

Prime Minister

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BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

If the Prime Minister has not seen it already, she may be interested in the attached copy of Nicko Henderson's article in a recent issue of the Sunday Times. I have now seen three such documents - the paper I wrote for the Prime Minister during the election campaign, Nicko's article, and a paper (the existence of which we are not allowed to be aware of) written by Antony Acland for the new Foreign Secretary. There was no collusion, but all three bear a remarkable similarity to each other. This may mean that all three of us are right: it may mean that the options are so limited that we were bound to say roughly the same thing: it may mean that all three of us have been so conditioned by similar experiences that we were likely to think in the same way!

Can you get hold of them? have been asked.

To my mind, the most interesting passage in Nicko's article is the piece about East/West relations. It reflects exactly what I believe and, I suspect, what will form the heart of the FCO paper being prepared for the strategy meeting in September.

If the Prime Minister has time for any holiday reading, I recommend Joseph Conrad's article "Autocracy and War" written on the outbreak of the Russo/Japanese war in 1905. It is contained in the volume "Notes of Life and Letters". It is vividly written and indicates how little the Russian monster has changed in spite of the revolution and all that has followed it.

Prime Minister

Would you like to see this?

A.S.C. 14/7

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A.D. PARSONS  
14 July 1983

SECRET



# Targets for Howe's FO

DEAR GEOFFREY,

I suppose when you first entered that palatial office whence Sir Edward Grey looked out over the Horse Guards and saw the lights being extinguished all over Europe, you made the same sort of decisions as other foreign secretaries upon arrival: the choice of portrait to look down upon you (George III is often banished but seems to get back somewhere); and the direction your desk is to face and what is to be placed upon it ("Take away this contraption of brass and glass", were the words Lord Curzon first used upon seeing the ink stand furnished by HM Stationery Office). By the time you receive this letter you will also have been able to realise, as your predecessors have done, that your cloak-room has the best view of any such office in London. But enough of these personal matters.

Many and detailed will be the papers, laughingly called briefs, submitted to you as incoming foreign secretary. Knowing the difficulty you will have in trying to thread your way between them to reach some objectives for the next five years, let me put to you synoptically what I would have said to you had I talked to you in that office where I first served one of your predecessors nearly 40 years ago.

It was Mr Ernest Bevin's problem then, as it will be yours in the next five years, to shape a foreign policy for Britain and secure its acceptance at home and abroad at a time when this country and our relations with the world are changing and becoming dramatically different from what they were when the assumptions governing our national outlook were formed. Many great empires have declined; most have fallen; none so far has found a satisfactory mutation to a new national genus - neither great power nor small power but one with world interests and influence.

I know that it is not our way to go in for concepts or systems. "And how", inquired a visitor to Sans Soucie exactly two centuries ago, "would Your Majesty define the English system?" The



**SIR NICHOLAS HENDERSON (left), former ambassador to Warsaw, Bonn, Paris and Washington, writes an open letter to SIR GEOFFREY HOWE (right), the new foreign secretary**

English" snapped Frederick the Great "have no system." Our philosophy has been pragmatism, the avoidance of general commitment and hypothetical judgment. I do not suggest that we should now reverse this principle and try to fit all foreign policy decisions into the same conceptual framework, but we need certain overriding objectives.

## Six steps

There will, I fear, be no escape for you from having to focus, in the first year or two at any rate, on the residual problems of empire - the Falklands, Gibraltar and Hong Kong - which are central to our responsibilities but peripheral to our long-term interests, except insofar as our handling of them affects our standing in the world. The first two will not be settled quickly, but you might achieve some easements. Hong Kong cannot wait long.

I will omit the Middle East, highly dangerous though the situation is in the Lebanon, because I do not think you can do much more than stick by the policy of the Venice Declaration which did indeed have considerable influence on the US government.

The following are major targets.

### ● Europe:

The Europeans may have come to realise the justice of our financial case but they certainly expect us henceforth to be more positive about the Community generally and to have ideas about its development.

Here are specific steps:

(i) Recognising the immense economic clout the Community wields, we should exhort it to pursue the free-trade rather than protectionist path.

(ii) Work towards the creation of a true common market in industrial goods and services, eliminating non-tariff barriers and the sort of restrictions that, for example, inhibit British insurance companies from operating in France or Germany.

(iii) Join the European Monetary System. As you know, there is always someone in the Treasury who thinks it is the wrong moment to join, whether because sterling is too strong or too weak; but it is in our interests that the EMS should survive - an area of monetary stability.

(iv) Promote industrial co-operation between the countries of Western Europe. It does not make sense for European industry and technology to be impotent in the face of US and Japanese competition when we have a market of 250 million people.

(v) Put great effort into political co-operation, the means by which the Community can exercise influence in the world at large. There is no other institution in which Europe can have a collective voice - eg, as regards the Middle East. It should look ahead not merely react.

(vi) Support greater community aid for the Third World, necessary on grounds of self-interest and morality (impulses that no foreign secretary will wish to see in conflict).

### ● US/UK relations and the Atlantic alliance:

There are transatlantic differences, of course, but no crisis. The USA expects more of Europe now, particularly in that the peoples of Western defence. This follows from an important change that has taken place. Europe has come, over the past decade, an economic force comparable to that of the USA with a higher up of arms and the

rate of growth. Western Europe should, I believe, be able, thanks to the latest technology, to increase its conventional strength at very little extra cost, so as to provide a more effective deterrent whilst putting off to a later phase the necessity for using nuclear weapons. This does not mean any change in Western Europe's ultimate reliance on the US strategic deterrent. You will not, I hope, be tempted to pursue the idea of a purely European system of defence, distinct from that of the USA.

It should also be possible for some countries of Western Europe - France, Italy and ourselves, for example - to envisage, without this amounting to a return to anything like a world role, being ready to support European interests that may be threatened outside the Nato area. The USA, as you know, shudders at the idea of being left alone as world policeman.

### ● East/West relations:

There is a need to resume the political dialogue with Moscow without necessarily having any hard-and-fast aim. We do not know enough at present about the governing personalities or thought in the Soviet Union because our contacts are so limited. Moscow has been looking upon London for a long time as a less worthwhile interlocutor than Paris or Bonn. This does not help us in European discussions on East-West relations because our leaders do not have the necessary direct knowledge.

There is no reason to fear that by talking we will have to make concessions. The Soviet Union will surely be facing calamity by the next century, but there is a dangerous intervening period when they may wish to exploit military might for political advantage. The time is too dangerous for us to remain completely out of joint with one of the two superpowers.

As regards Eastern Europe, we must hold open the door so that they can approach us whenever they think it is safe to do so. If you have lived in Eastern Europe, as I have done, it is difficult to exaggerate the yearning of the people there for contact with the West.

### ● Arms control:

I see no prospect of the Russians undertaking serious negotiations such as would preclude the need for the deployment of cruise missiles in the West. But I do believe that the peoples of Western Europe, while firm in the need to have the necessary means of deterrence, will become increasingly disillusioned if there is no arrest to the piling up of arms and the

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of overkill. This again is a subject that we have a right and duty to talk about in Moscow at the highest level. The Soviet Union has, after all, brought us into the act by referring to the UK and French nuclear deterrents.

## Public debate

Nor should we forget the influence that Europe can exert on the USA on this subject.

### ● Japan:

We should take advantage of the new mood that Mr Nakasone personifies. He is willing to engage in political consultation with the West without the former Japanese fear of entanglement, and to adopt similar postures vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. We should encourage the Japanese to regard their security as indivisible from that of the USA and Western Europe.

At Williamsburg we all supported the principle of free trade. The Japanese must make good on this by opening their markets to the West. They are likely to build up a visible trade surplus of \$30 billion this year - 50 per cent more than the previous year - and they should be left in no doubt of the political pressure for protection that will arise in the West unless they adopt a more liberal attitude.

### ● Conclusion:

Let me conclude with a bee in my bonnet about communication. The recent election showed the possibility and value of serious public discussion on international issues. Ministers were prepared to explain. I am sure that this should be continued as a regular practice and even extended to questions and answers conducted with audiences in foreign countries. When in all democratic countries decisions on foreign policy depend upon public support something a good deal more than Salisbury's diplomatic boat-hook is needed to avoid collisions.