

27th February 1984

Very many thanks for your letter of 25th February, and for the notes which you attached. We are having a 'preliminary' meeting with the Prime Minister tomorrow morning, and your thoughts will be most helpful. Thank you for your kind offer of help with further drafting for the Central Council Speech. I will, no doubt, be in touch with you in any event in the next week, and will be able to let you have a clearer idea than as to how we are progressing.

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February 25, 1984.

Dear Michael,

Herewith one or two off-the-cuff ideas for the Central Council speech. Should the PM want me to elaborate them or do any more serious drafting, I am, as always, at her command.

I also enclose a memorandum on Ireland prepared by my little CRD group. I do think that the period immediately after the Forum reports will be full of danger, but that nevertheless there is a chance that something of modest value could emerge. If the PM were willing and could find the time to talk to me about this, I should be delighted.

I shall be here up to the 10th of March, and then in Ulster for ten days, though I could always be got there through the DT.

Yours ever,

Peter.

CENTRAL COUNCIL SPEECH

Radicals and consolidationists

I think the PM ought to include a brief section on this 'radical v consolidationist' nonsense. The following is my off-the-cuff idea of the sort of thing that might be suitable:

"One picture of the Government which is being offered to you at present goes something like this: 'The Tories fought the 1979 election as a radical party; their "dynamic", some might say 'thoroughly bossy' leader had a clear vision of the kind of society she wanted; she was out to change everything; she was determined to destroy the consensus on which British politics had rested for ages.

'Having won the election of 1979, she and her colleagues', so the critics continue, 'did, we admit, do most of the things they had promised to do; but now, returned to power once again, with a huge majority, they have run out of steam and are content to rest on their laurels, afraid, indeed, to do otherwise.'

" Some of the critics wring their hands with despair at this loss of spirit; others breathe a deep sigh of relief and say that at last this mad bunch of radicals and their crazy leader have recovered their sanity.

"What, then, are the fallacies in this picture? Well, it is hard to know where to begin. We were never radicals in the sense of people who wanted to go round re-building

society from scratch and imposing an ideology. The consensus we attacked was a rather superficial thing—a body of false assumptions which politicians of all parties had fallen into the habit of making, and which led them too often to take the easiest course. But all the time, I believe, there was another and deeper consensus in the hearts of our people, bequeathed to us by our forefathers—a belief in the rule of law, in the supreme importance of the individual, in the free and responsible society. We have not brought any "new vision" to British politics; but we have brought out into the open what the people believe, and we have been determined that those beliefs shall be translated into policy. Is this true radicalism or true traditionalism?

The answer is that it is both: ✓ Above all we stand for continuity, for bringing this country back onto the true and natural line of its development.

"As for our having nothing else to do, that illusion springs from one of the great political fallacies—the view that the usefulness of a parliament depends on the number of laws it passes, on the extent, indeed, to which it multiplies government. A government which maintains an honest currency, which defends the rule of law,

radical in the sense that it is concerned with nourishing the roots of national life.

which provides fearlessly for the defence of the nation, is doing far more than a government which bombards a helpless people with unwanted legislation.

"We have set our faces in the right direction. We have been faithful to our election promises, and we will continue to be faithful to them. Slowly, steadily, determinedly, we are pressing back the frontiers of bureaucracy and extending the private sphere. but we remain committed, as we always have been, to the State's role in public welfare provision. It is not we who are the ideologues, but those who seem to think that any change, however modest, necessary or equitable in the running of the welfare state is an act of sacrilege. Ancient institutions like the monarchy and parliament have survived precisely because they adapted themselves to changing conditions. No institution, however cherished, can escape such adaptation; but the aim must always be to ensure that in adapting we also preserve. Is that radicalism or consolidationism? It is Toryism, and it is the British way.

#### Foreign policy

It seems to me that the main ingredients in the foreign policy section should be these:

- (i) A strong reaffirmation by the PM that she does not withdraw a syllable of her former condemnations of Soviet oppression.

- (ii) A vigorous assertion that the first objects of foreign policy must be to defend the nation and keep faith with its allies.
- (iii) A quite long self-congratulatory passage spelling out the efforts made by the Soviet Union (not without the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ aid of the Labour Party) last year to prevent us from doing what was necessary to redress the nuclear balance in Europe, and an account of our success in resisting those efforts.
- (iv) Because of that success, and only because of it, it is now possible to embark cautiously on the task of easing tension and checking the arms race.
- (v) Every decent opportunity of contact with the satellite states must be taken, not only for the sake of world peace but also for the sake of keeping their lines open to the West and fostering the very real efforts some of them are making to liberalize their systems. By the same token, if relations between Russia and the west can be stabilized for long enough, the chances of liberalizing even the Soviet Union will be increased. Clearly, the object of this section of the speech would be to reconcile the ideological elements in her foreign policy (which until recently bulked large) with the new emphasis on coexistence. The task would be to make it clear, without sounding too glib, that the two things are complementary.