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PRIME MINISTER

FOOTBALL SPECTATOR VIOLENCE

Your Principal Private Secretary's letter of 21 March set out those issues which you wished to consider further with colleagues following last Thursday's meeting.

I understand that the Home Secretary will be circulating a paper on those topics identified for him. I enclose a note on matches abroad. This is drafted in the light of the Minister for Sport's coordinating role: the majority of the specific measures would be for colleagues to implement. In the time available I have not been able to consult the Foreign Secretary.

As you requested, Neil Macfarlane wrote to the Football Association last Friday, formally asking them to change the date of the England v Scotland match. We have not yet had a reply.

I am copying this to Nigel Lawson, Geoffrey Howe, Leon Brittan, George Younger, Nicholas Ridley, Neil Macfarlane and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Andrew Arisun (Private Secretary)

for P J

27 March 1985

DRAFT PAPER FOR PRIME MINISTER

FOOTBALL SPECTATOR VIOLENCE: MATCHES IN EUROPE

The meeting on Thursday 21 March decided that further consideration should be given to action against misbehaviour by British supporters overseas. This is largely, though not uniquely, a problem for matches in Western Europe - particularly in France, Belgium and the Netherlands - because of ease of access.

The role and powers of the football authorities

The international governing body of football is the Federation Internationale des Football Associations (FIFA). Within Europe discipline is exercised by a grouping of the national governing bodies - the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). UEFA has adopted a set of rules (some of them binding) governing crowd control. The rules (Annex A) look effective but they are inconsistently applied by clubs. UEFA holds clubs responsible for the behaviour of their supporters and has penalised English teams following incidents of violence abroad, which might have been prevented if the host club had fully implemented UEFA's own rules. Examples of penalties for English clubs are fines and orders to play the next home match in the competition behind closed doors and for replays at a neutral ground. Action has also been taken against host teams, but the impression is that British clubs have been dealt with more severely because of our reputation.

Measures taken for matches in Europe are essentially those used at home; but there is the important complication that HMG has no jurisdiction. That is why the Minister for Sport negotiated through the Council of Europe an agreement (Annex B) on precautions to be taken by the various authorities. This was adopted as a "Recommendation to Member States" in March 1984. It already appears that some countries implement it more rigorously than others. The Recommendation's effect is due to be discussed within the Council of Europe in the summer.

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The Government and the Football Association have set up arrangements (Annex C) for monitoring the movements of British fans and thus assisting effective planning in other countries. The FA employs a retired Deputy Assistant Commissioner in the Metropolitan Police to advise authorities on particular club or international matches.

The FA has taken action to reduce problem matches for the England team. They now no longer arrange home and away fixtures with other countries, preferring to play European games in particular in this country. They have declined to sell tickets for away matches in order to discourage supporters from travelling.

New Measures

The Prime Minister will wish to consider alternative measures:-

Government Measures

a. Present supporters leaving the country for matches in Europe;

The Football Authorities have tried to discourage fans travelling and will seek Government help. This could endanger the essential freedom to travel, and it would be very difficult to separate the innocent from the guilty;

b. Persuade other Governments to refuse or restrict entry to English fans;

Neil Macfarlane has consistently urged European Ministers to deny entry to football supporters who are rowdy or drunk. This message might be reinforced. Other Governments argue that a more general ban should be imposed here rather than on disembarkation;

c. Withdraw or endorse hooligans' passports;

This is another likely request from the FA. My colleagues will see practical and constitutional objections;

d. Give British Courts jurisdiction over football offences committed abroad;

You mentioned this last Thursday. It is a problem that many countries simply wish to be rid of our hooligans and therefore charges are not pressed. We have urged other Governments to deal with them properly under domestic laws. Taking jurisdiction would be difficult to confine to football offences and costly to administer;

e. Improve liaison between British and continental police;

Although this is not perceived as a major problem special efforts on particular occasions could be productive;

f. Help the football authorities prepare a blacklist of hooligans;

The FA will urge us to breach consular confidentiality and make available to them the names of those who are arrested abroad, so that steps can be taken to try to make sure they do not get tickets in future. This may not be very effective, whilst it remains easy for tickets to be bought at foreign grounds. The Foreign Secretary will I think be concerned to protect the traditional principles of consular confidentiality.

g. Seek to toughen the Council of Europe Recommendation;

This could be made a binding Convention. We may have difficulty persuading other European Governments;

Football measures

h. ban troublesome clubs from matches in Europe, temporarily or permanently;

i. Control ticket sales more effectively, so that there is proper segregation of rival supporters at matches or no away supporters at all;

Effective plans have been spoiled in the past by host clubs selling tickets indiscriminately on the day. UEFA could ban this. A more difficult issue could be the activities of travel agents;

j. Discourage fans from travelling in Europe by not selling tickets and showing the match live on TV screens at home grounds;

This is an obvious step that might be readily agreed with clubs and UEFA.

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