

cc MASTER

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c Jean Carver
LPC



10 DOWNING STREET

30 May 1985

From the Private Secretary

Dear Phil,

The Prime Minister met Mr. Macfarlane together with Mr. Luce and Mr. Shaw today to discuss the Government's response to last night's events at the European Cup Final in Brussels.

Messages to Heads of Government

It was agreed that messages of sympathy should be sent to the Prime Ministers of Belgium and Italy and texts of such messages were agreed. In addition, the Prime Minister proposed that the British Government should contribute £250,000 to whatever was the most appropriate disaster fund for the victims and their families. Since most of the casualties were Italian it was likely that the Italians would set up a fund, whether by central government or by, for example, the Mayor of Turin. Nevertheless, it was important to ensure that the Government's contribution was seen to cover the Belgian casualties and the text of the messages was amended to ensure that this was made clear.

Role of the Football Association

Mr. Macfarlane reported that UEFA were certain to carry out their own investigation of the previous night's events, which would probably show that the arrangements made by the Belgian authorities were deficient in many respects. These included, for example, the sale of tickets on the day which had led to the mixing of rival fans in one part of the ground. Nevertheless, it was also likely that they would decide on strong action against English clubs probably including a lengthy ban on English participation in European competition. The Prime Minister noted that in these circumstances it might be best for the Football Association itself to volunteer to withdraw English participation until such time as adequate measures had been taken to ensure that there was no possibility of a repetition of the scenes in Brussels. This was of course a decision which could only be taken by the Association itself together with the clubs concerned. Mr. Macfarlane said that senior officials of the Football Association were in Mexico for England's summer tour. A message should be sent to them suggesting their immediate return to consider what action the Football Association should take. That message should make it clear that public outrage required action from the Football

Association. I attach a copy of the message which was eventually agreed.

Legislative Position

The Prime Minister suggested that the provisions about alcohol in sports grounds which were to be incorporated into a bill in the next session on public order should be put into a self-standing bill to be introduced in the current session. It was agreed that this would be investigated as a matter of urgency. Drafting would need to be accelerated and the proposals cleared through H and L Committees. Passage of the bill this session would require the cooperation of the Opposition who would be sounded out once policy clearance for the bill was cleared.

The discussion then turned to whether withdrawal of passports could serve as a way of preventing hooligans from reaching overseas fixtures. Mr. Shaw pointed out that passports could be withdrawn only in very specific circumstances, none of which seemed relevant to the problem. The existence of the British Visitors Passport in any case limited the effectiveness of such a measure.

Police and Court Action

The Prime Minister said that ultimately it was essential for those perpetrating acts of violence at football matches to be apprehended and charged, and for appropriately severe sentences to be issued. She recognised the difficulty of identification but hoped that television film would be carefully scrutinised. Mr. Shaw said the police were in touch with their opposite numbers in Belgium and would be providing them with any assistance they needed in their inquiries. Mr. Macfarlane reported the view of the Chairman of Liverpool Football Club that Liverpool supporters had been infiltrated by the National Front. It was agreed that possible involvement by the National Front in soccer violence should be investigated further.

The Prime Minister feared there might be a tendency on the part of prosecuting authorities and courts abroad to take a lenient line, preferring to send offenders back to Britain at the earliest opportunity. It was noted that prosecutions could be brought in this country for offences committed abroad only in exceptional cases such as murder. Authorities might be more ready to prosecute if there was an understanding that those found guilty could be returned to Britain to serve any sentences. It was agreed that this should be investigated.

Eye Witness Reports

The Prime Minister said that she had already received a detailed eye witness account from Mr. Peter Bottomley who was present at the match. In addition she hoped to speak to a number of sports journalists who were present as well as to Mr. John Smith, the Chairman of Liverpool Football Club. Arrangements for this were in hand.

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I am sending a copy of this letter to Colin Budd (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), John Ballard (Department of the Environment), Nigel Pantling (Home Office), Steve Pike (Minister of State's Office, Home Office) and Peter Westmacott (Minister of State's Office, FCO).

Yours ever,

Tim

TIM FLESHER

Phil Dykins, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

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