

CONSERVATIVE, RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

32 SMITH SQUARE · SW1

MEMORANDUM

To.....The Chairman.....

From.....Edward Llewellyn.....

.....22nd January 1990.....

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE EDG

I thought the following points might be useful in advance of Wednesday's meeting.

1. EASTERN EUROPE

- The EDG held its Group meeting in Berlin from 9th - 12th January. The Group met representatives of one the East German opposition groups, *Democratic Awakening*.
- Tom Spencer, Edward McMillan-Scott and John Stevens were present at the Conservative Council on Eastern Europe's conference in Prague on 13th/14th January. Christopher Jackson, Madron Seligman and Patricia Rawlings were present at the EDU round table in Vienna, which took place on the same weekend.
- I strongly recommend that Eastern Europe should be put high on the agenda for Wednesday's meeting. It is an area where we have reasonable common ground with the Group. It would be useful to ask those who have recently travelled to Eastern Europe for their impressions.
- In the European Parliament last week, the EDG put forward a proposal for a European Democracy Fund to assist with the establishment of parliamentary democracy in those reforming Eastern European countries. The proposal was blocked by the Socialists.

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2. LABOUR BASHING

- The British Labour Group is determined to do all it can to support the Labour leadership at Westminster and to get Mr Kinnock into Downing Street. Their leaked strategy document (attached) makes that quite plain.
- The debate on the ambulance dispute last week was a typical example of the BLG seeking to embarrass the Government at home and in Europe. A further tactic mentioned is to provoke Conservative MEPs into attacking the Government. We need to be alert to this. We also need the EDG's help in monitoring and attacking the activities of Labour MEPs.

3. COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT/PARTY/EDG

- Since June, there have been a range of measures to improve relations between the EDG and the Government.
- The **Prime Minister** has written to **Sir Christopher Prout** stressing the need for regular contact between, EDG Spokesmen and Ministers, and contact with Special Advisers and CRD.
- **Francis Maude** has written to relevant Ministers stressing the need for regular contact with the EDG; set up formal monthly meetings with Sir Christopher Prout, Tom Spencer and Christopher Jackson; organised more specific and targeted briefings; held an open day at the CCO on 8th January.
- At **Central Office**, Shirley Stotter's post is a new one, which the EDG sought. Her early involvement in the planning of the Information Campaign is an innovation.

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- CRD is keen to improve cooperation. The brief, '*Leading the Pack*', was sent to the EDG in advance for comments, many of which were incorporated.
- You are visiting the EDG in Strasbourg in February and again in April.

A further proposal you might consider is a more frequent exchange between Number 10, Central Office and Euro Constituency Chairmen. Letting the Group know that we intend to seek the views of constituency Chairmen on a more regular basis - who tend to be closer to the Government - would be no bad thing. The mechanism to do that exists in the National Union's European Co-ordinating Committee, which meets every two months.

4. THE MOOD OF THE EDG

- It is frustrating that the Group continues to feel isolated and unappreciated by the Party, despite the recent overtures that we have made to them. It is regrettable that recent months have seen an increase too in Press coverage of EDG/Government divisions, although that is partly due to the fact that several issues (eg Social Charter and EMU) came to a head in December. But I think we should continue to persevere to improve relations, accepting that it will be a while before our efforts bear any fruit.
- There remains a deep suspicion of Central Office among some, and general resentment at the way in which they allege Central Office and, in particular, Number 10, brief the Press 'against' the EDG. Michael Welsh, for example, told me that the Press' portrayal of the Number 10 meeting, as an olive branch extended by the Party and the Prime Minister, is orchestrated by CCO and Number 10 in an attempt to 'set the Group up'; it was the EDG which proposed the meeting. His theory is that Number 10 expects that an MEP will inevitably publicly criticise the meeting, at which point Number 10 will tell the Press that it has done its best to build bridges to the MEPs, but clearly they are not prepared to cooperate (this is why a joint press line with Christopher Prout after the meeting is so important).

- On policy, the Group's concerns centre on (a) the tone (b) the substance of the Government's policy.
 - (a) A constant gripe is that the Government is not positive enough on European matters, and is too reactive; it should be pro-active, they argue, putting forward new political initiatives with the frequency of the French, for example. And, as you know, they are especially sensitive to being told the EP is not real Parliament!
 - (b) The EDG's differences with the substance of the Government's European policy are the heart of the matter. Those differences are very substantial - the fact that it is the policy of Britain's Conservative MEPs to work for the kind of political union in the Community which Britain's Conservative Government, and the House of Commons, and recent poll evidence (see *Independent*, 20th January 1990) do not endorse.
- There is a widespread feeling in the Group that Britain is in the process of 'missing the bus' in Europe once again, to use the old cliché. I have noticed an increasing trend, on the part of Peter Price for example, to justify speaking out against the Government as his duty to the nation, which he must put above his duty to the Party.
- It is particularly difficult to know what to do about problem (b), which is exacerbated by the overwhelming desire of the EDG to gain entry to the EPP; they loathe isolation in Strasbourg, and it is the case that building political alliances is more important there than at Westminster if one is to exert any influence.
- In conclusion, I think the important thing is to speak plainly to the EDG. The fundamentals of the Government's European policy are not going to change. They must accept that. Continuing to bicker in public can only damage both

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sides. The Labour Group have evidently learnt the need for loyalty to their party if they are to win elections, be they General Elections or European Elections. Eastern Europe, however, offers a great opportunity for us to work together. On other matters, the Group should use the new arrangements that we have put in place; certainly we value their expertise. Once in a while they might welcome the Government's and the Party's too.

EL/nl

c.c. John Whittingdale
Maurice Fraser

EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC GROUP

MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER - WEDNESDAY, 24TH JANUARY 1990

Sir Christopher PROUT
Mr. Christopher BEAZLEY
Mr. Peter BEAZLEY
Lord BETHELL
Mr. Bryan CASSIDY
Sir Fred CATHERWOOD
Mrs. Margaret DALY
The Hon. James ELLES
Dr. Caroline JACKSON
Mr. Christopher JACKSON
Mr. Edward KELLETT-BOWMAN
Mr. Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT
Mr. James MOORHOUSE
Mr. Bill NEWTON DUNN
Lord O'HAGAN
Mr. Ben PATTERSON
Mr. Derek PRAG
Mr. Peter PRICE
Miss Patricia RAWLINGS
Sir James SCOTT-HOPKINS
Mr. Madron SELIGMAN
~~Mr. Richard SIMMONDS~~
Mr. Anthony SIMPSON
Mr. Tom SPENCER
Mr. John STEVENS
Sir Jack STEWART-CLARK
Mr. Amedee TURNER
Mr. Michael WELSH

Harold Kohler
Edward Hevellyn
Foreign Sec
Cliff Whip
Chairman,