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CABINET

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

THURSDAY 4 MAY 1989

at 11.00 am

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP  
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and  
Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon Nigel Lawson MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Lord Mackay of Clashfern  
Lord Chancellor

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP  
Secretary of State for the Home  
Department

The Rt Hon Peter Walker MP  
Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon George Younger MP  
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP  
Secretary of State for Employment

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment

The Rt Hon Lord Young of Graffham  
Secretary of State for Trade and  
Industry

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
and Sciences

The Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP  
Secretary of State for Health

Mr Rt Hon John MacGregor MP  
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and  
Food

The Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind QC MP  
Secretary of State for Scotland

The Rt Hon Paul Channon MP  
Secretary of State for Transport

The Rt Hon John Moore MP  
Secretary of State for Social Security

The Rt Hon John Wakeham MP  
Lord President of the Council

The Rt Hon The Lord Belstead  
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP  
Secretary of State for Energy

The Rt Hon John Major MP  
Chief Secretary, Treasury

The Rt Hon Antony Newton MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

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THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon David Waddington QC MP  
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

The Rt Hon Peter Brooke MP  
Paymaster General

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robin Butler  
Mr R G Lavelle (Item 4)  
Mr P J Weston (Item 4)  
Mr A J Langdon (Items 1-3)  
Mr J Holroyd (Item 4)  
Mr S S Mundy (Items 1-3)

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THE PRIME  
MINISTER'S  
TEN YEARS IN  
OFFICE

1. THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the day marked the tenth anniversary of Her Majesty The Queen's invitation to the Prime Minister to form an administration, following the 1979 General Election. The completion of a continuous decade in office was, in itself, an historic feat that was unmatched by any Prime Minister in modern times, but the achievement went far beyond mere statistics. During that period the authority of government had been restored, the economy had been brought back to health and the United Kingdom had been re-established in a position of influence and respect abroad. These very great achievements stemmed from the courage, leadership and clear vision of the Prime Minister. On behalf of all his Cabinet colleagues, he wished to express their pride in serving in her administration.

The Cabinet -

Warmly endorsed the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's remarks, and offered their congratulations to the Prime Minister on the tenth anniversary of her taking office.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that she greatly appreciated the Cabinet's congratulations and wished to record her thanks to Lord Whitelaw and other former colleagues, as well as to the members of the present Cabinet. She also wished to record her thanks to all the Government's supporters, both inside and outside Parliament, and to all who had helped the Government in its legislation and other work, for their contribution to what had been achieved in the last ten years.

PARLIAMENTARY  
AFFAIRS

2. The Cabinet were informed of the business to be taken in the House of Commons in the following week.

Current Issues

THE PRIME MINISTER said that there were a number of outstanding issues the substance of which it was desirable to resolve before the Summer Recess to pave the way for rounding-off the first two Sessions of the Parliament, which were inevitably difficult ones. These issues included the contracts of general practitioners in the National Health Service; the legislation on the privatisation of the water and electricity supply industries; the legal profession's response to the Government's proposals for reform; the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer; and the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme. In addition, there was the possibility of industrial action during the summer, which the media might well present in an exaggerated and sensational fashion. It was most important that Ministers should keep a close eye both on individual

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disputes and on the way in which different disputes might interact with each other.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

HOME AFFAIRS

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Abolition of  
the Dock  
Labour  
Scheme

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(89) 15.2

3. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT said that it was now one month since the Government had announced that legislation would be introduced to abolish the Dock Labour Scheme. The Transport and General Workers Union had arranged a work-place ballot from 10-17 May with a further short period for postal votes. In an attempt to ensure that any resultant industrial action was regarded as a lawful trade dispute, the union had made no reference to the Dock Labour Scheme in the ballot paper, which simply asked whether union members would be prepared to take part in strike action. The port employers, who had been acting very sensibly, would doubtless be looking at the ballot arrangements with the utmost care with a view to considering legal action if that seemed justified. It was clearly prudent that contingency plans should continue to be made both by Government and by industry against the possibility of the dock workers taking strike action. The Dock Work Bill was likely to have completed its Committee Stage in the House of Commons by the time of any possible strike action.

Disturbance  
at Risley  
Remand Centre

THE HOME SECRETARY said that about 50 prisoners at Risley Remand Centre, Cheshire, had given themselves up the previous evening after demonstrating on the roof of the establishment for the previous four days. He had ordered an internal Prison Department enquiry into the disturbance, in which appreciable damage had been caused to the fabric of the building, and a separate criminal investigation was also being put in hand. Untried and unsentenced prisoners, such as those at Risley, were held for short and unpredictable periods, and therefore did not have the same stake in the running of an establishment as did prisoners serving sentences. In the case of Risley, these problems were aggravated by the fact that the prison was badly designed. However, it was also manifest that the real problem at Risley lay in the violent and undisciplined nature of the inmates.

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Industrial  
Action on  
the London  
Underground

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(89) 15.3

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT said that London Underground was seeking an injunction in the High Court that day against an indefinite strike by London Underground workers which was due to begin on the following Monday. It was likely that the case would be taken to appeal, and tentative arrangements had been made for any such appeal to be heard on the following day. London Underground hoped that industrial action could be averted, but as a contingency his Department were in touch with the police about the implications of a prolonged London Underground strike for other forms of transport in London.

Possible  
Industrial  
Action on  
British Rail

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT said that the National Union of Railwaymen were likely to decide in the following week whether to ballot their British Rail members about possible industrial action. It was likely that any such action would fall short of a full strike and would take the form of selective action.

Civil and  
Public  
Services  
Association

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT said that the Civil and Public Services Association had balloted their members in the previous week to seek approval for a one-day strike against the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency and job reductions in the Training Agency. The result had been overwhelmingly against strike action which was a very welcome outcome, and in the event only minimal industrial action had occurred.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS

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Short Range  
Nuclear Forces  
in Europe

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(89) 15.3

4. THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the Prime Minister had had talks the preceding weekend with the Dutch Prime Minister, Mr Lubbers, and the Italian Prime Minister, Signor de Mita, as well as with Chancellor Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany about how to handle the subject of short range nuclear forces (SNF) in Europe in relation to the forthcoming North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Summit. On modernisation of NATO's SNF there was some prospect of progress with Chancellor Kohl on the wording to be announced at the Summit, to the effect that the Alliance supported the United States development programme for a follow-on system to the Lance missile. The

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rest of the allies seemed likely to go along with this. But on the question of whether the West should offer negotiations on SNF, the support for the United Kingdom's position was more limited. Apart from the United States, the main support came from the Netherlands. Following the resignation of the Dutch government, it would continue on a caretaker basis pending new elections but would be unable to take any initiatives, though it was to be hoped that its support on the SNF issue would not weaken. There was a risk that the Americans might seek some compromise solution in advance of the Summit. The fact nevertheless remained that no such negotiations could be initiated with the Soviet Union without the prior agreement of all the NATO allies.

Lebanon

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(89) 14.3

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THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the previous day had been a slightly better one in Beirut from the point of view of the shelling which had been taking place between the forces of the Maronite leader, General Aoun, and his opponents. There were some signs that the efforts of the Arab League to secure an effective cease-fire might be having results. The government was keeping under daily review the question of the safety of the British Embassy in Beirut.

China

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(89) 15.3

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THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that student demonstrations marking the 70th anniversary of the democracy movement of 4 May 1919 were taking place in Peking on much the same pattern as had been seen on 27 April, with huge numbers involved. The Chinese authorities were attempting to handle matters with restraint and to isolate the ringleaders in an effort to get the overall situation back under control.

Southern  
Africa

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(89) 14.3

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THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that in his capacity as President in Office of the United Nations Security Council he had received a letter on 3 May from the South African Foreign Minister, Mr Pik Botha, claiming that the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) was planning to infiltrate some hundreds of SWAPO guerrillas into Namibia across the Angolan border during the night of 3/4 May; and threatening that if this were to happen it would lead to the suspension of the agreement to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. The letter called for the situation to be looked at urgently. Her Majesty's Ambassador at Luanda had been in touch with the Cubans there who had undertaken to stop any such SWAPO plan in its tracks if the South African claim turned out to be well-founded.

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The Angolan Government had also been very firm. There was so far no evidence to support Mr Pik Botha's claims about such SWAPO action.

Anglo-Czechoslovak  
Co-operation  
on Explosives

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the Government had reached agreement in principle with the Czechoslovak authorities about joint work toward an international convention for marking explosives. This would require that all plastic explosives including Semtex should contain a chemical additive detectable by existing systems. It was a modest step in the right direction.

Helsinki  
Conference on  
the Montreal  
Protocol

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT said that at the meeting held in Helsinki to review the Montreal Protocol, a proposal had been put forward for the establishment of an international fund. It had not been made clear what detailed purposes the fund would serve or how it would operate. He had opposed the proposal. In doing so he had had the support of the United States and, when they had realised that they would be a net donor, the Soviet Union.

The Cabinet

Took note.

Cabinet Office

4 May 1989

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