

CONFIDENTIAL

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

OD(80) 16th Meeting

COPY NO 46

CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a Meeting held in the
Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons,
on TUESDAY 10 JUNE 1980 at 4.00 pm

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department

The Rt Hon Lord Hailsham
Lord Chancellor

The Rt Hon Lord Carrington
Secretary of State for Foreign
and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Sir Ian Gilmour MP
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon John Nott MP
Secretary of State for Trade

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon George Younger MP
Secretary of State for Scotland
(Item 1)

The Rt Hon Humphrey Atkins MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
(Item 1)

The Rt Hon David Howell MP
Secretary of State for Energy
(Item 2)

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP
Chief Secretary, Treasury

The Rt Hon Michael Jopling MP
Parliamentary Secretary
Treasury
(Item 1)

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R M Hastie-Smith
Mr W N Wenban-Smith

i

CONFIDENTIAL

139

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

MEMOS.
1

2

3

CONFIDENTIAL

CONTENTS

Item	Subject	Page No
1	THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND: PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION	1
2	REPORT OF THE BRANDT COMMISSION	4
3	NEW HEBRIDES: SECURITY SITUATION	5

ii

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

1. THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND: PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION
Previous Reference: OD(79) 12th Meeting

The Committee considered a memorandum by the Home Secretary (OD(80) 44) to which was attached a draft document for publication setting out the Government's proposals for future discussion regarding the future government of Northern Ireland.

THE HOME SECRETARY said that he had submitted his memorandum as Chairman of the group of Ministers which had been set up to assist the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in formulating his political proposals. Only someone in touch with the political parties and public opinion in Northern Ireland could form a valid judgement on the political mood of the Province, and he therefore considered it right to accept the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's own assessment of the position. There were obvious difficulties, and it was possible that what was proposed would be rejected by the Northern Irish political parties. This could not be established until the attempt was made. It could be argued that the draft proposals were too tentative in tone, but anything more specific would be more likely to be rejected outright. There were other possible alternative proposals, but none of them dealt better with the various difficulties than those in the paper or appeared to have a greater chance of success. The Conference which had already taken place had aroused considerable expectations. It would be wrong and dangerous now to give the impression that the work of the Conference had been a waste of time and that the Government had no intention of seeking to make political progress in that direction. This impression would also alienate the Social Democratic and Labour Party, who would then become even more dependent on Mr Haughey. In regard to the proposed publication date, the recent interest in the whole issue in the media swung the balance of advantage towards an earlier rather than a later date.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND said that the present Government had come to power with a commitment to making some political advance in Northern Ireland. The ground had been prepared at the Constitutional Conference, and considerable expectations had been aroused. It was generally expected that more narrowly focussed proposals would now be produced for further discussion. The main political parties who had taken part in the

1

CONFIDENTIAL

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

MEMOS
1

2

3

Conference would recognise much that was included in the draft proposals. There were alternative possibilities, but none of them would be accepted by all the political parties, and a situation could easily arise in which only a continuation of the present direct rule methods were possible. If powers were to be restored to Northern Ireland, it had to be done on some basis in which both the majority and minority communities would have a share.

In discussion there was considerable support for the view that the draft proposals represented the best way forward in present circumstances despite the fact that they involved a number of risks and difficulties. The following points were made -

a. It would be important to ensure that the arguments in the draft proposals justifying a transfer of powers to Northern Ireland should not seem to be applicable to Scotland. A number of amendments to deal with this point had already been proposed, and these appeared to present no difficulty.

b. In a number of places, notably in paragraphs 2.13 2.14 and 2.16, the present draft, no doubt unintentionally, gave the impression that it was the Government's long-term intention to hand Northern Ireland over to the South. It would be important to ensure that the final version carried no flavour whatever of this kind. The use of the phrase "special relationship" at the end of paragraph 2.14 should also be avoided.

c. If the proposals were accepted, they would involve a considerable degree of over-government in Northern Ireland. To some extent this had also been true in the past. If the proposals were accepted, it would be necessary to reconsider the level of Northern Ireland representation at Westminster. It was for consideration whether this point should be made in the published document.

d. The acceptance of proportional representation in the draft proposals could make it more difficult to resist this concept in relation to Westminster.

e. In order for the draft proposals to stand any chance of being accepted by the minority community, they had to involve some means whereby the minority could exercise a restraining influence on the Executive which would reflect the wishes of the majority. This was the justification for the proposed transfer of legislative powers. But the minority would not receive a total power of veto under the proposed arrangements because the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would retain overriding powers in the event of an impasse being reached.

f. There was no support at the Constitutional Conference or in the Ulster Unionist Party's own separate proposals for the suggestion in the 1979 Manifesto for the establishment of one or more elected regional councils with a wide range of powers over local services.

g. Having held the Constitutional Conference at considerable length, the Government would appear to be infirm of purpose if it abandoned this proposed approach to political advance at this stage. The effects in the United States and Southern Ireland would be bad.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that, although the Committee recognised the numerous difficulties implicit in the draft proposals, and were not deceiving themselves about the prospects for their acceptance in Northern Ireland, the Committee's ^{view} ~~new~~ on balance was that they represented the best way forward. The paper required amendment in order to remove its negative features and avoid the impression that the Government's longer term policy was to give Northern Ireland away. It was also important that the paper should be considered very carefully in relation to its possible effects on the situation in Scotland. Reference should also be included to the need to reconsider the level of Northern Ireland representation at Westminster if the proposals were agreed.

The Committee -

Invited the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland -

i. To be guided by the Prime Minister's summing up in amending the proposals for further discussion.

ii. To circulate a final draft for consideration by the Cabinet and early publication.

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

MEMOS

1

2

3

CONFIDENTIAL

2. REPORT OF THE BRANDT COMMISSION

The Committee considered a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(80) 39) on the Report of the Brandt Commission on North-South relations.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the report had attracted considerable attention both in the United Kingdom and internationally. The Commission's recommendations could not be accepted in their entirety: some were sensible, others plainly unreasonable - such as the proposition that new technology should be made available gratis to the developing countries; and many would involve unacceptable increases in public expenditure. The Government would however need to explain its position with care in the forthcoming Parliamentary debate. The Commission's proposal for a summit meeting of 25 world leaders seemed to be gathering momentum, and it was likely that the United Kingdom would be invited to take part; but this proposal should be cautiously received.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up a brief discussion, said that the Committee agreed with the views expressed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and approved the recommendations in paragraph 24 of the note by officials annexed to his memorandum. The Government should do nothing to stimulate the summit meeting proposed by the Brandt Commission. The Government's spokesmen in the forthcoming Commons debate should be guided by the Committee's discussion.

The Committee -

Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

3. NEW HEBRIDES: SECURITY SITUATION

CONFIDENTIAL

The Committee had before them a minute (PM/80/44) addressed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to the Prime Minister concerning the security situation in the New Hebrides.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that there had been longstanding antipathy between the English and French speaking communities in the condominium. The French authorities regretted the success of the English speakers under Father Lini in the elections, and would not be sorry to see the arrangements for independence on 30 July collapse. The francophones feared, perhaps with some justification, that they would be discriminated against after independence. This was the background to the secession declared by Mr Jimmy Stephens and his followers on the island of Espiritu Santo. He had discussed the position the previous day with the responsible French Minister; M Dijoud had with difficulty been brought to confirm French acceptance of the outcome of the elections. He had also accepted that it would be reasonable for the United Kingdom to position British troops in Fiji as a precautionary measure (the French already having troops at Noumea in New Caledonia). The French Government would, however, regard deployment of British troops alone to Vila, in accordance with Father Lini's wishes, as a breach of the condominium agreement. M Dijoud and he had agreed to instruct their respective Resident Commissioners to co-operate more closely in seeking to end the secession by negotiation; they hoped that the two Commissioners, despite the equivocal role hitherto played by the French Commissioner, would accomplish the main part of this task, which might be completed through a joint visit to the New Hebrides by M Dijoud and the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (Mr Peter Blaker). Success was not however assured. Should negotiations fail, the Government would look foolish if they took no action; while the use of British troops alone could damage sharply our relations with France. A precautionary move of 100-200 troops possibly to Fiji, provided this were acceptable to the Fijian Government, would show both Mr Stephens and Father Lini that our intentions were serious.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up a short discussion, said that the Committee agreed in principle to the despatch of between 100-200 troops with the aim of improving the chances of obtaining a negotiated end to the secession of Espiritu Santo in concert with the French Government. The Foreign and

CONFIDENTIAL

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

MEMOS

1

2

3

CONFIDENTIAL

Commonwealth Secretary should consult the Secretary of State for Defence about the arrangements for the operation, including the possibility of using troops from the Gurkha battalion stationed in Hong Kong.

The Committee -

1. Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion.
2. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Defence, to make preparations for the despatch of 100-200 troops to an appropriate destination, as a precautionary measure.

Cabinet Office
12 June 1980

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

PM/80/44

THE PRIME MINISTER

New Hebrides: Security Situation

1. In his minute of 6 June Peter Blaker informed you and members of OD of the serious situation in the New Hebrides and that we were considering the precautionary despatch of a company size unit with HQ element to Vila. The deployment of such a unit to the area would demonstrate our commitment to protect the territorial integrity of the Condominium and would put us in a position where we could act jointly with the French should this prove necessary.
2. M Dijoud, the responsible French Minister, came to London for talks with Mr Blaker on 9 June. I also saw him for half an hour. M Dijoud considered that the precautionary deployment of British troops to Vila itself would breach the principles of the Condominium, would be misinterpreted by francophones in the territory and would be counter-productive. He said that France could not accept such a move. We do not accept that a precautionary deployment of troops to Vila would of itself put us in breach of the 1914 Protocol. However it would neither be to the advantage of the emergent New Hebrides, nor in our wider interests, to risk a serious confrontation with the French by deploying troops in the face of opposition from the French Government.
3. M Dijoud agreed that we should be seen to be in a position to act in concert with the French, should the need arise; and that it would therefore be useful for us to have appropriate forces readily available elsewhere in the region. Such a move would demonstrate our resolve to bring the New Hebrides to independence, encourage the parties to resolve their differences and discourage the NHG* from precipitate action.

*New Hebrides Government

/4.

CONFIDENTIAL

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

MEMOS

1

2

3



CONFIDENTIAL

2

5. It was agreed that this arrangement for the pre-positioning of British troops in the region, as part of a package, should help us to make progress through negotiations. We also agreed that we should instruct our two Resident Commissioners to work more closely in their efforts to persuade the two sides to resume the dialogue interrupted by the secession of Santo on 28 May. A joint statement will be issued later this week in which we and the French will set a timescale within which we expect some real progress to be made. We shall then propose that the two responsible Ministers should go to Vila to bring the negotiations to a conclusion about the end of June or early July.

6. The French will be sending a mission to the New Hebrides this week with a generous economic aid offer (the implementation of which will be conditional on a commitment by the New Hebrides Government to respect the vital interests of French citizens in the New Hebrides).

7. Our preferred place for pre-positioning troops is Fiji. This is about one hour's flying time from the New Hebrides. Furthermore I understand that UK forces in Fiji would be subject to our own Service jurisdiction.

8. Subject to the Defence Secretary's views I should be grateful for your approval to approach the Fiji Government, or another friendly government in the region, for their agreement to the precautionary deployment of a company size unit with HQ Element and signals support and for your authority for their subsequent deployment.

/9.

CONFIDENTIAL

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

MEMOS.
1

2

3



CONFIDENTIAL

3

9. We shall have an opportunity to discuss this briefly in OD this afternoon. I am copying this minute to other members of OD and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

C

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
10 June 1980

CONFIDENTIAL

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

MEMOS.
1

2

3