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CC(84) 34th
Conclusions

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CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet
held at 10 Downing Street on
THURSDAY 25 OCTOBER 1984
at 10.30 am

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone
Lord Chancellor

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph MP
Secretary of State for Education and Science

The Rt Hon George Younger MP
Secretary of State for Scotland

The Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP
Secretary of State for the Environment

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Michael Jopling MP
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP
Secretary of State for Transport

The Rt Hon Earl of Gowrie
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Rt Hon Lord Young of Graffham
Minister without Portfolio

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THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP
Attorney General (Item 4)

Mr John Gummer MP
Paymaster General

Mr Norman Lamont MP
Minister of State, Department of Trade and
Industry (Item 4)

Mr John Cope MP
Treasurer of the Household

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr P L Gregson (Item 4)
Mr D F Williamson (Items 2 and 3)
Mr B G Cartledge (Items 2 and 3)
Mr M S Buckley (Item 4)
Mr C J S Brearley (Item 1)

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PARLIAMENTARY
AFFAIRS

1. The Cabinet were informed of the business to be taken in the House of Commons during the following week. Parliament would be prorogued on Wednesday 31 October and the new Session would be opened by The Queen on Tuesday 6 November.

Police and
Criminal
Evidence
Bill

THE HOME SECRETARY said that during the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill's passage through the House of Lords three amendments had been carried against the Government. Their effect was to restrict the power to stop and search to policemen in uniform, to disqualify evidence from confessions obtained improperly, and to make racial discrimination a specific disciplinary offence. The last two had been moved by Lord Scarman. It was essential to reverse the first of these amendments and to substitute a Government amendment for the second during the remaining stages of the Bill in the House of Commons. On the third, the amendment had been opposed by the Government solely on the grounds that it was not necessary as racial discrimination was already a disciplinary matter in the police. Because of this and the importance of securing changes on the first two points, he and the other Ministers principally concerned had concluded that there should be no attempt to reverse or alter this amendment. Such a course would be to some extent controversial with the Government's supporters in Parliament but was likely, in the context of the achievements of the Bill as a whole, to be acceptable to the associations representing the police.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COMMONS said that it had require great effort to secure as satisfactory an outcome in the House of Lords as had so far been achieved. The Law Lords, the Bishops and cross-bench peers as well as the political parties all held strong views. Every effort would be made when the Bill returned to the House of Lords the following week to secure their agreement on the first two amendments but to try to secure reversal of the third amendment was unlikely to be successful and could well be counter-productive. He therefore supported the course of action proposed by the Home Secretary.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up a brief discussion, said that the decision not to seek to reverse or amend the third amendment, as well as the other two, would be controversial; there would inevitably be considerable concern that the effect of the amendment would be to make the task of the police very much more difficult in certain areas.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

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2. THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that during a police search of the grounds of the French Ambassador's residence on Tuesday 23 October, in preparation for the State Visit by the President of the French Republic, President Mitterrand, two small containers of high explosive had been discovered. It had emerged that these were placed there by a French security officer who was in London in connection with the President's visit, apparently to test the efficacy of British security measures. The officer had been interviewed by police at the Grosvenor House Hotel where he was staying. He had been found to have more explosives with him there, and these had been retained by the police. The officer had been further questioned at West End Central Police Station and later released. The police had subsequently decided not to bring any charges against him. It appeared that he had avoided airport security checks when travelling from Paris by revealing his status as a security officer. Members of Parliament and others had expressed grave concern over what had happened. So far the French Government had made no official statement. He had spoken to the French Minister for European Affairs, Monsieur Dumas, about the French reaction to the incident, urging the issue of a suitable statement, and exchanges were continuing.

In discussion it was agreed that the episode was inexplicable and unacceptable. It was important to establish urgently that no similar events had occurred or were likely to occur during President Mitterrand's visit. In particular assurances should be sought regarding security at Buckingham Palace. The police were naturally extremely annoyed at what had occurred. The matter would inevitably be raised in Parliament at Prime Minister's Questions or in other ways. The failure of the French Government to explain, let alone apologise for, what had occurred was astonishing, and made it difficult for the British Government to comment without appearing critical of the French during President Mitterrand's visit. At the very least the French should send the officer concerned back to France and conduct an inquiry. It was, however, the French Government who had got themselves into a difficult position and there was much to be said for reacting calmly.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Cabinet were astonished at what had occurred. It was essential to ensure that security arrangements had not been infringed in other ways. The British Government's reaction to the episode must depend on whether the French apologised and on what action they were prepared to take.

The Cabinet -

1. Took note.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the continuing presence of three leaders of Opposition parties in the British Consulate in Durban had created further difficulties with the South African Government. Following the attempt by the three to engage in political activity from the Consulate, the regime governing their conditions and behaviour had been tightened in the hope that this might encourage their voluntary departure, but although the hunger strike by members of their families had come to an

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end, the three showed no disposition to leave. As a result, criticism by the South African Government of the British Government's handling of the affair had increased. The four South African citizens facing charges under United Kingdom customs and excise legislation had failed to appear in court, in Coventry, on 22 October: the court had accordingly ordered that their bail, amounting to £400,000, should be forfeited. The South African Government had sought to demonstrate legal justification for its refusal to return the four defendants to the United Kingdom; the court in Coventry had, in fact, ruled that the South African diplomat, Mr Pelser, who had stood surety for the four defendants had not been guilty of personal misconduct. The South African Ambassador had been summoned by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Rifkind), and the South African Government had been urged to reconsider its position. It seemed unlikely, however, that it would do so, and the outlook remained uncertain. Various means of bringing pressure to bear on the South African Government to disgorge the four defendants had been considered and there had been demands from Members of Parliament that the South African Ambassador should be withdrawn. However, the only realistic means of expressing the strength of the British Government's disapproval of South African conduct would have been to expel Mr Pelser, and this option had now been made less feasible by the court's personal exoneration of him. Mr Pelser's expulsion would in any case lead only to retaliation in kind by the South African Government. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that his conclusion was that the overall interests of the United Kingdom's relations with South Africa required that there should be no punitive action by the British Government. The Government's objective should continue to be to limit the damage of the Durban episode to these wider interests; but the situation remained very difficult.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that he had made an announcement in the House of Commons on the previous day of increased United Kingdom aid to Ethiopia, where the situation of drought and famine had become desperate. Exchanges in the House, following a Private Notice Question on 22 October, had demonstrated the depth of Members' anxiety that everything possible should be done to provide relief. This degree of public concern had been increased by recent reports on television. He had therefore decided that as much help as could be given from the aid budget should be made available: he had directed that the whole of the balance of national food aid allocated for 1984, amounting to over 6,000 tonnes, should go to Ethiopia and that a further £5 million should be made available for drought relief in Ethiopia and other African countries. It had to be recognised, however, that relief measures of this order were wholly inadequate to the scale of the problem which required, according to one estimate, at least 60,000 tonnes of relief cereals every month. Relief on this scale far exceeded the cargo capacity of the Hercules aircraft available and the problem was compounded by the absence of roads in the region of Ethiopia worst affected and by the continuing civil war in the country. There was so far no evidence of the improper diversion by the Ethiopian authorities of aid for whose distribution the Red Cross and the Save the Children Fund were responsible, although there was clearly a risk of this. The United Kingdom should nevertheless

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provide all the help it could and urge the other members of the European Community to do the same. Colonel Mengistu's regime, which had just spent extravagantly on the celebration of its own anniversary, appeared at last to be adopting a more constructive attitude. The Soviet Union, for its part, was doing nothing whatsoever to help.

In a brief discussion it was pointed out that the revelation through television reports of the scale of the disaster in Ethiopia had inevitably made it a central political issue and that there was already evidence of some disposition on the part of the Labour Party to make political capital out of the situation. Not least in view of the summer's record harvest and the size of agricultural surpluses in the European Community, there would be strong public pressure for an adequate response to the situation by the British Government and any steps which might be taken should be given effective publicity. There was agreement that it would be important to instigate a concerted and effective response from the European Community and that an appropriate message should be sent to the Irish Presidency as soon as possible.

The Cabinet -

2. Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to be guided by the views of the Cabinet as expressed in the discussion.

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COMMUNITY
AFFAIRS

Enlargement
of the
Community
Previous
Reference:
CC(84) 30th
Conclusions,
Minute 3

3. THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the Council of Ministers (Foreign Affairs) on 22-23 October had reached agreement on the Community's negotiating position with Spain and Portugal on some outstanding points, in particular on industrial tariffs and olive oil. In line with the United Kingdom objective, the Community would be seeking a progressive increase in the Spanish reduced duty quota for cars and a substantial cut in the tariff applied to it. The negotiating position on fisheries and on wine was not yet resolved.

Lome
Convention
Previous
Reference:
CC(84) 33rd
Conclusions,
Minute 4

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that in the Council of Ministers (Foreign Affairs) there had been an attempt to reopen the Community's negotiating position that the size of the European Development Fund to accompany the new Convention should be 7 billion ecu. It was important that Germany should be encouraged to maintain the present position.

Community
Budget
Previous
Reference:
CC(84) 33rd
Conclusions,
Minute 4

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that a substantive discussion on budgetary discipline had been avoided in the Council of Ministers (Foreign Affairs) on 22-23 October. The French Government had had internal differences on this question. Efforts had been made, however, in bilateral contacts to achieve a satisfactory text, and he believed that these discussion were on course to reach a result.

Agriculture
Previous
Reference:
CC(84) 32nd
Conclusions,
Minute 2

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD said that the Council of Ministers (Agriculture) on 22-23 October had rolled forward the agricultural structure measures. There had been a deadlock on the proposed reform of the Community's wine regime, and it was possible that this would be submitted to the European Council in December. The United Kingdom had protested about the gas price for Dutch horticulturists and about the European Commission's latest measures on butter exports.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

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4. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY reported to the Cabinet on the latest position in the coal industry dispute. The Cabinet's discussion is recorded separately.

INDUSTRIAL
AFFAIRS

Coal
Industry
Dispute

Previous
Reference:
CC(84) 33rd
Conclusions,
Minute 5

Cabinet Office

25 October 1984

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Sir Robert Armstrong (Bound Volume)

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CABINET

LIMITED CIRCULATION ANNEX

CC(84) 34th Conclusions, Minute 4

Thursday 25 October 1984 at 10.30 am

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY said that the number of miners working continued to increase slowly. Of the total of 174 pits there were now 79 with some men present compared with 63 at the beginning of the summer. A record 911,000 tonnes of coal had been moved in the previous week and there had been a small increase in power station coal stocks. The previous weekend the National Coal Board (NCB) had announced the appointment of Mr Michael Eaton, Area Director for North Yorkshire, as temporary Assistant to the Chairman. Contrary to the impression given in some press reports, he would be responsible for improving the NCB's communications with its workforce and the public and not for the conduct of negotiations. In the early part of the week there had been intensive discussions between the NCB and the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS) under the aegis of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). He would circulate to members of the Cabinet copies of the agreement reached, which had now been published. It dealt skilfully with a range of points of particular concern to NACODS and provided for the incorporation into the colliery review procedure of an independent review body, but left intact the principle that it was for the NCB to make final decisions about closures. On the basis of the agreement the National Executive Committee of NACODS had unanimously decided to call off the strike due to start that morning. This was in spite of intense pressure from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and from the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The NUM would be meeting the NCB that day for discussions at ACAS. The President of the NUM (Mr Scargill) had however already made it clear that the agreement reached with NACODS was unacceptable to him and appeared to be maintaining his total opposition to the closure of uneconomic pits. The NCB would be unlikely to make any significant concessions to the NUM which they had been unwilling to grant to NACODS. The talks would probably therefore be unproductive and might not last long. The time limit for the payment of the fine of £200,000 imposed on the NUM for contempt of court had run out the previous day. It seemed inevitable that the court would quickly proceed to make an order for the sequestration of the NUM's assets.

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THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up a brief discussion, said that the calling off of the NACODS dispute was a serious blow to the NUM. The strategy should continue to be one of ensuring that the NUM was isolated from effective support from other unions. Any further initiatives, and the handling of the media, should be considered in that context. The immediate line to take should be to point out that one-third of NUM members had voted, by a two to one majority, not to strike and were at work, that NACODS had reached a satisfactory understanding with the NCB not only on the matters of particular concern to its members but also on the fundamental issues in the dispute, and that the remaining union in the mining industry, the British Association of Colliery Managers, had remained at work throughout the dispute. By contrast, the remaining NUM members who were on strike had been deprived of the opportunity for a ballot. It would be deeply disturbing if the TUC now thought fit to side with the NUM leadership and against those in the industry who wished to continue working.

The Cabinet

Took note.

Cabinet Office

26 October 1984

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