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21 NOVEMBER 1979

EUROPEAN COUNCIL, DUBLIN

29/30 NOVEMBER 1979

SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS

Brief by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

OBJECTIVE

1. Defensive response to any Italian approaches in the margins on two subjects of concern to them; and to approaches from Mr Jenkins on one of these, the Community's research programme.

POINTS TO MAKE

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CERN (EUROPEAN ORGANISATION FOR NUCLEAR RESEARCH

2. We are considering the report of the CERN Working Group and the discussions of the Committee of the CERN Council about the choice of the next Director General.

JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE : NUCLEAR SAFETY PROJECT "SUPER SARA"

3. We continue to have doubts about the financial and technical aspects of the project. But we realise its importance to Italy and as you know we are reconsidering our position. We have not yet taken a final view but want to be flexible. Cost-effectiveness is obviously important. It would help if Italy could make an additional host country financial contribution to the installation and operation of the project, as we do for JET. Assume the Research Council will want to come to a decision on 20 December.

(ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR USE PRIMARILY WITH MR JENKINS)

4. We value the work of the Joint Research Centre, and have

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no intention of seeking major cutbacks. But we want the programme to be cost-effective.

5. I recognise that Italy is already paying for the "loop" an experimental facility at Super Sara. But given that many EEC countries - not just the UK - have doubts about the project's value, would it not be appropriate for the Italians to make a further offer? We have of course made a sizeable national contribution to the JET fusion programme at Culham, Oxfordshire.

BACKGROUND

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CERN

6. The Italians have lobbied the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on behalf of Professor Zichichi, who is their candidate for Director Generalship of CERN. CERN is a nuclear research establishment on the Swiss/French border.

7. We have repeatedly told the Italians that we must first consider the report of the CERN Working Group, and the views of CERN's Committee. (Not for use) We shall almost certainly support a German candidate who is far better qualified. But we want to avoid telling the Italians this until after Dublin. They now seem to recognise that the German will prevail, and may in due course lobby for Zichichi to be appointed his no 2.

JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE : NUCLEAR SAFETY PROJECT "SUPER SARA"

8. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is a Community institution set up under EURATOM to conduct nuclear research.

9. The JRC and Research Council have been considering proposals for a Pressurised Water Reactor nuclear safety project called "Super Sara". This would use the ESSOR reactor at Ispra (N Italy) which is owned by the Community.

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There is no other use for the reactor, and if it is not used for Super Sara it will close down.

10. While nuclear safety is important, we doubt whether the project will justify its present cost; in any case we want to cut the JRC budget. At the last Research Council we and the French voiced our strong reservations about the need for the project. The Italians have pressed us to reconsider; in reply, and with the need for solidarity at Dublin in mind, we instructed our Embassy in Rome to hint without commitment at the prospect of a change in our position. The Embassy have put it to the Italians that our task of reconsideration would be eased if they were to make an additional host country contribution to Super Sara (as we do to the Joint European Torus (JET) fusion project at Culham). They have said they cannot; but we believe this is not their final word.

11. The Commission have briefed Mr Jenkins to raise Super Sara and the JRC programme as a whole in the margins of Dublin. On the programme as a whole, where we are isolated in pressing for staff cuts, we can probably accept a compromise package at the 20 December Research Council subject to what happens at Dublin. On Super Sara, Mr Jenkins may argue that Italy, in providing the "loop", is already bearing 12% of Super Sara's cost; and that we only pay 10% of JET's cost as our national contribution. We do in fact pay more if the site and buildings are included in the cost, but a detailed discussion of figures at Dublin seems inadvisable; the points to emphasis to Mr Jenkins are that it is not just the UK which has doubts about Super Sara but that we want to achieve a constructive outcome on 20

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December.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

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