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April 25, 1983

My dear Ian.

In yr. last letter about Alfred, you said you thought that we are not out of the wood so far as Alfred's troubles are concerned.

Quite true. They rumble on. But implicit in yr. remark is the suggestion that one day we will get to a happy land where there are no woods. That I very much doubt. Alfred expects woods. He will invent them if they are not there.

I think that that is part of his character. He is original, persistent, learned, ingenious, & in the right circumstances, very entertaining. But he is a little unbalanced sometimes & occasionally very unbalanced. Dealing with him in my experience is rather like dealing with the Soviet Union: there is never a final settlement; there are armistices, not compromises.

The present series of crises derive in my opinion from (a) my approval late last year of his request for more & more highly qualified staff because of the imminence of the general election. So I approved a groundsman for him as chief of staff & a more experienced secretary. I told Nathalie Brooke too she cd. let up her iron curb over spending on entertainment at the ranch - at least a little. I also told her to be as forthcoming as possible to him in respect of all requests because of the need to keep his brain particularly lively in the period before the election; and

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(b) my tardy effort to draw a line. e.g. over the credit card. Alfred is extravagant & things no doubt the Centre cd. gain more money expenditure at restaurants is scarcely essential and whatever the possibilities Nick Ceyzer does not always find it easy to ensure a steady flow.

There was also my request to him, but after the affair of Stodhart's article, & after consultation with David, to try & keep his advice on politics for the Prime Minister's benefit till the election. We thought this reasonable but, of course, it led, as we know, to the crisis of journalistic integrity.

That in turn ~~had~~ led not to concessions on Alfred's part but to the proposals he made for his deputy chairmanship, his role on the board, his plans for expansion after the election etc.

Now of course we find that these proposals of his are not met, or are not immediately - & we have further troubles.

Personally, as I think, that I told you, the idea of a larger Centre with more resources is attractive & it could be a great help in the Prime Minister's second term - providing, as I believe,

- (a) it is sensibly organised;
- (b) the money is available; and
- (c) the relations with Central Office is well worked out.

(b) and (c) are interrelated. We had troubles in Peter Thorneycroft's time over our fund-raising. We'd have to work out carefully the inter-relationship with Central Office. I think Alfred wd. say that is not necessary but, of course, that is unrealistic. No one wants inter party rows & they aren't necessary.

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I must say something about the organisation of the Centre, expanded or not.

My experience is that Alfred wd. be inappropriate to run the Centre or indeed anything - just as (as I have sometimes said to him) it wd. be inappropriate to have asked Beethoven to administer the Vienna Opera House.

This cd. be wrong. He cd. mature if authority were given to him. But I am a bit sceptical because there has not been a sea-change exactly in his conduct since he became (on my arrangement) first a ~~man~~ director & then a member of the Centre * & since we settled his finances.

The aim must be to find therefore, a chairman who will, with some degree of humour as well as ^{accommodation} of the sensitivity of the position vis à vis the Prime Minister, be able to reproach Alfred if in public he calls Keith Joseph a coward - or says something disgraceful about Cline Whitmore; who will tell him not to spend £350 in three days at Brighton; who will try & sit on him if he hears ~~Alfred~~ he has made a contract with a publisher to write a book about the mistakes of the Government after his election (as Alfred has, I think, with Geo. Weidenfeld); who will seek to dissuade him from

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* This is a complicated distinction. The Centre is a Company now "owned" by Nick Cayzer, David Young, Alfred & myself. They appoint the directors.

Directors: Lord Thomas (Chairman) Lord Cayzer (Hon Treasurer) Alfred Sherman (Director of Studies)
Simon Webley Secretary: Nathalie Brooke

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answering every attack on him by a letter in the press; who will question his judgement sometimes about people — whether it be his interest in that slightly seedy ex M.I.6 officer George Young or one or other of the mysterious financiers or would be donors who naturally are attracted by an institution such as the Centre & whose interests may be personal not philanthropic; who will write all the letters of thanks & reminder to the eighty or so donors, at the right time, & go through the Centre's publications to see if a statement made might be damaging; and who finally will be able to write letters of apology, if necessary of the most fallacious nature if a minister is offended by something — as I recently had to to Norman Fowler.

Whether Prof. Jones sitting in Aberdeen is the right man for this factful job is very much open to question. I fear he wd. be ineffective. But if the Centre is expanded someone stronger wd. be needed. In my opinion the person concerned ought to be someone like John Hoskyns or perhaps Ld. Marshall — a heavyweight in politics whom Alfred respects.

As to the various matters pending, I have not yet spoken to Alfred's nominees for the Board since they (Westall Smith, Haas) have been away. I shall see them ^{in the} next week or so. I regret to say though that Dick Cayzer is unhappy about the idea of making Alfred deputy or vice-chairman. He was very offended by remarks made by Alfred about Keith Joseph (or someone else I can't quite remember) at a lunch, & cannot forgive him. I shall not tell Alfred this at the moment.

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The above must sound negative .
 I assure you I do recognise Alfred's qualities
 In some ways he is a genius . But the essence of
 genius is that there are strange shadows in such
 a person's soul . I naturally always find it
 easy to defend Alfred on the occasions when I have
 to do so in private conversation — & those have
 been numerous over the last four years . I know
 that the Prime Minister prizes him & that is
 a decisive matter . I ~~am~~ also naturally recognise
 that it was he who introduced me as a
 possible source of ideas & advice , to the Prime Minister
 long ago, when she was still in opposition , & so
 gave me the possibility of adding a whole new
 dimension to my life — of great value .

I began this overlong letter by raising a
 question as to whether it is possible to satisfy
 Alfred . I continue to think he is insatiable,
 is the correct use of that word . I personally
 believe myself to be on excellent terms with him,
 even though he may differ — I do not know exactly:
 perhaps the truth is ~~that~~ not that he has
 lost confidence in my chairmanship but that he is
 weary of the side of himself that he has exposed
 to me . On which La Rochefoucauld might say
 I end this overlong letter . Yours ever
 Hugh

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