

POST MORTEM MEETING NOTES

Report from Ian

We were right with our list of Untouchables, but there were clearly other people who might have been added to that list. Quite a number of people voted for the Prime Minister with considerable reluctance, although I was agreeably surprised by the result. We would be mistaken if we thought that there was enthusiasm from everybody who voted for Mrs Thatcher.

If, in eleven months time, which I think will be the case, the economy is still in difficulties, with inflation still relatively high, interest rates high and the Balance of Payments responding slowly, with the opinion polls probably worse, all of which I predict, then I think the mood of the Party will be difficult and not least because MPs in marginal seats will be that much closer to the Election and more anxious about holding their seats. They may say to themselves we are doing badly enough to lose our seats under the present Leadership, might we do better under a different Leader.

Particular issues in people minds: even I cannot say that the style of leadership, although I am a strong supporter, commands universal assent. I don't think we can change that style, although I do think there is some feeling that perhaps the Prime Minister is not as accessible as she might be. We appreciate the pressures on her and if it were possible to diminish the other burdens on the Prime Minister so she could see more of her backbenchers that would be a help. I sometimes wonder if we make the best use of getting MPs to Receptions, lunches and dinners because people are flattered if they are asked to No 10. Are we now able to get Officers of Committees over, but I certainly think we could have more backbenchers at lunches and dinners and if that meant fewer Ministers I think it would be a help.

Europe is the second factor and there is anxiety about what I feel have been mistakes as far as the economy is concerned. Also possibly inflation. We have to continue with the economic policy. Nothing more can be done about the Community Charge; privatisation of water is not universally acclaimed, but it is happening today. Privatisation of electricity is also going to go ahead. Therefore the things with which we can deal are European policy.

I do not mean to be gloomy because I think the question of the perception of the Prime Minister in seeing the backbenchers enough can be put right and I believe that the economic prospects will improve before we have to go to the country. I think it is very important that amongst those who might be described as wholly committed to the Prime Minister there is no atmosphere of triumphalism now and that in so far as there are wounds, that we should do all in our power to bind up the wounds.

GY pointed out that we must positively seek out those who are doubtful about the Prime Minister. GY asked Ian for his feelings as to what can be done about Europe.

Ian said he thought we should just ensure that the Prime Minister is aware that there is considerable anxiety in the Parliamentary Party concerning this matter.

Report from Richard

Organisationally I think this team has worked very well and I do not think we have many lessons to learn from what we have gone through. I think, ideally more use should have been made of the Apostles. We know that many of them were slow in reporting to us and our major handicap has been the lack of peripheral information. Ideally Apostles should be reporting on conversations which they have generally. Apostles should also be more carefully instructed in their way of canvassing. A man should never know that he has been canvassed and I am not quite sure that that was done as effectively as it may have been.

As far as policies are concerned and the lessons we should learn from the Election. There is, and always has been, a band of people who are dissatisfied with the Prime Minister, but I think this Election would not have happened had there been 4% inflation and 9% mortgage rates because we would have been ahead in the polls. I share Ian's view that a year from now inflation will be high, interest rates will be high, local elections will have been rough and by-elections may have been difficult so spirits of the Party will not be any higher next year.

As far as policies are concerned, there is no advice about how we can run the economy save to say that the arguments over the ERM have been robust and damaging enough and they will cause more damage the nearer we get to 1st July. The French and Italians are already breaking down their exchange barriers and the majority of the Party is in favour of joining the ERM. They may not understand the issue, but they are told by their small businessmen that it would be a good thing so they believe it. The danger is that the Prime Minister will be confronted by Members of the Cabinet again and again, either by speeches outside in the country, or even they might possibly present Cabinet with a paper. News of the circulation of that paper might leak and the Cabinet and the Prime Minister would be placed in a very awkward position.

GY asked whether Richard felt there had been a lot of moans about the ERM.

Yes. A lot of ignorant moans. Basically the Party is in favour of joining the ERM. The Prime Minister's words have not been believed. But there are many supporters who have said that the result of this Election has been a vindication of her European policy. She should be told that this is not so. Young people tend to be better disposed to the Community and they cannot understand the apparent isolation of Britain and I believe that this is not in our interest.

Peripheral moans: when we are doing badly, everyone will say we are handling things badly, but when we are doing well the opposite is the case.

The Apostles cannot meet together for a party, but I think the Prime Minister should see them one at a time for a cup of tea.

As far as the Dodgies are concerned, I do not take the view that 12 people should be brought in to see the Prime Minister. It does not work because it becomes terribly impersonal. Only very small groups can be seen together. The Monday lunches at Downing Street are a waste of time. Some members of the cast are the same every Monday. They talk about the topic of the day in a superficial manner. One or two outsiders are brought in but they realise they are not part of the furniture. I would cut down on the regulars and bring in more outsiders to those lunches. I agree with Ian on the receptions and dinners. I do not know the value of the Prime Minister being seen in the Tea Room and the Dining Room.

Relationships between her and her colleagues: If the colleagues feel they are not being consulted and their relationship is weak it gets out and adds to the unhappiness. I think that it is important for her in particular to establish a good working relationship with Douglas Hurd. Whether that relationship can ever be as good as it should be so long as Bernard and Charles remain at No 10, but they have got to be lived with. The relationship with Geoffrey is never going to be easy again, but he is the Deputy Prime Minister, he is quite easily reassured and I think the occasional meeting with Geoffrey would help to diminish the number of forays that he makes into the European field. Other Members of the Administration - I think she should, wherever possible, have meetings and listen as much as possible with them and let them have their say. What she cannot afford a year from now is the Ministerial Cabinet Colleagues telling the press that things have got worse not better, because the Party might then be tempted to vote another way. There are about 40 who voted for the Prime Minister but reluctantly.

Overall I think this result is very much as I would have expected, but the campaign has confirmed the number of people who have given her the benefit of the doubt, but only just, and she should know this and should know that if these people are still unhappy in a year then she will be in trouble.

Report from Mark

GY should present his paper for the weekend box, prior to his meeting on Monday.

It would be helpful to gather together some of the articles which have appeared in the press this week - for example Ferdinand Mount's and Robin Oakley's. She will know, then, what other people have said. You should also speak to all Apostles because some of them are a bit disappointed.

You should, on Monday, also suggest that you see her again in January.

We should also have as accurate a figure as possible of those who voted without enthusiasm.

We are going to have a terrific row about the rules. Her greatest supporters are likely to do her a disservice. This could raise fury in the anti-Thatcher camp.

Accessibility of the Prime Minister: she is terribly close to Charles Powell and he thinks the best thing for her to do is to get on as many trips as possible. We have got to put a stop to it. She was a great success on East/West side with Reagan. She is not such a success with Bush. It is very important that she only does the foreign trips which she must do. Also because she has become such a world figure, every Minister etc from every country in the world wants to have half an hour with her. She must be told that she must not take on these foreign commitments to the detriment of her time in the House of Commons.

Report from Tristan

I do not dissent from anything anyone has said. We are talking about the beginning of the end of the Thatcher Era. We have to try and ensure that that is managed in a way that enables her to go to the end of her Prime Ministership with dignity and honour. The most we can achieve is that she wins the next Election. I think that is possible, but not certain.

