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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The Prime Minister has considered your minute of 14 April about the book Sir Michael Butler proposes to publish about the working of the European Community.

The Prime Minister is content for publication to go ahead and does not require any changes in that part of the text which she has been shown.

I am copying this minute to Sherard Cowper-Coles in the Foreign Office.

Charles Powell

15 April 1986

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Prime Minister

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You should see what Michael Butler proposes to say about you. It redounds to your credit, as you would expect from him. Agree that he may publish his book?

Ref. A086/1134

MR POWELL

CDP  
14/4

Sir Michael Butler has written a book about the working of the European Community. It describes the constituent parts of the Community, its inter-relationships, and its development; and it is enlivened by example and comment drawn from his long --- experience. I enclose a list of its chapter headings.

2. It is unusual but not unprecedented (cf Sir Leo Pliatzky) for a public servant to publish such a book, with a considerable autobiographical element in it, so soon after retirement. But it is an interesting and lively book, written of course from the standpoint of a convinced supporter of the Community and of British membership of it, and I do not think that we need or should object in principle.

3. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Cabinet Office have gone through the typescript in detail, and have proposed or are proposing a number of changes to protect national security, to avoid damage to international relations, and to preserve confidentiality on matters to which he was privy in confidence. He is being very co-operative in making changes to meet these proposals.

4. Of particular sensitivity is his account of the British budget negotiations, and his account of the Prime Minister's way of working. Sir Antony Acland and I are satisfied that the chapter on the budget negotiations will, as finally amended, be in order. I do not find the passage on the Prime Minister's way of working, in its finally amended form, offensive: on the contrary, I think it is fair, friendly and admiring. But she may like to see for herself how this particular adviser has --- found his dealings with her, and I am therefore attaching copies

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of the relevant pages as they now stand. I am sure that Michael Butler would be prepared to make further changes, if the Prime Minister said that she would prefer him to do so.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

14 April 1986

SIR MICHAEL BUTLER'S BOOK: LIST OF CHAPTER HEADINGS

1. What is the European Community?
2. The Work of the Community
3. The Internal Market, Industry, Technology and Research
4. Fisheries, the Environment, Rules of Competition and State Aids, Economic and Monetary Policy
5. The Council at Work
6. The Community Budget and Resources Transfer
7. The British Budget Problem
8. Britain in Europe Decision-taking As Others See Us
9. The Media
10. National Characteristics and Interests
11. Europe and the World
12. Constitutional Issues

Cabinet Office, I would every month or two attend one of the Foreign Secretary's meetings in preparation for a Council. And quite often on another day in the week, I would have to fit in a visit to London to attend a meeting with Sir Geoffrey Howe or Mrs Thatcher herself. Meetings at 10 Downing Street will be among my most vivid memories of all the events of these six crowded years. No meeting Mrs Thatcher chairs is ever dull. On the European Community, at any rate, there are normally vigorous exchanges of arguments. Mrs Thatcher, though thoroughly convinced of the need to make the Community work properly, is - to say the least - not automatically in favour of Commission proposals which involve sharing more sovereignty or spending the tax-payers' money through the Community budget! It is often a Permanent Representative's duty to argue in favour of one or other of these things. He needs to have a good case.

Meetings with Mrs Thatcher are not for the faint-hearted or the ill-briefed. She has normally read all the papers on the subjects under discussion, probably in the middle of the night when her Ministers and advisers sleep. She will frequently launch a ferocious attack on a possible weak point in the

arguments she is advised to accept. She expects her Ministers and officials to defend them with equal vigour if they believe they are right. She will interrupt them if they say something she disagrees with - and yet listen intently if they insist and prove to have an important point to make which she needs to consider. It sometimes seemed to me that she would on occasion tease her advisers by advancing some outrageous proposition in which she did not believe, just to see how they responded to it.

Contrary to what is generally written in the newspapers and believed by her critics, she seemed to me positively to welcome serious argument and to have a high regard for those who argued with her most effectively. She likes a tough exchange, as I have several times heard her explain to Heads of Government from other Community countries who she has treated to a frank expression of her views. "That," she says, to their astonishment "is how we reach decisions at home." And this is true, though her Ministers and officials do not always know at the time of their discussion with her whether their recommendations have been accepted. Just occasionally, I have heard her say "you are doing quite well", after a particularly difficult corner in

the discussion has been turned. But more often it is not clear until later, until - let us say - she is going through her speaking notes, frequently already revised on her instructions, in the plane on the way to the meeting, how far she has accepted the advice she has been offered.

