofness on first contact. You may find it helpful to see Sir Jock Taylor's letter of 14 October to David Hannay, enclosed.

If the Prime Minister agrees, the Department will produce a Brief for the Prime Minister for the Anglo-German Summit.

Yours on
R B Bone

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street



LIST OF COMMISSION PRESIDENTS

Hallstein	(FRG)	January 1958	-	June 1967
Rey	(Belgium)	June 1967	-	June 1970
Malfatti	(Italy)	July 1970	-	March 1972
Mansholt	(Netherlands)	March 1972	-	December 1972
Ortoli	(France)	January 1973	-	December 1976
Jenkins	(UK)	January 1977	-	December 1980
Thorn	(Luxembourg)	January 1981	-	[December 1984]

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 November 1983

Thank you for your letter of 2 November about the next President of the European Commission. The Prime Minister agrees with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that it would be useful to raise the issue of offering British support for a well qualified German candidate at the Anglo-German Summit on 8/9 November.

I should be grateful therefore if, as you propose, you could provide a brief for the Prime Minister on this question for the Summit.

Boe

A. J. COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 November, 1983

Jan Eke

R B Bone
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per

Anglo/German Summit: Next President of the Commission

/ I enclose a short Speaking Note on the next President of the European Commission for use at the Anglo/German Summit in Bonn.

Jan Eke
R B Bone

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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SPEAKING NOTE FOR PRIME MINISTER TO USE WITH CHANCELLOR KOHL AT THE ANGLO/GERMAN SUMMIT ON 8-9 NOVEMBER 1983

NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION

We need to begin thinking about who should succeed Thorn as President of the Commission. Theoretically open to all Member States, but in practice several can be ruled out, eg no obvious Irish, Danish or Greek candidates; Benelux probably ruled out because Thorn was Benelux candidate last time; UK and France have both recently held Presidency. In practice this leaves Germany and Italy.

Next President will take over at a critical time. Will have to guide Community on its new course after post-Stuttgart negotiations. In our view, the right candidate should be a person of established political reputation and real ability, not least in the firm management of large organisations. Also of importance that he should have direct experience of the Community, otherwise valuable time would be lost while new President learns the ropes.

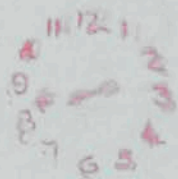
We would see advantage in a German President if a really good candidate could be found. UK and German views very close on many Community issues, notably importance of the market economy and the need to counter protectionist tendencies. Has Herr Kohl considered putting forward a German candidate?

[If Kohl says that he is considering Albrecht] An interesting thought. I will reflect further.

[If Kohl mentions candidates other than Albrecht] I shall give these suggestions careful consideration. Is Herr Kohl sure they have the right qualifications, including Community experience?



7 NOV 1983



Sir Jock Taylor KCMG



BRITISH EMBASSY,
BONN.

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RECEIVED IN REGISTRY		
24 OCT 1983		
DESK OFFICER	REGISTRY	
INDEX	FA	Action Taken
	✓	DW

14 October 1983

D H A Hannay Esq CMG
Foreign & Commonwealth Office

No further action
No further

A very useful reply.

We must now re-submit
with a dft. to No 10.

Dear David

THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

At 18/10

A

1. I have been giving thought to Michael Butler's letter
of 13 September to you and your letter of 23 September to me.

William?

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2. Chancellor Kohl has a strong personal commitment to the
European idea. He would dearly like to contribute to its
revitalisation. He is therefore likely to react positively
to the suggestion that the Commission needs a strong
President in the difficult years ahead.

3. I think he would also be keen to put forward a good
German candidate. He will not want a candidate from the SPD.
I also doubt that he would want one from the FDP. The idea
of an FDP appointment could well cause Kohl serious
embarrassment by prompting Strauss to propose Genscher, in
the hope of furthering his campaign to replace the latter
as Foreign Minister.

4. In considering possible candidates, we have therefore
concentrated on people from the CDU/CSU with recognised

/ ability,



ability, a reputation at least at national level and some direct experience of the Community. We have also had in mind the important point that the new President should not be a man whom Genscher could dominate. These requirements amount to a tall order. Given that Stoltenberg cannot be spared (and anyway has relatively little EC experience), there are really only two people who measure up: Carstens and Albrecht. I would rule out the former. He gives up as Federal President next year and, at 70, wants to do some writing and academic work. I think he would regard a move from Head of State to President of the Commission as implying either that the status of the former position was less than he believes or that he was accepting a demotion.

5. Ernst Albrecht has a thorough grounding in Community affairs. He held various posts in the Commission from 1954 to 1970. From 1961 to 1963 he was Deputy Leader of the Commission Delegation handling negotiations for British entry. From 1967 to 1970 he was Director General for Competition.

6. His career as a politician has been equally rapid and successful. He moved quickly on entering politics to build up a power base in Lower Saxony, which he won, unexpectedly, for the CDU in elections in 1976. Since then, he has become one of the top figures in the Federal CDU. He was the CDU choice as Chancellor-Candidate for the CDU/CSU in the 1980 Federal elections but had to stand down when the CSU

/ persuaded



persuaded Strauss to run. Following Strauss's clear defeat, Albrecht was an obvious favourite to be CDU/CSU Chancellor-Candidate for the Federal elections due in 1984. Had the SPD/FDP Coalition not fallen in mid-term, Albrecht might possibly have replaced Kohl at the head of the CDU and now be looking forward confidently to winning the Chancellorship next year.

7. Albrecht has found it hard to come to terms with Kohl's becoming Chancellor and succeeding in the role. He has made no secret of his belief that he would have made a better Chancellor. Relations between him and Kohl are therefore not close. But we have ascertained from the latter's Private Secretary (in a general discussion about leading CDU figures and of course without breathing a word of the question about the Presidency of the Commission) that the two are perfectly friendly and that there is no personal enmity.

8. Albrecht cannot expect a Federal Cabinet job while Kohl is Chancellor. Both of them are 53. Albrecht's hope must be to succeed Kohl in the longer term. He might well regard a prestigious, highly visible job in Brussels as time well spent, increasing his chances of national leadership in due course. Kohl, for his part, might not be averse to seeing Albrecht out of Federal politics for a time. He would have to admit that Albrecht was a very good candidate for Brussels, and would have great difficulty in suggesting an equally convincing alternative. He would also welcome, incidentally, the opportunity of placing his own man at the head of the

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Land Government in Lower Saxony.

9. Albrecht is a cool, aloof character with a strong will - but not unfriendly when you get to know him. He is not universally popular. He has strong religious convictions (Protestant) and is a keen family man. Politically, some of his views are towards the left in the CDU: he was in favour of the Eastern Treaties concluded under Brandt's Ostpolitik and likes to display a well developed social conscience, for instance about the disadvantaged in society. But on economic policy he stands to the right of the CDU, favouring a tough market-orientated approach. He believes that the present economic policies of the Federal Government will not produce lasting recovery or reduction in unemployment. He would like to see massive tax relief for employers to encourage investment, partly by shifting the cost of unemployment benefits from employer contributions to increased VAT. These attitudes stem in part from 5 years in the 70s as Finance Director of a major food concern in Hanover. Albrecht also favours privatisation. He has pushed through controversial legislation in Lower Saxony to allow private capital in local broadcasting and television.

10. Albrecht is intellectually formidable. He has run a tight ship in Lower Saxony. I think he would be a strong manager and Chairman in Brussels, with a better chance than many others of controlling the bureaucracy. He

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certainly has the determination to make real efforts both to contain the Community Budget and to tackle the other great problems facing the EC. I do not know Albrecht well but I have always found him friendly and most impressive, and well disposed to Britain.

11. As to the manner of approaching Kohl on this subject, I agree in general with paragraph 5 of Michael Butler's letter. I suggest that the Prime Minister should preface her suggestion with some general remarks designed to appeal to the Chancellor's commitment to the European idea and the vital importance of gripping the problems of the EC which have caused so much public disillusionment with that idea. After referring, as Michael Butler suggests, to the importance of appointing effective Commissioners and the failure to do so in many cases, the Prime Minister could suggest that the right candidate to be the next President of the Commission should be a person with a widespread reputation and notable ability, not least in the firm management of large organisations. In order to make it harder for Kohl to come forward with any of the less satisfactory figures who might occur to him, the Prime Minister should stress that the right person should, if possible, have significant direct experience of the EC in action. The Prime Minister, if she wished, could add that she would like the next President to be a Conservative politician: I think this would appeal to Kohl. The Prime Minister could then ask Kohl whether he has considered the

/ question

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question of a German candidate. If he has not, he might conceivably ask the Prime Minister whether she had any ideas. Or he might express scepticism that all the qualifications mentioned earlier in this paragraph could be found in one man: and this, depending on the atmosphere, might enable the Prime Minister to mention Albrecht. In any case, the Prime Minister should say that the UK would be willing to support a German candidate with the right qualifications.

12. This line of approach is designed to steer between an outright unprompted suggestion of Albrecht, which could annoy Kohl, and any implication that the UK would support the wrong sort of German candidate. It does not guarantee that the right man will be selected by Kohl but it should give a better chance than any other tactic. Clearly the exchange will involve an element of tight-rope walking. We have to avoid the wrong sort of German candidate.

13. On the specific point in paragraph 3 of your letter, during the SPD/FDP Coalition, the two German Commissioners were representatives of the two Coalition parties. If Germany in future still has two Commissioners, both Kohl and Genscher would no doubt want to follow that pattern, having one CDU and one FDP Commissioner. But in Hallstein's day, there were two CDU Commissioners, so one cannot be dead sure. This strengthens my point above about the importance

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of guiding Kohl towards a really strong candidate
for the Presidency.

Yours ever

Jock

Jock Taylor

cc: Sir M Butler KCMG
UKRep Brussels

D Williamson Esq
Cabinet Office

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2 NOV 1988

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