

MR. BUTLER

GRAND HOTEL

Thank you for your note about the aftermath of the Brighton bomb. A number of points occur to me which follow in no particular order:-

i) As far as I was concerned there was no substitute for being in the office. I think that recent experience has indicated that it is worth coming into the office at the first sign of serious difficulty, even at the risk of over-reaction.

ii) We were acutely aware throughout the morning that apart from functions like ringing up relatives etc., our role was distinctly limited. The real decisions were being taken at Brighton. Given this, we had to strike a balance between our need to know and the need to avoid pestering those who were on the spot.

iii) I think that we became a clearing house for information as Martin points out simply because we were not ourselves taking decisions. I agree, therefore, with your point (iii) that we must look primarily to our own responsibilities in such circumstances. Had the incident been worse, I am sure that we would have been so busy coping with our own duties that we would not have had time for the "public relations" role that we acquired that morning.

iv) It would be useful to have in the Duty Clerk's bible a reminder about keeping the Palace informed. It is not always uppermost in one's mind in such circumstances.

B. B.

v) You mentioned that, as the Private Secretary on the spot, you found it useful to have people here at No. 10. Equally, we were confident in the knowledge that you were in Brighton. That would, however, not have been the case had the bomb gone off on say the Tuesday night. Were these circumstances to recur at a time when there was no Private Secretary present, we would, I imagine, need to despatch one rapidly.

I have one or two other comments which I will pass to you orally.

TF

Timothy Flesher
21 November 1984

Mr. Bytler

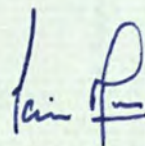
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MISS CAINES

You invited my comments on Martin Sawyer's minute.

First, I should say that his assistance was invaluable. He kept me fully informed, while I was able to feed him with whatever was reaching me from the media. There was however one major problem from my point of view.

Frequently, I needed to check out rumours (which abounded), and I was very conscious that everyone involved was extremely hard pressed - not least the Duty Clerk. However rather than increase the burden on police, hospital etc by going to them direct, I had little option but to rely on him for information; once or twice the hospital rang me direct, but they did not keep me informed as a matter of course. The Sussex police (and I found the same with the Met during the Harrods bomb last December) despite two direct requests did not consider our requirements at all. It would certainly be helpful if there were standing instructions to police forces to the effect that, in the event of an incident involving the Prime Minister, or one in which we express an interest, the No 10 Press Office is given some kind of priority treatment; it would both help them and us. I think the Home Office Press Office encountered a similar problem. We can't stop the press scratching around for information, but more than once throughout that weekend I felt that we were close to conveying an impression of confusion and incompetence, through their being ahead of us with hard information.



IAIN R MURRAY
PRESS OFFICE

5 December 1984

MR. FLESHER

cc. Mr. Ingham
Miss Caines
Mr. Sherbourne
Mr. Joce
Supt. Parker
Mr. Sawyer

The No. 10 Office Functions in the Aftermath of the
Bomb Explosion at the Grand Hotel, Brighton

I asked Martin Sawyer, who was Duty Clerk on the night of the Brighton bomb, to record what he had to do and any lessons to be learned from the events of that night. I had it in mind that this is something which could be added to the Duty Clerks' "bible".

I attach Martin Sawyer's useful note, and I should be grateful for any contributions which you and other recipients may want to make with that object in mind - namely, recording for the sake of future crises any lessons to be learned.

My own reflections are as follows:-

- (i) It is very useful to have recorded here the list of people to whom information should be passed on: as the Private Secretary on the spot, I was very glad that I could rely on the office here to tell everybody who needed to know of developments. It is particularly difficult to think of all these aspects at the time.
- (ii) I think that the Press Office must be added to the phrase "No. 10 Office" in category (i) of those to whom information is passed.

(iii) While Martin may have had the impression that No. 10 was the focal point of all outside and internal enquiries, I believe that, there were a number of "focal points". The answer to Martin's question - whether that is as it should be - is that No. 10 must primarily look after our responsibilities, which are summarised in the note, and thereafter try to deal with all other enquiries, as best we can. We tend to become a focal point for other people's enquiries because of our efficiency - and that is a compliment!

(iv) I recognise the difficulties of getting information from the Home Office and the police on the spot. We must continue to use those channels, but my experience suggested that the best way to get information is by using such means as No. 10 will normally have to get information direct from the horse's mouth - for example, at Brighton, the best source of information about the progress in rescuing the Tebbits and the Wakehams was obtained through asking our contacts on the spot what was happening, particularly Lord Whitelaw, who visited the scene - and we have to be prepared to use those means.

F.E.R.B.

21 November, 1984

20/11/84

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

DUTY CLERK'S ACTIONS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE BOMB EXPLOSION
AT THE GRAND HOTEL, BRIGHTON, 0300-1330 (approx) ON
12 OCTOBER, 1984

Action

The Duty Clerk was required to find out as MUCH information as possible and inform the interested parties.

- the incident had already taken place, so it became a matter of communication, and gradual piecing together of available information.
- it necessitated constant telephone work over a period of several hours from first notification that a bomb had been detonated.

Sources of Information

(i) the Prime Minister's party at Brighton - main link being the Garden Room Girl (Detectives and political office occasionally).

(ii) Police, Brighton Police Station mainly (occasionally Lewes Police HQ).

(iii) The media (radio and television).

(iv) Cabinet Office Duty Officer.

(v) No.10 Press Office.

This is a rough descending order of contribution.

Information passed on to:

(i) Duty Private Secretary and No.10 office.

- (ii) PM's party at Brighton and Lewes.
- (iii) Relatives (mainly handled by Duty Private Secretary)
- (iv) Queen's Party in USA (Kentucky).
- (v) Sir Robert Armstrong.
- (vi) Security Co-ordinator
- (vii) Other Whitehall Departments (incl. FCO, Home Office, Cabinet Office).

Conclusions

In general, smooth communication with the important personnel was ensured throughout, and such information as was available, was obtained. Everything functioned at No.10, as would be expected - switchboard were good etc. etc.

Points of Note

1. Useful callers, with information, consisted mainly of people 'on the spot' (the PM's party), or Cabinet Office - other information was often obtained through the media.
2. The Home Office provided very little information - they rarely rang No.10.
3. The Police had great problems coping with enquiries. No.10 was given little priority treatment - very little information could be obtained direct from them, apart from casualty details.

As a result, we became the focal point of all outside (and internal) enquiries - the question is - is that as it should be ? Or should another Department handle all general enquiries? If we are to be the 'lynch-pin', we need more information given to us by a greater variety of people. More often than not we did most of the obtaining of the information, in order to satisfy ourselves and those requesting it from outside.

Martin Sauer Duty Clerk.