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CC(81) 21st  
Conclusions

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CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet  
held at 10 Downing Street on

THURSDAY 4 JUNE 1981

at 10.30 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP  
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP  
Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Rt Hon Lord Carrington  
Secretary of State for Foreign and  
Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
and Paymaster General

The Rt Hon Lord Soames  
Lord President of the Council

The Rt Hon James Prior MP  
Secretary of State for Employment

The Rt Hon John Nott MP  
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Sir Ian Gilmour MP  
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon Peter Walker MP  
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment

The Rt Hon George Younger MP  
Secretary of State for Scotland

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP  
Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Humphrey Atkins MP  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

The Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP  
Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP  
Secretary of State for Trade

The Rt Hon David Howell MP  
Secretary of State for Energy

The Rt Hon Mark Carlisle QC MP  
Secretary of State for Education and Science

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP  
Secretary of State for Transport

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP  
Chief Secretary, Treasury

**SECRET**

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP  
Attorney General (Items 4 and 5)

The Rt Hon Michael Jopling MP  
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

SECRETARIAT

Mr M D M Franklin	(Items 2 and 3)
Mr P Le Cheminant	(Items 1 - 5)
Mr R L Wade-Gery	(Items 2 and 3)
Mr D J L Moore	(Item 5)
Mr L J Harris	(Items 1 and 4)
Mr J W M Rogers	(Item 4)
Mr W Moyes	(Item 5)
Mr R M Whalley	(Item 1)

C O N T E N T S

Item	Subject	Page
1.	PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS	1
2.	FOREIGN AFFAIRS	
	France	1
	Belize	1
	Poland	2
	Canada	2
3.	COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	2
4.	DISQUALIFICATION OF PRISONERS FROM ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT	4
5.	CIVIL SERVICE PAY	5

PARLIAMENTARY  
AFFAIRS

1. The Cabinet were informed of the business to be taken in the House of Commons during the following week.

FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS

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France

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(81) 20th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2

2. THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that on 28 May, he had had an informal discussion with the new French Foreign Minister, Monsieur Cheysson, who was well disposed towards Britain, had made two points of interest. First, the very close relations between France and Germany were not seen as exclusive by the new French Government, who wanted a privileged relationship with Britain also. Second, there would be broad continuity in French foreign policy, particularly as regards solidarity with the Western Alliance and resistance to the Soviet Union. Indeed, since President Mitterrand's Government were less open to being outflanked by left-wing opinion than their predecessors they might well be somewhat firmer on East-West issues. On the Middle East Monsieur Cheysson had reaffirmed support for the Venice Declaration and discounted reports that France would adopt a pro-Israeli stance because of the close personal links between President Mitterrand and some Israeli leaders. On Africa, on the other hand, Monsieur Cheysson had indicated that French policy would be modified; that there would be less sympathy for South Africa; and that France would not in future be willing to join in vetoing United Nations resolutions on South African sanctions. In the last few days, moreover, there had been reports that France might withdraw from the Western Contact Group on Namibia; this would be unwelcome, but its likelihood could not yet be assessed. All told, he had found his talk with Monsieur Cheysson reasonably encouraging. France would of course continue to pursue her national interests. But it might well prove easier for Britain to establish a good working relationship with the new French Government than with their predecessors. He would be consulting the Prime Minister further on the subject. Meanwhile it would clearly be preferable not to prejudice the possibilities by allowing major Anglo-French disagreements to break out at this early stage of the new relationship.

Belize

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(81) 15th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the current negotiations between Britain and Guatemala, at which Belize was represented, were likely to be completed later in the month. There was a better than even chance that the outcome would be a satisfactory Treaty which would implement the Heads of Agreement reached in March and thus terminate Guatemala's claim to Belize. Unfortunately, the Premier of Belize, Mr Price, had committed himself to holding a referendum there on the acceptability of the Treaty. There was a clear danger

that the Belizeans would not cast their votes on the merits of the Treaty but on the basis of their attitude to Mr Price. In these circumstances some difficult decisions for the British Government might lie ahead. Thought was being given to how the question put to referendum might best be formulated; and to how pressure might be brought to bear on Belizean public opinion.

Poland

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(81) 15th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 2

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the situation in Poland appeared to be deteriorating. But it was impossible to judge the likelihood of the Russians intervening. From their point of view the arguments against doing so were if anything stronger than in the past. But in certain circumstances they might feel they had no choice. On balance they seemed likely at least to await the outcome of the elections for the Polish Communist Party Congress in July.

Canada

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(81) 20th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 1

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the Canadian Supreme Court had not yet pronounced on the Canadian Government's proposals for patriating the Canadian Constitution. The judgment could come at any time but might be delayed until the autumn.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

COMMUNITY  
AFFAIRS

3. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD said he had met the new French Minister of Agriculture, Madame Edith Cresson, at a recent informal meeting of Community Ministers of Agriculture. She held radical left-wing views and saw the need to change the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) so that it would be much more a vehicle for the redistribution of wealth than a policy for agriculture. It seemed likely that, in defence of the small French farmers who had voted for him, President Mitterrand would resist changes in the CAP of the kind favoured by the Federal German Government.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

In discussion, the following points were made:-

a. The new French Minister for the Sea had indicated his willingness to have an early meeting of the Council of Ministers (Fisheries). It seemed likely that he would have used such an occasion to lay down a tough French position on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in advance of the forthcoming legislative elections. On the other hand both President Mitterrand and Monsieur Cheysson had given indications that they were anxious for an early settlement, and the latter had suggested preparatory bilateral talks. The Dutch Presidency had wisely decided that there had been insufficient preparation for a meeting of the Fisheries Council in June. Instead they planned to hold an informal meeting after the elections.

b. Monsieur Cheysson had put his Community colleagues on notice that the French would wish to postpone all discussion on budget restructuring until at least September. It would be necessary to use the British Presidency to keep up the pressure for progress.

c. Contrary to newspaper reports, there was no disagreement between the Treasury and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office over budget restructuring. The speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the joint meeting of the Dutch Foreign Affairs Institute and the European Movement in The Hague on 3 June represented agreed Government policy although its presentation would be new to some of our Community partners.

d. The Joint Council of Finance, Economic and Employment Ministers was still likely to be held during the Dutch Presidency but one of the two dates now suggested would coincide with the forthcoming meeting of the European Council.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

DISQUALIFICATION  
OF PRISONERS  
FROM ELECTION  
TO PARLIAMENT

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(81) 19th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 1

4. The Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Home Secretary (C(81) 25) about proposed legislation disqualifying prisoners from election to Parliament.

THE HOME SECRETARY said that the Home and Social Affairs (H) Committee had agreed that urgent legislation should be introduced to prevent a repeat of the last by-election in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, in which a convicted terrorist serving a long term of imprisonment had been elected as a Member of Parliament. The Committee had concluded that all persons serving a prison sentence of more than 12 months in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland, including those released from prison but subject to recall, should be disqualified from election to the House of Commons, and that acting returning officers should have power to invalidate the nominations of such persons, thereby preventing them from standing as candidates. It had been agreed that if a writ for Fermanagh and South Tyrone were to be moved before the legislation could be introduced, the Government would seek to have the debate adjourned; but once the Summer Recess had begun, the Recess Elections Act 1975 required the Speaker to issue his warrant for a writ if any two Members certified that the previous Member was dead. It was therefore essential that the legislation should be introduced as soon as possible and passed by the end of July. Preparatory work had revealed that a Bill which fulfilled all the objectives of H Committee could not meet this timetable. He therefore proposed that disqualification should be limited to convicted persons detained in prison in the United Kingdom pursuant to a sentence of more than 12 months, and should not extend to prisoners in the Republic of Ireland, or to those released subject to executive recall. He proposed to retain the proposed power to invalidate nominations, but there were signs that the Opposition would object to this, and it might be necessary in order to obtain a wide measure of agreement simply to restore substantially the position which had existed before 1967, under which convicted prisoners serving sentences of more than 12 months were disqualified from sitting or voting as Members of the House of Commons, but not from standing as candidates in Parliamentary elections. He expected that legislation in the form proposed in C(81) 25 could be ready for introduction in about a fortnight.

In discussion, it was noted that arrangements were believed to be in hand for putting up another convicted prisoner as a candidate in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. Disqualifying legislation should be passed as quickly as possible, even if this meant that the power to invalidate nominations had to be dropped. A Bill in the form now proposed would inevitably leave a number of loopholes which might well be exploited, particularly since attention had been focused on the possibility of cross-Border candidature by the decision of the prisoners in the H block to put themselves forward for election to the Dail. These problems could not be dealt with in the immediate

future, but would require further consideration in the context of the general review of electoral law currently being conducted by the Home Office.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Cabinet recognised that a comprehensive Bill on the disqualification of prisoners could not be passed by the end of July and agreed that the legislation should be confined to the points recommended in C(81) 25. The Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Paymaster General should now consult other parties in the House of Commons on this basis, and report back to the Cabinet if it seemed desirable to modify the proposed power to invalidate nominations in order to secure a wide measure of support for the Bill.

The Cabinet -

1. Approved the recommendations in C(81) 25.
2. Invited the Home Secretary, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Paymaster General, to discuss these proposals with other parties in the House of Commons, and report any difficulties to the Cabinet, as indicated in the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion.

CIVIL SERVICE  
PAY

5. THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL reported orally on the latest developments in the pay dispute with the non-industrial Civil Service.

Previous  
Reference:  
CC(81) 20th  
Conclusions,  
Minute 4

Following a discussion, the Cabinet -

Agreed on the line to be taken in further discussions with the Civil Service unions and invited the Lord President of the Council to be guided accordingly.

Cabinet Office

4 June 1981