



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

6 April 1979

*Dear Mrs. Thatcher*

When Sir Ian Bancroft saw you earlier this week he said that I would be letting you have a brief note about the Prime Minister's Office at 10 Downing Street. I now enclose a copy for your personal information.

The note, which both Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir John Hunt have agreed, sets out the position now. The construction and working of the office has, of course, evolved over many years under successive Prime Ministers. But I do wish to emphasise that its sole purpose is to meet the Prime Minister's requirements and it can be, and will be, adapted in any way as the Prime Minister of the day wishes.

I should, of course, be very willing to talk to you about No. 10 in all its aspects if this would be helpful to you.

*Your sincerely,  
Kenneth Lowe.*

The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, M.P.

## The Prime Minister's Office

1. The Prime Minister's Office at No. 10 Downing Street secures for the Prime Minister information, advice and action on all matters of government policy. It is essentially a two-way link between the Prime Minister and the machinery of government in the widest sense.

2. The sources of advice available to the Prime Minister on any matter include all or any of: Ministers in the administration; ~~the Cabinet Office via the Secretary of the Cabinet~~ <sup>who is also Permanent</sup> ~~the CSD via~~ <sup>Secretary of the MPO and Head of the Civil Service</sup> ~~the Head of the Civil Service~~; the CPRS; the political policy advisers and the Press Secretary in No. 10; and Government back-benchers via the Parliamentary Private Secretary. It is the responsibility of the Private Office to ensure (1) that these sources are tapped as the Prime Minister wishes, and the resultant advice is co-ordinated and presented in good time, and (2) that action as directed by the Prime Minister is taken and, if need be, monitored and followed up in the Departments concerned.

3. For this purpose each Private Secretary is made responsible for dealing with certain fields of policy, under the direction of the Principal Private Secretary, as follows:

Overseas Affairs Private Secretary (dealing with overseas, defence and Northern Ireland matters)

Economic Affairs Private Secretary (economic, financial and industrial policy)

Parliamentary Affairs Private Secretary (briefing for the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Questions; letters to Members of Parliament; the preparation of the Prime Minister's statements; and assistance with speeches in the House of Commons)

<sup>and Engagements</sup>  
Home Affairs/Private Secretary (dealing with non-economic home matters <sup>and the</sup>)

~~Engagements Private Secretary~~ (Prime Minister's engagements, including travel arrangements; entertainment; correspondence about engagements)

4. The Principal Private Secretary, apart from overseeing all the work of the Private Office, deals personally with all matters of overriding importance, constitutional matters, relations with the Palace, and Honours, and works in close consultation with the Secretary of the Cabinet ~~and Head of the Civil Service~~.
  
5. Although each Private Secretary specialises in certain fields, the office functions as one team and business is, if necessary, dealt with by any of the Private Secretaries. Each Private Secretary in turn is designated as the duty Private Secretary for each day; he then becomes responsible for dealing with all business arising out of office hours ~~and accompanies the Prime Minister on internal United Kingdom journeys~~. A similar arrangement applies at weekends. The Duty Private Secretary is on call at home when on duty but will, as necessary, come to 10 Downing Street, to Chequers (or elsewhere) to deal with Prime Minister's business.
  
6. The Private Secretary (Appointments) - advises the Prime Minister on various public and ecclesiastical appointments. He is also responsible for the administration of Civil List pensions, for general personnel management matters within the office, and for matters relating to the fabric and services at 10 Downing Street and Chequers. He is also the Lord Chancellor's Ecclesiastical Secretary, and advises the Lord Chancellor on appointments to those Livings of which he is the patron. In this work he is assisted by the Assistant Secretary for Ecclesiastical Patronage, who is a member of the Lord Chancellor's staff.
  
7. The Press Secretary - the No. 10 Press Office is headed by a Press Secretary, appointed personally by and responsible directly to the Prime Minister. He is responsible for the management of the Prime Minister's relations with the Press and the broadcasting organisations, for the Prime Minister's public relations more generally, and the presentation of the Government's policies as a whole - for this purpose the Press Secretary co-ordinates the work of Departmental Press Officers. The Press Secretary at 10 Downing Street deals directly with the Parliamentary Lobby Correspondents and also has oversight on the Prime Minister's behalf of Departmental press and public relations.

8. The Prime Minister's office is manned 24-hours a day, 365 days a year by (1) a Duty Clerk<sup>†</sup> in the Private Office; (2) two Secretaries (Garden Room Girls)<sup>†</sup> and (3) two telephone switchboard operators - and a Private Secretary and Press Officer will be on duty, out of office hours, at home.

Functioning of the Office

9. The forward planning of business is done on a weekly cycle as follows:

i. ~~On Thursday of~~ Each week the Cabinet Office talk both to the Private Secretary in charge of the Prime Minister's diary and to Departments with business for collective discussion with a view to drawing up provisional proposals for Cabinet and Cabinet Committee business for the ensuing three weeks.

ii. ~~On Friday morning~~ <sup>Thursday evening</sup> The Principal Private Secretary attends an internal Cabinet Office meeting chaired by Sir ~~John Hunt~~ <sup>Robert Armstrong</sup> at which the draft programme is considered. The purpose of this is to reconcile competing bids on the Prime Minister's time; to ensure that matters do not unnecessarily come to Cabinet or Cabinet Committees; and that essential and urgent business is given priority.

iii. ~~On Friday evening~~ <sup>Thursday</sup> ~~Sir John Hunt~~ <sup>Sir Robert Armstrong</sup> minutes the Principal Private Secretary with proposals for meetings of the Cabinet and of any Cabinet Committees chaired by the Prime Minister for the following three weeks. ~~These are related in No. 10 to other Prime Ministerial engagements so that a co-ordinated programme can be submitted to the Prime Minister.~~ The proposals for Cabinet/Cabinet Committee business are for specific meetings, at stated times, and cover suggested agenda items with a brief explanation of these. ~~These proposals are put into effect, if the Prime Minister agrees, on the following Monday.~~

Sir Robert Armstrong normally has a meeting with the Prime Minister on Friday mornings to discuss the arrangements. They

<sup>†</sup>See Annex A

/iv. The fixed

- iv. The fixed points in the following week then become Cabinet (on Thursday and possibly Tuesday), any Cabinet Committees chaired by the Prime Minister, Prime Minister's Questions in the House on Tuesday and Thursday (for which preliminary briefing meetings may be needed) and the existing Prime Ministerial engagements in the diary, which normally include Audience of The Queen on Tuesday at 1830.
- v. A diary is prepared, on Friday evening, taking account of provisional Cabinet etc. business for the ensuing week and the ensuing year.
- vi. A daily diary is prepared afresh, for each day, at close of business on the preceding evening, for the Prime Minister and the Private Office and distributed to other principal advisers. The weekly diary is revised as events dictate and engagements are added or subtracted.

10. Briefing for Cabinet, for Cabinet Committee meetings chaired by the Prime Minister, for other Ministerial meetings, and for other engagements, is commissioned by the appropriate Private Secretary from the Cabinet Office, from Ministers in the Departments concerned, and from political advisers so as to be available for the Prime Minister's consideration in good time before the appropriate meeting. In general this briefing material arrives in No. 10 and is assembled with relevant papers for each item of business on the evening (or two evenings) before the meeting takes place. The Private Office similarly commissions and assembles briefing for the Prime Minister on other matters of business - e.g. for meetings with overseas and other visitors, or to deal with important letters.

11. The occasions in the Prime Minister's diary calling for speeches are similarly identified well in advance, briefing commissioned and assembled, and a draft prepared either by the Private Office or the Political Staff or jointly, as the Prime Minister directs.

/12. The Press

12. The Press Secretary, after consultation with the Prime Minister, traditionally meets the Lobby correspondents at 1100 and 1600 hours each day.

13. The end product of the day's input into No. 10 - submissions from Ministers; from the Secretary of the Cabinet; from ~~the Head of the Civil Service~~ or the head of the CPRS; briefs from the Cabinet Office; Ministerial advice on issues either raised by the Prime Minister or referred to him; draft replies to correspondence; draft speech material; papers put forward by Ministers, the Cabinet Office, or Private Office for the Prime Minister's information - is assembled in three folders (Action, Information, Signature) and put in the Prime Minister's box to be worked on at the Prime Minister's convenience. It is the Private Office's responsibility to ensure that the Prime Minister's political advisers are aware of, and able to advise on, all papers of this kind, as the Prime Minister may direct.

14. Special procedures apply for highly classified and intelligence material.

15. Separate notes are attached on:

- i. Supporting staff - Annex A; and
- ii. Inward and Outward Overseas Visits - Annex B.

An organisation chart for the office as a whole is at Annex C.

10 Downing Street,  
London S.W.1.

6 April 1979

/ANNEX A

SUPPORTING STAFF

The Private Secretaries and the Duty Clerk (see (1) below) work together in two rooms next to the Cabinet Room. Other staff of all kinds, official and political, are dispersed around the (cramped) complex of rooms in No. 10.

The supporting sections of the office are as follows:

(1) Confidential Filing

The Confidential Filing Section, headed by an Assistant Private Secretary, is responsible for:

- a. providing Duty Clerks who man the Private Office on a 24-hour basis; and
- b. the current official files of the Prime Minister's Office (except for the specialised files held elsewhere in the office).

There are six Duty Clerks, who are Executive Officers. They are the first point of contact for official business during non-office hours, and service the Private Office during the working day.

Outside normal working hours, the Duty Clerk:

- i. is available personally for the Prime Minister if necessary, and at all times available on the telephone;
- ii. deals with enquiries, supplies the Prime Minister with urgent messages or papers, and carries out the Prime Minister's instructions, where necessary in consultation with the duty Private Secretary;
- iii. ascertains the Prime Minister's movements, makes the necessary arrangements, and informs all those who need to know;

~~/iv. puts together~~

- iv. supervises (and assembles as necessary) the Prime Minister's box (see paragraph 13 above) for the day and arranges for it to be delivered to him.

(2) Parliamentary Questions Section

This small section (a Higher Executive Officer and a Personal Secretary) maintains a filing system of all the Prime Minister's Questions, statements and Parliamentary speeches with supporting briefing, and assists the Private Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs in his activities.

(3) Garden Rooms

The "Garden Rooms", headed by an Assistant Private Secretary, is the collective name given to the team of Senior Personal Secretaries and Personal Secretaries who provide shorthand typing and secretarial services for the Prime Minister and also the Private Secretaries. A member of the Garden Rooms is in all circumstances available to the Prime Minister to provide secretarial services and one will accompany the Prime Minister on all travels, including visits to Chequers, for this purpose. They also open and distribute incoming mail for the Prime Minister. Members of the Garden Rooms take it in turns to be on night and weekend duty, to accompany the Prime Minister when he is away from London and to <sup>staff</sup> ~~man~~ the office at Chequers whenever the Prime Minister is in residence there.

(4) Honours Section

The Prime Minister is advised on the selection of candidates for recommendation to The Queen for honours by a system of committees under the direction of the Head of the Home Civil Service. The Honours Section at No. 10 Downing Street, headed by an Assistant Private Secretary reporting to the Principal Private Secretary, maintains an index of those suggested for honours, handles correspondence between 10 Downing Street and Government Departments and outside organisations and individuals about possible candidates, prepares submissions to The Queen on honours and gallantry awards for the Prime Minister's signature, and despatches formal letters to recipients of honours. The Honours Section prepares and arranges



the printing of honours lists. The Honours Section also assists the Principal Private Secretary in the processing of Ministerial appointments.

(5) Correspondence Section

The Correspondence Section is headed by an Assistant Private Secretary. It is responsible for dealing with letters to the Prime Minister (other than constituency or Party correspondence) from members of the general public, which fluctuate widely but has averaged something like <sup>over 2000</sup> ~~2000~~ per week. All of these letters are acknowledged by No. 10; the majority are sent to other Government Departments for answer.

(6) Records Section

This Section, ~~headed by the same Assistant Private Secretary as the Correspondence Section,~~ is responsible for the custody and preliminary sifting of the official papers of past Prime Ministers and, when these are 25 years old, the final selection of those papers worthy of permanent preservation in the Public Record Office.

(7) Office Manager

The Office Manager is responsible for supplies and services of all kinds in 10 Downing Street and for supervision of the messengerial and cleaning staff. He reports to the Secretary for Appointments and through him to the Principal Private Secretary.

(8) The Secretary (Invitations)

The Secretary (Invitations) is responsible to the Diary Private Secretary for the detailed organisation of the Prime Minister's official entertainment. This involves preparing guest lists for the Prime Minister's approval, and sending out invitations and receiving replies, and preparing menus and table lists for the Prime Minister's approval.

(a) Cook (Part-time)

A part-time cook provides working lunches ~~on Tuesdays and~~ <sup>(if he remembers it)</sup> ~~for the Prime Minister, Private the PPS, Private~~ <sup>the PPS Secretary</sup> ~~Parliamentary~~ <sup>Senior policy advisers</sup> ~~on Tuesdays and~~ <sup>Thursday</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~Thursday~~ <sup>when the House is sitting and the is sitting.</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>A charge is</sup> ~~made for~~ <sup>the food</sup> ~~materials~~

OUTWARD AND INWARD OVERSEAS VISITS

(1) Outward and inward visits involving the Prime Minister and foreign Heads of Government fall into two categories:

- i. multilateral or bilateral meetings which have become a regular part of the calendar (e.g. meetings of the European Council, Economic Summit Meetings, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, Anglo-German and Anglo-French Summits); and
- ii. bilateral meetings arranged on the initiative of the United Kingdom Government or at the invitation of another Government.

(2) The recurrent multilateral meetings are usually arranged by the Heads of Governments concerned at the end of the preceding meeting in the series. Proposals for either inward or outward visits involving the Prime Minister are usually put forward on the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. The first step in arranging such a visit is to reach agreement on the dates. This is usually negotiated, under the Prime Minister's direction, by the Overseas Private Secretary at No. 10 direct with the Private Office of the other Head of Government concerned, or with the relevant Embassy or High Commission in London. Once the dates have been agreed, the Prime Minister will give an indication of his or her wishes concerning the programme, and these will be conveyed to the host Government through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

(3) Consideration of the substance of an inward or outward visit begins with the submission by the Cabinet Office, on the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other interested Departments, of recommendations on the objectives which the United Kingdom should pursue in the discussions and on the likely objectives of the other side.

/(4). Recommendations

(4) Recommendations concerning the agenda for the Prime Minister's discussions with a visiting or host Head of Government are made by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and, if - as is usually the case - they concern a number of Whitehall Departments, will be co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office. An outline agenda and, flowing from this, a suggested list of briefs, are submitted to the Prime Minister about two weeks before the visit takes place. When the Prime Minister has approved these, briefs are commissioned by the Cabinet Office or (for straightforward bilateral visits) by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: the aim is normally to have the briefs ready for the Prime Minister to read over the weekend preceding the visit.

(5) It has proved useful in the past for the Prime Minister to hold a briefing meeting, in the Cabinet Room at No. 10, a day or two before an inward or outward visit begins. This meeting is attended by Ministers and senior officials from all the Departments concerned with the visit, and its purpose is to determine the priority objectives for the visit, and the tactics which the Prime Minister should adopt in the various discussions with the host or visiting Head of Government. The meeting also provides the Prime Minister with an opportunity to ask for further information on any points which may not be adequately covered in the briefs.

(6) The normal pattern for the Prime Minister's involvement in an inward visit by a Head of Government is a tete-a-tete discussion (accompanied only by notetakers), a plenary session of talks for the host and visiting delegations in the Cabinet Room at No. 10, a lunch or dinner at No. 10, and participation in whatever return hospitality is offered by the visitor.

The following visits currently figure in the Prime Minister's diary for the remainder of 1979:

17/19 June  
~~10/12 May~~

European Council, Stuttgart  
Chancellor Schmidt to visit the United Kingdom for six-monthly Anglo-German consultations (with an addition to the programme on this occasion of the award to Chancellor Schmidt of an Honorary Degree by Oxford University).

/12/14 June

12/14 June State Visit by the President of Kenya  
22/23 June European Council in Strasbourg  
27/29 June Economic Summit in Tokyo (already announced)  
1/8 August Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in  
Lusaka (already announced as to The Queen's  
participation by the Palace)  
3/4 December European Council in Dublin

24 June Visit by Vice-President Buch  
Houphouët Boigny  
26-29 July Visit by President of the Ivory Coast  
25-28 October State visit by President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka  
23-30 November Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting  
5-6 November European Council in Athens