

CONFIDENTIAL



Charles Powell

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NBPN
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22/5

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

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POSSIBLE INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY FCO COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

In Box

I have seen a copy of your minute of 17 May to the Prime Minister.

2. I wholly support the line which you advocate in paragraph 8 of your minute. It is extremely important that we should not be seen to be giving way in the face of industrial threats in this particular case. I gather that the negotiations to date have been bedevilled by the desire of the main union negotiator to indulge in a certain amount of politics. Agreement has just been reached with the staff representatives at GCHQ on a broadly parallel restructuring exercise and it would, as you point out, be extremely damaging if the Civil Service Union were to be seen to extract a better bargain than that which has already been accepted by the staff representatives at GCHQ.

3. My officials are of course working closely with yours over these negotiations, and we have certainly not ruled out a peaceful outcome. But I hope very much that we will be prepared to stand firm in the event that a work to rule does begin on 31 May. I note that while there could be some disruption affecting Departments, including my own, it should be possible for the FCO to make arrangements to ensure that a minimum of essential business continued. I think the inconvenience would be a price well worth paying for the wider principles at stake here.

4. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, to Michael Heseltine, Norman Tebbit and Michael Jopling, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

N.L.

21 May 1985

22 MAY 1965

