

SECRET

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

CC(81) 27th  
Conclusions

COPY NO 78

CABINET

---

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet  
held at 10 Downing Street on

THURSDAY 9 JULY 1981

at 9.45 am

---

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 Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph MP  
Secretary of State for Industry

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
and Paymaster General

The Rt Hon Lord Soames  
Lord President of the Council

The Rt Hon James Prior MP  
Secretary of State for Employment

The Rt Hon John Nott MP  
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Sir Ian Gilmour MP  
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon Peter Walker MP  
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP  
Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Humphrey Atkins MP  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

The Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP  
Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP  
Secretary of State for Trade

The Rt Hon David Howell MP  
Secretary of State for Energy

The Rt Hon Mark Carlisle QC MP  
Secretary of State for Education and  
Science

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP  
Secretary of State for Transport

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP  
Chief Secretary, Treasury

**SECRET**

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP  
Attorney General

The Rt Hon Michael Jopling MP  
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong  
Mr M D M Franklin (Items 2. and 3)  
Mr R L Wade-Gery (Items 2, 3 and 5)  
Mr W N Hyde (Items 1 and 4)  
Mr L J Harris (Items 1 and 4)

C O N T E N T S

| Item | Subject  | Page |
|------|--|------|
| 1.   | PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS                              | 1    |
| 2.   | FOREIGN AFFAIRS                                    |      |
|      | East-West Relations                                | 1    |
| 3.   | COMMUNITY AFFAIRS                                  |      |
|      | Community Objectives during the British Presidency | 1    |
|      | Sheepmeat  | 2    |
| 4.   | CIVIL UNREST                                       | 2    |
| 5.   | NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS                           | 6    |

PARLIAMENTARY  
AFFAIRS

1. THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND PAYMASTER GENERAL informed the Cabinet of the business to be taken in the House of Commons during the following week. It was likely that the Opposition would use the debate on 16 July on outbreaks of civil violence to attack the economic policies of the Government, which they would allege had been a prime cause of the disturbances. There was great pressure on the time of both Houses during the remainder of July; time might, nevertheless, have to be found for a debate in Government time on the Brandt Report and also, if the Opposition did not choose the subject for a Supply Day, for one on the British Broadcasting Corporation external services.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS

---  
East-West  
Relations

Previous  
References:  
CC(81) 26th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2 and  
CC(81) 22nd  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2

2. THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that he had visited Moscow on 5 and 6 July. The Soviet Government had reacted with predictable hostility to his initiative on Afghanistan. The inference must be that they were not yet in deep enough trouble there to want a way out. His aim now would be to keep up the international pressure. On Poland, he had found the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr Gromyko, surprisingly relaxed and communicative. Having just returned from a visit to Warsaw, Mr Gromyko was clear that the economic prospects for Poland were extremely serious, but he gave the impression that he did not regard the political situation as too critical and that the forthcoming Congress of the Polish Communist Party was unlikely to lead to produce circumstances in which the Soviet Union would feel compelled to intervene. By contrast, Mr Gromyko and his colleagues had shown considerable uncertainty and hostility about United States policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. The central issue involved was arms control. Mr Gromyko had argued uncompromisingly that progress in this area would be impossible unless the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation agreed to the Soviet proposal for a moratorium on the deployment of long-range theatre nuclear weapons.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

COMMUNITY  
AFFAIRS

---  
Community  
Objectives  
during the  
British  
Presidency

3. THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY reported that he had addressed the European Parliament on 8 July setting out the proposed objectives for the Community during the six months of the British Presidency. He was hopeful that the approach would be thought reasonable by Community partners.

sheepmeat  
previous  
reference:  
C(81) 26th  
conclusions,  
minute 3

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD said that the outstanding problem of "clawback" of premia on exports of sheepmeat might be settled later in the week, although the Commission had not been very helpful and the solution would not be wholly satisfactory.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

## CIVIL UNREST

4. THE HOME SECRETARY said that in the course of the previous fortnight there had been serious outbreaks of rioting in Southall, the Toxteth area of Liverpool, the Moss Side area of Manchester and, to a lesser extent, Wood Green in North London. Earlier that week, he had visited Liverpool and discussed the situation with civic and church leaders, and with representatives of the ethnic minorities. In spite of the considerable degree of financial assistance which the area had received from the Government, they still regarded Liverpool as a neglected area; they ascribed the root cause of the present unrest to a feeling of alienation among the young, and to the high level of unemployment, although they acknowledged that many rioters were below working age. There had been some complaints of police harassment, but racial conflict did not appear to have played a very large part in the disturbances in Liverpool. The police had been subject to extreme pressure, but their morale was very high, and they greatly appreciated the high level of continuing support which they had received from the Government. The Moss Side riots seemed to be largely in imitation of those in Liverpool, though social conditions in the area were very bad. There had been major damage to property in the area, but, unlike Liverpool, no police officers had been seriously injured. There was no doubt that the most recent Southall riot had been provoked by racially motivated white youths from outside the area. The Wood Green incident had taken place in a relatively prosperous area and seemed to be isolated in its causes. There were other cities in which disturbances could well occur during the summer. In the debate arranged for the following week, the Opposition would almost certainly seek to blame high unemployment for the unrest, and to demand major changes in the Government's economic policies; the attitude of some of the Government's own supporters would be to suggest a response concentrated on law and order issues. He recommended that the Government should attempt to steer a middle course between these two extremes. They must continue to give the police their fullest support, and to be ready to advise Chief Constables as necessary on the handling of the difficult and unfamiliar situation which had arisen. The particular problems of the deprived inner city areas should be kept in mind in the Government's further consideration of the allocation of scarce resources, and the Home Office would press ahead with its current study of racist attacks, and with the review

of the Public Order Act, though the outcome of the latter would have to await the conclusion of Lord Scarman's current inquiry, and was in any case unlikely to be immediately relevant to the present situation.

In discussion, it was agreed that the Government needed to react quickly and effectively to help shopkeepers and others who had suffered serious damage and loss in the disturbances. Compensation was payable by police authorities under the Riot Damage Act in respect of damage to buildings and their contents, and leaflets had already been distributed in Liverpool explaining the procedure for lodging claims. The payment of claims could, however, take some time and it was desirable that the process should be expedited. While it was clearly important to minimise the risk of abuse, those concerned should be given wide delegated authority to make advance payments where necessary, and perhaps to pay compensation for damage to vehicles and other property not covered by the Riot Damage Act. It might be useful to enlist outside help - for example, from a panel of professional loss adjusters - to ensure that claims were dealt with quickly and fairly, and that fraudulent claims were detected.

In discussion of the implications for law enforcement, it was noted that the existing law was prima facie adequate to deal with the various offences, including assault, and causing an affray, which had been committed in the course of the riots. Looters could be charged with theft or handling stolen goods. Nevertheless, the police faced formidable difficulties in arresting the main trouble-makers amid the confusion of a riot; and, having done so, in obtaining convictions in circumstances where identification was often doubtful. Reintroducing the Riot Act in a modernised form might be presentationally helpful, and would have the additional advantage that anyone found on the streets once the statutory time from the reading of the proclamation had expired, including Press and radio and television reporters, would be guilty of an absolute offence. Difficulties of identification might be diminished if the wearing of masks were of itself to be made a criminal offence. It was essential that those who had been charged in connection with the current disturbances should be brought speedily to trial. The experience at Bristol suggested it was often best to charge individuals with summary offences, and special sittings of Magistrates' courts could be held. Where offenders were more appropriately tried on indictment special arrangements needed to be made to ensure an early trial.

In discussion of the underlying causes of the disturbances attention was drawn to the number of young people, many West Indians, who felt no loyalty to society and resorted to crime. High unemployment in inner city areas was increasing the numbers of such frustrated young people with no outlet for their energies. Much responsibility also lay with parents who failed to exercise adequate control over their

children. The Criminal Justice Bill planned for next Session would increase the powers of the courts in dealing with parents of offenders. Headmasters in Liverpool consulted by the Department of Education and Science had reported an atmosphere of mounting tension in the schools in the period immediately preceding the riots, and there was some evidence that the disturbances had not been spontaneous. More generally, the riots and their aftermath had revealed an alarmingly widespread lack of moral sense; much of the large-scale looting in Toxteth, for example, had been carried out by middle-aged white residents who had had no part in the riots themselves. Though it was often claimed that it could not be demonstrated that television had a deleterious effect on standards of moral and social behaviour, the fact was that the generation of young people now growing up were habituated to watching television for many hours every day, and there was good reason to fear that television had undermined the traditional disciplines of family life, and had given prominence to violence in both news and entertainment programmes.

In further discussion, it was noted that the moderate Labour leadership of the Merseyside County Council and of the Labour group on the Liverpool City Council were coming under great pressure from the extreme Left, who missed no opportunity to weaken the administration of both authorities. There was evidence also that extremists had penetrated voluntary community organisations with the deliberate intention of provoking and exploiting disturbances aimed in particular at the police. In Manchester the police authority was now under left-wing control. In many cities the Left would try to make capital out of any supplementary rate increases made necessary by the measures being taken to limit excess local authority expenditure, and out of any future increases in council house rents. Some left-wing members of the legal profession sought to persuade young people who came before the courts that their convictions were the result of calculated social injustice.

In discussion of the economy of the areas concerned, it was argued on the one hand that money should be made available for the creation of jobs and environmental improvement in areas of greatest deprivation; but on the other, that it would be better to look more widely at "travel-to-work" areas and to spend such resources as could be made available on points of potential growth, which would not necessarily be in exactly the places these disturbances had occurred. The impression must not be given that more law-abiding areas were being penalised or that well-organised rioting produced quick results. Moreover, experience suggested that value for money would not be obtained if resources were channelled through local authorities and other agencies without clear direction. For these reasons, and to reassure the public, there might be advantage in appointing a Minister or Ministers who would be publicly identified with the Government's concern for improving social conditions, who

would analyse the needs of particular areas on an objective basis and who would be responsible for encouraging private sector investment as well as for ensuring that such additional public money as might be made available was used to the best advantage.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Cabinet accepted that there might be further outbreaks of civil disturbances. What had already happened was a matter of great concern and might prove a watershed in British political life. The Government should continue to give full support to the police and must be seen to respond quickly and effectively to the present situation. The Ministers concerned should consider urgently whether changes in the criminal law were needed and should make any arrangements necessary to ensure that those charged with offences in connection with the disturbances were brought to trial without delay. Destruction of shops and other property would further weaken the economy of the areas affected and urgent consideration should be given to the best way of ensuring that those who had suffered serious loss during the riots received very early compensation, if necessary on an interim basis. The Home Secretary should consider what more could be done to encourage the broadcasting authorities to pay greater attention to the possible effects of the way in which they collected and broadcast news items about violent incidents. The Cabinet had also had a useful discussion on possible ways of improving the effectiveness of expenditure in inner city areas, where considerable sums had been spent in the past, sometimes on the wrong objectives; and she would herself consider further the points made and, in particular, the need for better leadership and co-ordination of programmes of expenditure in these areas.

The Cabinet -

1. Invited the Home Secretary, in consultation with the Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Attorney General and the Lord Advocate, to consider whether any changes to the criminal law were desirable in order to enable the courts and the police to deal more effectively with offences committed in the course of riots and to report to the Cabinet.
2. Invited the Lord Chancellor, in consultation with the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Attorney General and the Lord Advocate, to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that persons charged with offences in connection with the riots were brought to trial at the earliest opportunity.

3. Invited the Home Secretary, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment, to consider urgently the best way of expediting the payment of compensation to those who had suffered losses in the course of the riots, and to report to the Cabinet.

4. Invited the Home Secretary to discuss with the broadcasting authorities the influence of their programmes on viewers and listeners, as indicated in the Prime Minister's summing up.

5. Took note that the Prime Minister would give further consideration to the question of Ministerial leadership and co-ordination of programmes and policies for improvement of social conditions in the areas in question.

NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
AFFAIRS

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(81) 25th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 4

5. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND said that the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, which was a non-official Catholic body involving both laymen and clerics from both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, had sought to play a helpful role in relation to the hunger strike by prisoners in the Maze prison but had been unable to bring the strike to an end. They had seen the protesting prisoners on three occasions; and they had been in contact with the strikers' families and probably also with the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). It had been made clear to them in advance by the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Alison) that there could be no negotiations between the Government and the prisoners, and that the strike was in any case not really about prison conditions. Meanwhile the prisoners had put out a statement which was conciliatory in tone but not in substance; their five demands were unchanged, although they were content for concessions to apply equally to all prisoners and were no longer demanding a differentiated status for themselves. In response the Government had repeated its earlier procedure by which he himself had set out in a public statement the conditions and privileges which were applicable to all conforming prisoners, and this statement was then communicated to each protesting prisoner. It had thus been made clear, both inside and outside the prison, that the continuation of the strike was not due, as so often alleged, to inflexibility on the Government's side. A fifth hunger striker, McDonnell, had died early on 8 July. His place had been taken by another prisoner, so that a total of eight remained on strike. The police had been well able to cope with the public disorder immediately following his death, in which no-one had been seriously injured.



**CONFIDENTIAL**

Further trouble was expected at the time of the funeral; but it was hoped that this would be over before the start of the Protestant marches commemorating the Battle of the Boyne, which on this occasion would not take place until 13 July because 12 July fell on a Sunday. If the hunger strike persisted the next striker was likely to die soon after 20 July.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

Cabinet Office

9 July 1981

**CONFIDENTIAL**