

AC UNIT KERRIE. S

TO KILL THE CABINET



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Why the full story must be told

FOR nearly 400 years children have chanted a slogan that has passed from generation to generation: Remember, remember the Fifth of November.

But now there is another date that will probably be remembered long after Guy Fawkes and his bungled Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

At 2.54 in the morning on October 12, 1984, an IRA bomb ripped through Brighton's Grand Hotel and came within a whisker of wiping out Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and most of her Cabinet.

It was only by chance that the explosion, which claimed five lives, did not succeed where Fawkes had failed.

This is the story of those days in October that will never be forgotten.

It is a harrowing tale of appalling suffering, but it is also a tribute to the courage and heroism of both the rescuers and the rescued.

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The IRA bury their dead and vow: Thatcher must die

ON A windswept and rainy Brighton seafront the tiny reception committee waiting for Margaret Thatcher to arrive for the start of the 101st Conservative Party conference hardly notices as the jet black Daimler pulls up outside the Grand Hotel.

Press and police easily outnumber the motley band of demonstrators and supporters gathered outside the security cordon.

It is just before 11 a.m. on Tuesday, October 9 and the Tory delegates are already listening to the opening debate inside the Brighton Centre. Their leader has been delayed by traffic jams on the main road from London.

As the gleaming limousine draws to a halt, one man, holding back his barking dog on a lead, suddenly realises that the Prime Minister has arrived. Almost as an afterthought he gives a quick cry of "Maggie out". It is lost on the breeze.

Another protester, perched on a bicycle piled with anti-smoking leaflets, hardly stirs. A few pensioners clap and others just stare, trying to catch a glimpse of Mrs Thatcher as she briskly climbs the steps to the hotel foyer.

Wearing her favourite two-piece green tweed suit, hair immaculate, she smiles and says "Good morning" to cameramen, TV crews and a group of hotel staff. Dark suited security guards glance from their charge to the people around her as they shepherd Mrs Thatcher inside and up to the first floor Napoleon suite.

Police have been ready for any possible trouble from demonstrators — from lone egg throwers to mob violence. But when the Tory leader emerges from the hotel ten minutes later to walk the few yards to the Brighton Centre, even the one man and his dog have gone.

Senior officers on duty outside the conference venue, veterans of mass demonstrations on Brighton seafront, are pleased. This is quiet, very quiet.

It is a view to be echoed time and time again over the next two days by reporters, police and



All quiet

even delegates, who expected a much warmer reception. One officer, after yet another planned rally had turned into a virtual washout, remarks: "It makes you wonder what they are all planning. It's almost too quiet."

Two days later he is to realise how grimly prophetic his words had been.

For a story that began three years ago in the bomb-ravaged streets of Belfast is about to reach its horrifying climax in the elegant splendour of the Grand Hotel, Brighton.

It was on a spring day in Northern Ireland that the countdown began. It was early May, 1981, and the mean, tatty streets of West Belfast were packed with a coldly, angry, restless mob.

Tension crackled in the air like a fusillade from Armalite rifles as the massive, belligerent procession shuffled from Twinbrook to Milltown cemetery.

At its head, a coffin bore the emaciated body of Bobby Sands.

He had died just a few days earlier, starving himself to death in one of the Maze prison's notorious H-blocks, in a gruesome protest at the way IRA prisoners were being treated.

Now, in an awesome, carefully

stage-managed display of Republican strength, the body of the convicted gunman was followed to the graveside by 70,000 mourners.

It was a scene to be repeated in the coming four months as a further nine hunger strikers died, each one drawing worldwide attention to the IRA.

The Provos said the deaths should have been avoided. They blamed the British Government for not giving in to their demands for political status unless the hunger strike was called off.

They blamed Mrs Thatcher for not resolving the problem. In many Republican eyes she and her Cabinet were directly to blame for the ten lingering deaths.

And as they stood at Sands' graveside, in their outlawed paramilitary uniforms, the Provos vowed revenge.

Sands and his nine followers would not have died in vain, they pledged.

The IRA top brass met to plan a strike back at the British, which would be the most devastating and daring yet seen.

The word went out to the commandos who masterminded their campaigns of violence: "Thatcher must die. Death to the Cabinet."

But when she returns to the Grand Hotel from the conference on that Tuesday, Mrs Thatcher has no inkling that the past is rapidly catching up with her.

Characteristically, she briskly scours the Cabinet papers and affairs of State from the red despatch box that follows any Prime Minister wherever he or she may go.

If she glances up, she can look out of the tall window in the drawing room of the Napoleon suite and see over the ornate wrought iron balcony to the beach beyond.

For security reasons, part of the seafront road below her room has been cordoned off to traffic, but otherwise life is agreeably normal.

The Napoleon suite, though surprisingly small, is well-furnished and comfortable. The bedroom, apricot-coloured bathroom and drawing room have only recently been redecorated, and there is a reassuring touch of restrained good taste in the heavy, full-length curtains and rich sea-green carpet.

For the town of Brighton, too, things are going well. The 1984 political conference season began and is due to close in the town.

The TUC had been first off the



Happy and confident — Mrs Thatcher arrives at the Grand Hotel for the 1984 Tory Conference

on the seafront

mark in September, drawing thousands of striking miners to a mass lobby of union leaders. Labour and the Alliance parties had gone elsewhere and now it is the Tories' turn to move into the Brighton Centre and wrap up the round of debates.

No one, on this grey Brighton Tuesday, imagines that the Conservative Party conference will end with an explosion that will change the face of British politics.

The main talking point inside the conference hall — and not listed on the agenda — is the antics of a group of Young Conservatives who smashed up a CND model Trident submarine on the eve of the opening day.

CND — minus their mock submarine — still manage to scrape up a handful of members for a token protest later on the Tuesday. By the Wednesday the peace campaigners have brought in their leader, Mgr Bruce Kent, and he marches with 100 supporters after a rally in the pouring rain. Later open air speeches are cancelled because of the weather.

During the Wednesday 30 members of the Irish Freedom Movement — a British-based group set up to lobby for a united Ireland — hand out leaflets ominously headed "Rock the Tories in Brighton — Smash the Preven-

tion of Terrorism Act." They are showered with coins from Tories on the Brighton Centre balcony.

On Thursday the sun comes out — and so do the demonstrators. About 300, mainly Young Socialists, join the noisiest rally outside the Centre. As they press up against the steel barriers, chanting "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie . . . Out, out, out!" it looks as though the Prime Minister is finally set for a verbal assault.

The crowd swells and waits for the end of the morning session ready to give Mrs Thatcher a roasting. She slips out before the end of the debate and is back inside her Grand Hotel suite before the crowd has even realised. By the time she returns, the Young Socialists have moved to another part of town. It is still very quiet.

Inside the conference hall the week passes with stage-managed precision.

The Tories present a united and untroubled front. Home Secretary Leon Brittan wins huge applause as he pledges more money to police the miners' picket lines. As he speaks, collection tins are passed around, raising funds for working miners.

One of the conference darlings, Michael Heseltine — known as Tarzan to friend and foe —

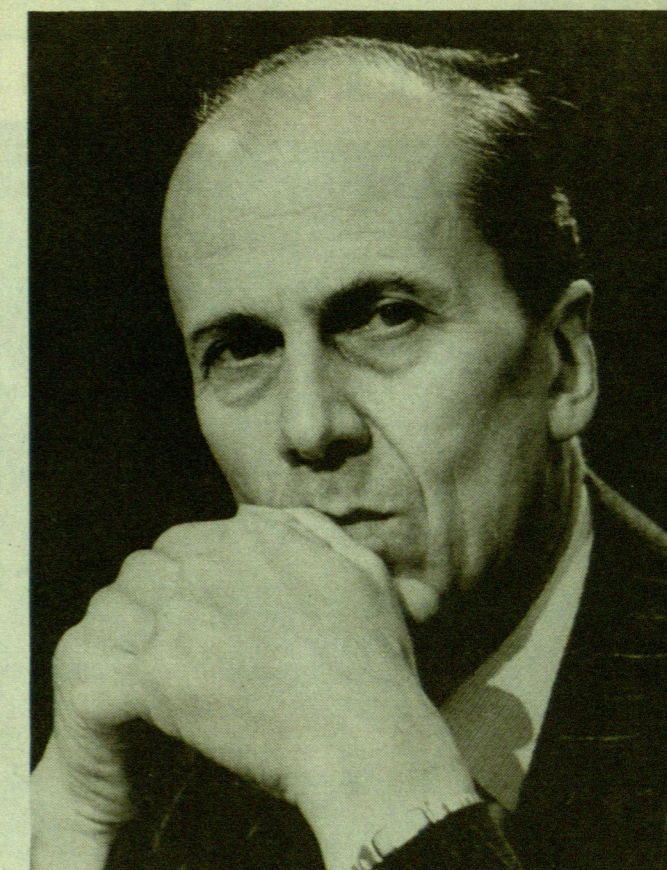
swings into action with a hard-hitting attack on Labour's defence policies. He also defends his Prime Minister's handling of the Belgrano affair.

It is what the delegates want to hear and he is given a predictable standing ovation. Just one question is unanswered — will that other favourite, Norman Tebbit, turn in a better performance?

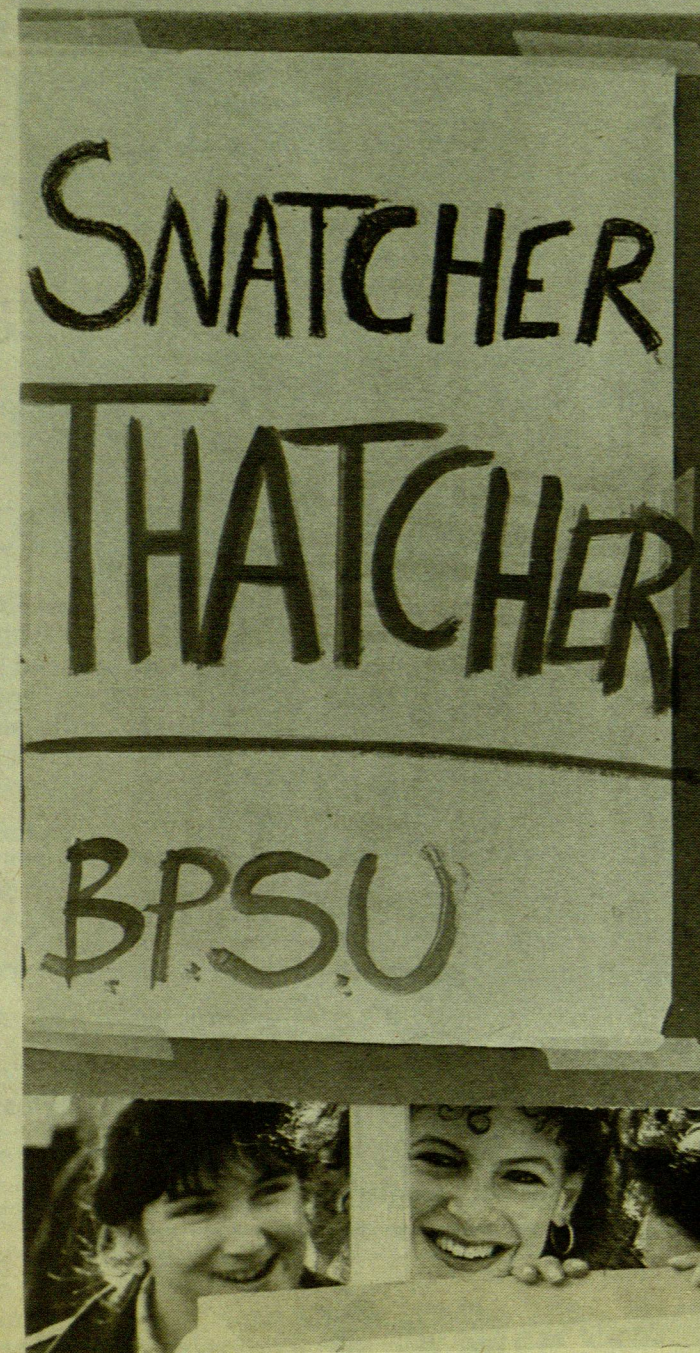
Tebbit, the Tory party's hard man, turns out to be in fine form. From centre stage he mocks Labour plans to re-nationalise companies sold off by the government. The standing ovation he receives leaves him smiling and content as he returns to his second floor suite at the Grand Hotel. All is set for Margaret Thatcher to wrap up a highly satisfactory week in Brighton, he decides.

Even the banner-towing aircraft which has been darting across the clear blue Sussex sky with the message: "It's better in Blackpool" seems to add to the Tories' buoyant mood.

The year before they were in Blackpool, and the conference was completely overshadowed by the Cecil Parkinson scandal. Parkinson, another handsome golden boy of the right and then party chairman, was in disgrace after his affair with secretary Sarah Keays became public



Norman Tebbit — hard-hitting speech



A light-hearted protest — but the town was quiet. Very quiet

A town

The bubbly flows as the secret count down begins

knowledge. Miss Keays was pregnant and Mr Parkinson had resigned.

How could it have been better in Blackpool? Brighton is a sea of calm in comparison.

Even the fringe meetings, held in rooms of hotels dotted all around Brighton, pass relatively trouble-free, apart from the odd stink bomb.

Almost all the famous faces — and many of the not so famous — of the government are staying at the Grand Hotel. The hotel, built in 1864 and looking like an elaborate wedding cake, seems to be living up to its name.

Downing Street is virtually redundant. For conference week the centre of government is the Grand Hotel.

As manager Paul Boswell remarks: "Every Cabinet minister and every government minister is here. The Grand is in all its splendour and glory."

Cabinet meetings are held in Mrs Thatcher's rooms or the rooms opposite, which for the week are turned into offices and filled with government papers.

Ministers are dotted around the hotel, many with front sea-view rooms. Sir Geoffrey Howe and Leon Brittan are both on the first floor in rooms next door to the Prime Minister. Norman Tebbit and party chairman John Selwyn Gummer are on the second floor.

The security cordon surrounding the Brighton Centre extends along King's Road, Brighton, to include the Grand. Police stand at either end of the 100 yard

public no-go zone checking conference passes. Demonstrators are kept off the pavement behind the steel fencing.

Security men check passes a second time at the entrance to the Brighton Centre where bags are searched and random body checks given.

Uniformed officers patrol the front of the Centre — the number depending on the size of the day's demonstrations. More stand on permanent watch outside the entrance to the Grand.

Security seems as tight as a drum. But a time bomb is ticking away on the sixth floor of the hotel.

Each morning a convoy of police vans brings in extra officers on standby to quell any mob violence. The 700 bobbies, from forces all over Britain, are billeted at Butlins holiday camp in Bognor Regis.

For most, the first three days of the Tory conference pass in dull routine as all stays quiet on the Brighton front. The men, and riot gear, are put up inside the Top Rank Suite near the Brighton Centre during the day. At night it is back to Butlins and a hi-de-hi style cabaret.

Meanwhile the IRA men sit back in satisfaction. They know they are nearly ready to avenge the deaths of their hunger strikers.

As Thursday's debates draw to a close, the souvenir sellers inside the Centre are satisfied too. The stock of marzipan models of Margaret Thatcher, at £2.50 each, has virtually gone. Support the Working Miners badges are also moving fast.

Inside and outside the Brighton Centre the Tory world is calm.

The lucky few who have managed to obtain tickets are

primed to erupt

already talking about the annual ball to be held that night at the Top Rank Suite. The ball is reckoned the highlight of the conference social calendar.

Even the weather has finally decided to brighten up.

The only note which jars that blue sea of tranquillity comes from the speakers' microphone during a debate on unemployment. Ivor Humphrey, a salesman, makes a passionate plea for more aid to help ease the unemployment figures. Speaking on the Government's policy, he says: "There is an alternative. There has to be an alternative."

"Otherwise one day you will experience an explosion the like of which you have never witnessed before."

As delegates drift away from the conference that evening no one in Brighton, least of all Mr Humphrey, can foresee that that explosion is less than 12 hours away — and that the IRA, rather than unemployment, will be the cause.

For in the cavity between Grand Hotel rooms 628 and 629, a sophisticated electronic timing device is pulsing away on a countdown to destruction.

The IRA bosses who instigated the outrage wait for vengeance.

In the days, or possibly weeks, leading up to the conference, explosives have been secreted into the Grand and assembled and hidden in such a way that they are unlikely to be discovered by maintenance men, security experts or even sniffer dogs.

During the week of the Tory conference, the security forces' normal alert status is upped one grade, to the still comparatively low-key state known as Bikini Black Alpha.

But to Sussex Chief Constable Roger Birch and his men, this security state is too low. During the Prime Minister's stay in Brighton, his security will far exceed Bikini Black Alpha.

Unknown to police, the bomb is already in place.

And only a handful of people, all of them miles from Brighton, know that Brighton's Grand Old Lady has been primed to erupt.

Meanwhile, back at the Top Rank Suite, only yards from the Grand, the cheers of 1,200 loyal Tories almost drown the strains of the band playing Hello Dolly as Mrs Thatcher sweeps into the annual conference ball on a tidal wave of adulation.

It is 10.30 p.m. on the night of Thursday October 11. The dance hall is packed with supporters come to acclaim their leader on the eve of the closing day of the conference.

As the Zoochi band strike the first chords of the old standard the crowds change the name from Dolly to fit their heroine and sing: "Hello Maggie, it's so nice to have you back where you belong. You're looking swell Maggie..."

Wearing a silver spangled



Band call for the Prime Minister at the Top Rank Suite

Bedtime—but Mrs Thatcher is working late

blouse with a wide ruff collar over a full length dress as deep blue as the starlit sky outside, Margaret Thatcher — two days away from her 59th birthday — does indeed look swell.

She takes to the stage and explains she can't stay long because she has to prepare for a "bigger few words" next day.

Denis Thatcher, baton in hand and beaming, leads the band as his wife dances a quickstep with Col. Gerry Exley, the Tory agent for Hove who has organised the ball.

The massed ranks of photographers, flashbulbs popping, follow her every step and capture her every smile. The night is going well. Very well.

The Prime Minister pauses to admire a large blue bear, the main prize in a raffle. She signs a few autographs and then it is time to go. That speech still needs finishing.

They cheer her out into the clear Brighton night, where security men wait in a Daimler to drive Mr and Mrs Thatcher the 200 yards back to The Grand Hotel. It is 11.15 p.m.

As the Prime Minister arrives back at the Napoleon suite a BBC Newsnight team — fronted by veteran political interviewer Sir Robin Day — is finishing a

live broadcast from the main lounge.

And in his flat, facing the sea from the second floor, Grand Hotel manager Paul Boswell notes in his diary that the conference week is going very well — and surprisingly quietly.

Downstairs, business is booming in the hotel bars. Everyone seems happy and the Cabinet members have been quick to compliment him and his staff on the smooth service offered by the Grand. In Mr Boswell's words, it is a happy hive of industry and social activity.

But for Mr Boswell the week is already tinged with sadness. For this is his last season in charge of Brighton's top hotel.

A few months before, the owners De Vere had been bought out by northern brewery giant Greenhall Whitley. Mr Boswell sensed he no longer fitted in with the new set-up, and with a heavy heart he had discussed his position with the new bosses.

It was decided that "in the mutual interests of both sides" Mr Boswell would retire to his 600-year-old cottage near Sidmouth, Devon, spend more time coarse fishing, help with the local church and voluntary groups, catch up on his reading — and maybe even write a book on his 34 years working in hotels.

Content that his last big week is about to end incident-free, Mr Boswell has checked with his two duty managers and three night porters that all is well before retiring to his quarters.

He climbs wearily into bed at 12.30 a.m., expecting that Friday will see him go through his normal routine.

How wrong he was to be. For disaster on a scale no one could have dreamed of is just a few hours away.

Mr Boswell, sleepy now, plans out his Friday: Up at 6.30 a.m., check with staff on breakfast arrangements for guests, say his good mornings to everyone, chat with the police on duty and go through the early post.

Then it will be time for a brisk walk along the seafront before taking his own breakfast, then appointments, staff meetings and the post. But this routine, from 17½ years at the Grand, is nearly ready to explode.

As Mr Boswell sleeps, many Tories are heading back to his hotel for late drinks. They have been out on the town in style, packing restaurants and clubs.

Some late clubs are still teaming with Tory revellers determined to keep the last night party spirit running into the early hours of Friday. They dance and drink,

happy that the conference has been such a success.

It's a quiet night for the emergency services in Brighton, too. Ambulancemen have had two maternity calls in Brighton and Hove, and later they rush out to a man found collapsed near Hove seafront.

Firemen have only answered a handful of calls up to midnight. Three are false alarms and one is a hoax call to Grand Parade, Brighton. At 7 p.m. they are sent to Western Street where a pile of rubbish is on fire. Three hours later colleagues are dealing with a smouldering tumble drier in a Seaford motel — all routine stuff.

They don't realise the devastation that is only hours away.

For Sussex police it is an "averagely busy night with no major incidents" — an attempted robbery in Brighton, a minor road accident in Newhaven.

They don't realise the horror getting closer every second.

At Brighton's Royal Sussex County Hospital Sister Eileen Brencher, who has been on duty since 9 p.m., is pleased because there has been no major crash or fire.

Nurses in the accident and emergency department have been kept busy dealing with the 25 or so patients during the night — an overdose case, a cardiac arrest and minor burns.

They don't realise the agonies that they will see before the night is out.

Meanwhile the Tory revellers are enjoying themselves. Even the Young Conservatives — who angered Tory bosses with antics at the start of the week — are content to sup up the champagne and relax.

The bubbly is flowing well for Ron Farley, a 40-year-old chartered accountant and leader of the Tory group on Bradford council. He has ordered another three bottles of champagne in the Grand Hotel bar — a round of drinks for the 12 or so councillors, agents and Young Conservatives from his area. Most have been to the ball and are still wearing evening dress. The ladies glitter in long gowns and jewellery.

The bar is noisy with the sound of Yorkshireman Ron, an easy-going Yorkshireman who has thoroughly enjoyed his conference week, reckons on staying until about 3 a.m. then heading back to the flat he is renting along the seafront towards Hove.

He raises his glass to his colleague, Tory agent Mark Mewse, who has skipped the ball and dined instead at one of Brighton's French speciality restaurants.

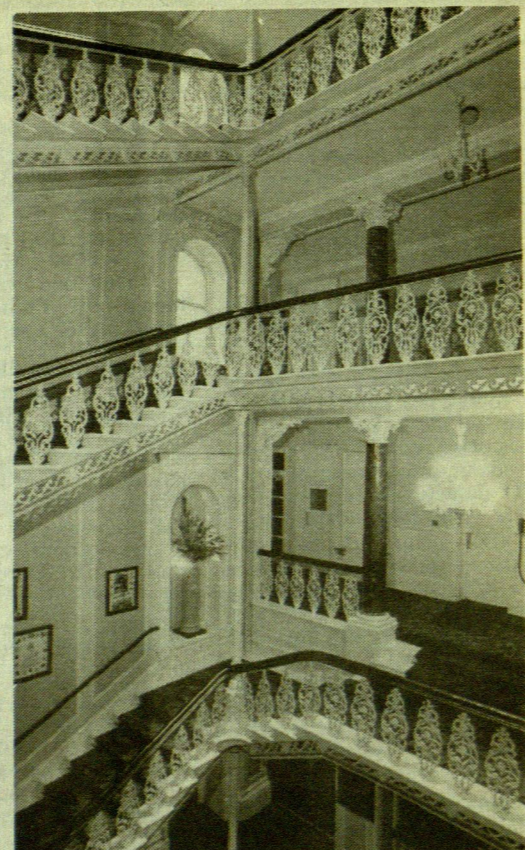
Mark, 24, a former senior air-craftsman in the RAF, has been in the Grand since 11 p.m. He joins in the laughter as one of the night staff has trouble opening a bottle of champagne.

Ron Farley, immaculate in black dinner jacket, dark slacks, white shirt and black velvet bow tie, has enjoyed the social life of

Grand by nature



The elegant lounge of the Grand Hotel — destined to become a disaster area



Ironwork and mouldings — all doomed by the IRA bombers

The split second when time runs out

the conference, and has relished mixing with MPs and ministers.

As he orders the champagne to toast the end of a happy conference, he glances around the bar — staff, delegates and pressmen mingling near the elegant hotel entrance. It is almost time for bed, he thinks.

Party chairman John Selwyn Gummer has also done his share of socialising during that hectic Thursday night. As chairman he is expected to make a showing at most receptions and meetings, and for Mr Gummer there is an added incentive to do his job well.

Brighton is his first conference in his new role after taking over from the disgraced Cecil Parkinson. A smooth-running conference is vital for party morale and Mr Gummer sees no reason to be disappointed.

Mr Gummer, 44-year-old son of a vicar, and his wife Penny, started Thursday night with a dinner laid on by a television company before attending the agents' ball at the Top Rank Suite.

Later there were more meetings

and receptions at The Metropole Hotel and it is 1.30 a.m. before the couple can return to their second floor suite at the Grand — directly above the Prime Minister's rooms and next to Norman and Margaret Tebbit.

But as Penny Gummer heads for bed, the night's work is still not over for her husband.

Friday afternoon is the climax of the conference — Mrs Thatcher's closing speech and, with the world's press waiting to hear her words, everything must be perfect.

Denis Thatcher and most of the Cabinet have retired to bed by now, but the Prime Minister works on, putting the finishing touches to one of her most important speeches of the year.

At her side is Mr Gummer, and they are discussing the progress of the conference and the finer details of the speech she will make some 12 hours later.

Meanwhile, in a secret place in room 629, the microchip timer is down to its last hour.

It is almost three hours into Friday when Mr Gummer steps

across the corridor, past the armed Special Branch guards, and into the party office to find yet another file.

Back in her drawing room Mrs Thatcher glances at the clock and decides to call it a night. But her principal private secretary, Robin Butler, asks her to tackle just one more vital paper before she goes to the bathroom to prepare for bed.

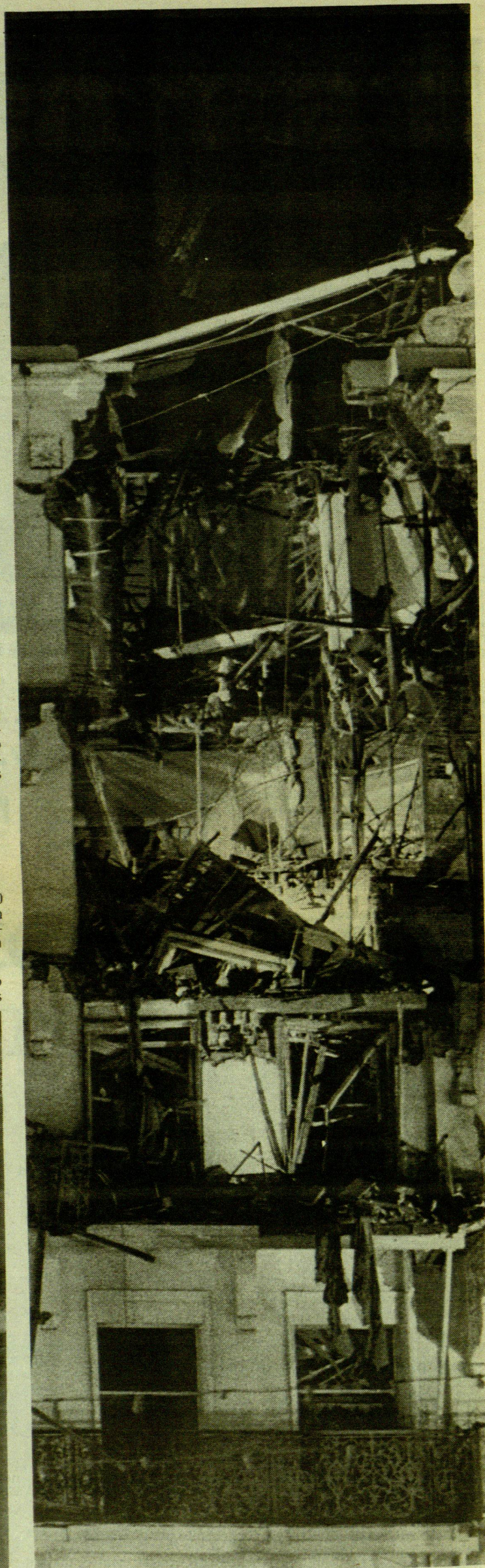
She sits in the armchair and begins to read.

Across the corridor, John Gummer has found the final details he needs. He decides to check back with the Prime Minister before joining his wife upstairs for some much-needed sleep.

The time is 2.53 a.m. on Friday October 12, 1984. In exactly one minute the IRA's bomb is set to devastate the lives of everyone in the Grand Hotel.

50 . . . 40 . . . 30 . . . 20 . . . 10 . . . and a piercing blue flash rips the heart out of the hotel — and brings death and destruction in its wake.

This is the moment destined to claim a place in history books as



The wreckage of the once elegant Grand Hotel



Bubbly one moment — coated in rubble the next

Friday, October 12, 1984: 2.54 a.m.

BOMBED!

the day the IRA terrorists execute a 20th century gunpowder plot—and come terrifyingly close to pulling it off.

The 20lb. gelignite bomb, a parcel of death hidden behind a bath panel in room 629, explodes in a blanket of blinding light, setting off a chain of destruction.

Huge chunks of masonry hurtle through the air out on to the seafront. Windows burst and shatter. Flagpoles on the promenade are snapped off like candy-floss sticks as masonry missiles smash down on to the beach below.

The head of a parking meter is shorn off and rocks crash through windows of a seafront shelter. A mushroom cloud of smoke and dust billows out of the hotel.

A huge chimney stack at the top of the Grand rocks — then plunges downwards through ceilings and floors of the rooms in its pathway, taking sleeping guests with its avalanche of rubble.

Some will miraculously escape. Others will die.

In the choking dust and jagged piles of debris of the darkened hotel someone begins to scream . . .

But the assassins' target, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who has escaped death by minutes, is icy cool. She has just finished reading one final paper and is planning to wash ready for bed.

But as the explosion rocks the Grand, Special Branch men stationed outside her door rush in with handguns drawn.

Mr Gummer flings himself on the floor to avoid the shower of glass from the shattered windows.

Almost instantly his thoughts turn to the Prime Minister, and he rises and rushes from the office in time to see Mrs Thatcher emerging from the door of her suite.

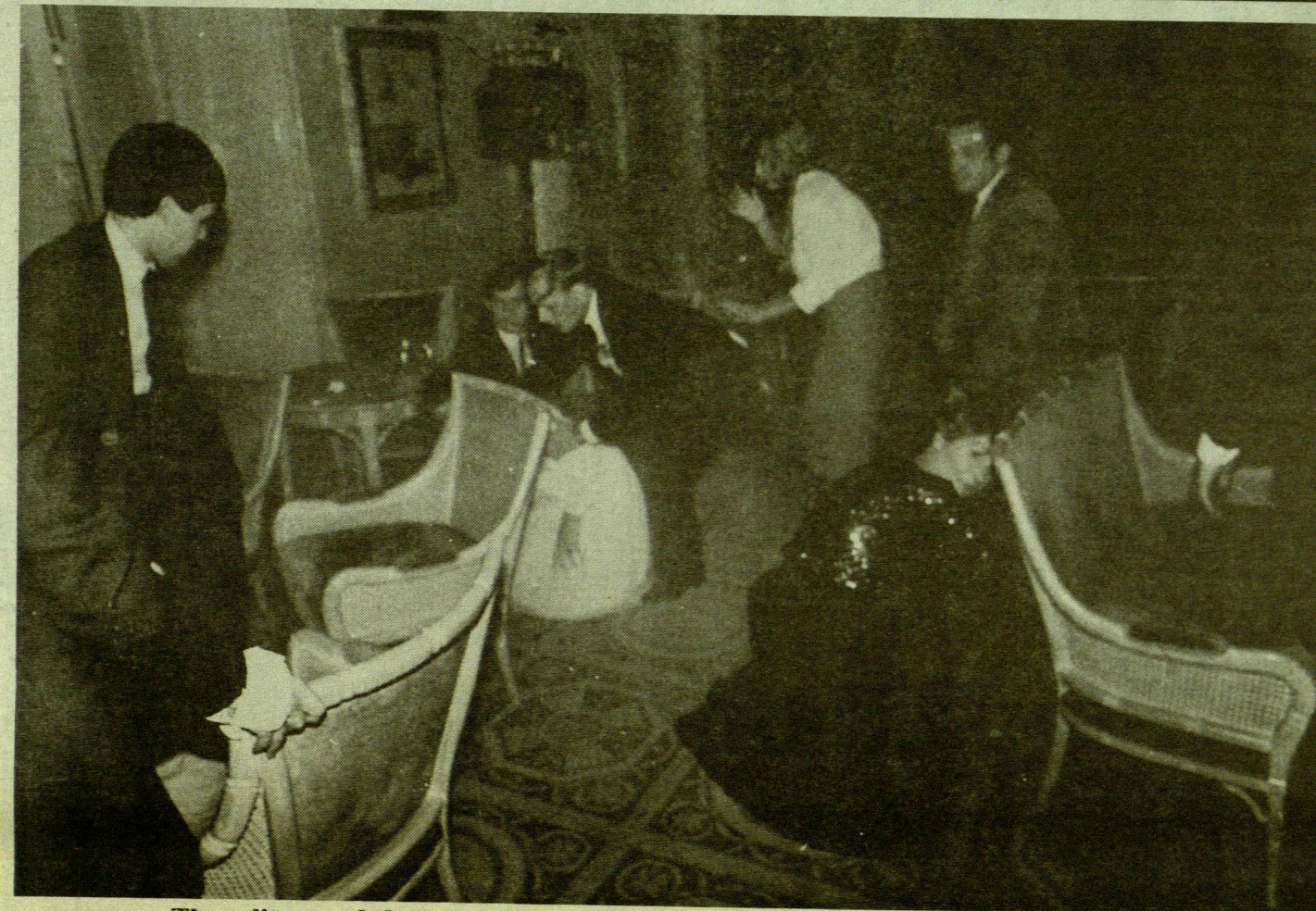
True to her Iron Lady image her first words are: "What can I do? What's happened?"

It is a question on everybody's lips in the confusion after the blast.

Businessman Jeremy Elwes wakes in pitch blackness, choking on dust and pinned down by rubble. His first thought is that the revellers upstairs have knocked the ceiling through. He hasn't heard the bang. His wife Phyl, lying at his side, murmurs: "It's a bomb."

The wall between the bathroom and bedroom in room 530 have collapsed and they are trapped under the heap of rubble on their bed — a gleaming brass four poster that has been a source of some amusement for the couple.

Married for 21 years, they have been cracking jokes all week about finding themselves in the honeymoon suite. But when the blast rips through the hotel, sending an entire wall crashing down



The split second the bomb went off. People dive for cover as the rubble begins to fly

Screaming — like a child in a nightmare

on them, it is the bed that saves their lives.

The rubble has buckled the sturdy frame but the four poster has held firm and taken most of the force.

"If it hadn't been for that," Mr Elwes, 47-year-old chairman of the Conservative Political Centre National Advisory Committee, is to say later, "it would have come straight on to our heads."

Mrs Elwes cannot move; but her husband fights to kick his feet sideways through the twisted metal of the bedhead. Then begins a frantic struggle to release his wife from the wreckage.

He tosses rubble aside with his bare hands, talking all the time to his wife who is conscious but in pain. As he works he can hear desperate cries for help coming from next door.

Slowly he pulls his wife clear

and searches the room for something to wear over their night-clothes before stumbling barefoot over the debris into what is left of the corridor.

He can still hear the pitiful cries coming from the room nearby. As he turns to answer the call his path is blocked and a young man in a National Car Parks jacket says: "You're not going anywhere. You're going straight down that fire escape."

Car park cashier John Taylor is in the middle of the rescue operation after dashing along the seafront to offer help. He has been working an all-night shift at a nearby multi-storey car park when he hears what sounds like a cannon shot.

He runs along the seafront, helps police close off Cannon Place, and then hears a woman shouting that people are trapped on the fire escape. He climbs up

and helps ferry the survivors to safety.

Clinging to the fire escape five floors up, 72-year-old Mrs Mabel de la Motte screams for help. Minutes earlier Mrs de la Motte, secretary of the Conservative Foreign and Commonwealth Council, had been sound asleep after an exhausting day of debates and parties.

Suddenly the world has exploded almost directly above her head, leaving her screaming like a child in a nightmare. She is no longer in bed, but lying in the corridor entombed up to her neck in rubble, with timbers crashing down around her.

Shock wipes out the first waves of pain. As consciousness returns the only thing that matters is getting out. The nightmare is real.

Using all her strength she writhes free from the rubble inch

by inch. Agonising minutes later she is able to stand, and for the first time tries to see through the fog of dust, praying for a way out.

A few paces away she sees an open fire escape door and picks her way over the debris into the cool night air. Slowly, bleeding from cuts and still shaking from the weight of the rubble, she clutches the hand-rail and begins to edge her way down the iron steps.

Like many in those first few minutes she is confused, terrified and alone. Her mind is unable to take in the horror of the moment.

Meanwhile Harvey Thomas, 6ft 4in tall and weighing 181 stone, is hanging over a gaping hole that drops five floors. His head and shoulders are trapped in rubble, his feet are caught on a shelf . . . and in between is absolutely nothing.

Mr Thomas, the 45-year-old conference organiser, is convin-

Lord let me live to see my baby...

ced he will die. His room, 729, was directly above the bomb — and the whole structure is disintegrating.

A teetotaler and non-smoker, Mr Thomas has not joined the revellers in the foyer for late drinks, preferring to head for his room to work. It is the third time he has masterminded the annual conference, and up to 2.54 a.m. on Friday, it has gone well.

Mr Thomas, dangling there over an abyss, allows himself a rueful grimace.

Everything was ready for the Prime Minister's final speech, and on the Saturday he was planning to be back home in London where his wife, Marlies, is due to give birth to their first child at any time. The baby is already four days late.

That night he had drifted into sleep easily, but was wrenched awake by a tremendous rumbling and crashing. It still felt like a dream, falling from a cliff with a thunderstorm outside, he would say later. Only pain forces the realisation that rubble is actually falling on him.

It must be an earthquake, he thinks. But then he thinks again: No, you don't get earthquakes in Brighton, at least not during the Tory conference.

Mr Thomas, a devout Christian and former crusade director with Billy Graham, thinks: "Right, if I am going to die, first John, chapter one, verse nine: If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness — if not from the rubble of the Grand Hotel.

"Lord if I have anything unconfessed, take it as read."

He lies there, flat on his back, masonry pouring on top of him, burying his head, blinding his eyes and filling his nose and mouth. Thinking quickly, he holds his hands over his mouth to make a vital air pocket, but it is a struggle to breathe. Water from a burst tank cascades down on to him.

He has crashed through two floors, and is lying with a bath full of shattered stone bearing down



Mr and Mrs Thatcher — shocked but unhurt. Denis Thatcher wears a jacket over his pyjamas

on his chest, and a girder across his ribs.

His life dangles in the balance over that gaping void as he silently says his second prayer: "Lord please give me spiritual strength and the physical strength to hold off the crushing weight."

He is to say later: "I'd survived the fall and I felt sure that, with a marvellous wife like Marlies, the Lord was not going to leave her with no husband and an overdue baby. I prayed the Lord would let me see the baby."

But it was to be a long, agonising wait before he would hear that his prayers had been answered.

Five floors below in the foyer

bar the blast and tumbling masonry have silenced the late night laughter, leaving only terrified cries of confusion.

The Bradford Tories, lifting their glasses in a farewell toast to the 1984 conference, dive for cover as the bomb goes off. One explosion seems to be followed by another, louder blast — the falling chimney.

Ron Farley knows instinctively that the Grand has been blitzed by terrorists. He shouts: "Get down, stay down," and then masonry begins cascading down and the bar fills with choking dust.

The men and women in the

dress, scramble under tables and chairs. Mark Mewse barely waits for the dust to settle before he crawls on his hands and knees to search for an exit.

At first he thinks the bombers have thrown explosives into the foyer, so he stays close to the ground, half expecting terrorists to come bursting in through the door with guns blazing.

He remembers seeing an emergency fire door and, inching across the rubble, he manages to find the escape route. It opens easily and he shouts back to tell his friend to start moving people out.

Mr Farley coolly takes command. He orders the shaken guests to link hands, then he leads them towards safety out into the road at the back of the Grand.

Then he runs to the front of the hotel to offer help to the injured. It is only then that he sees the full extent of the destruction caused by the bomb in room 629.

Delegate Gary Matthews, a 25-year-old Cornish councillor, is drinking in the lounge of the nearby Hotel Metropole when he hears the explosion. He rushes along the seafront to help and is horrified to see the wounded staggering out of the Grand.

Many have cut faces and arms. One woman, with her clothes virtually torn off, is sobbing. Others are screaming.

The dazed victims of the outrage spill out on to the seafront, clutching the tattered remains of their once elegant evening dress, caked in dust and some dripping with blood.

Those who walk clear are the lucky ones.

For inside the crippled Grand

Choked with dust, dazed with fear

Hotel others are buried under a mountain of rubble.

Guests, fast asleep after a hectic night of celebration, have been flung out of bed into a deep, dark chasm of chaos. Others find themselves staring at mounds of debris surrounding them in their beds as they gasp for clean air in the black fog of dust.

Delegates with rooms on the 5th and 6th floors have plunged 150ft. downwards. Some, miraculously still alive, are staggering round in the basement.

Top floor guests tumble past victims on the lower floors as entire rooms pivot on to each other in a macabre somersault.

Only later can experts piece together the cause of the devastation — a massive chimney stack at the top of the hotel which is dislodged by the blast and collapses through the floor beneath. The floor in turn gives way under the immense weight and then crashes through to the next floor, and on in a downward spiral of death.

A series of rooms collapse like a pack of cards, turning as they plunge down. As the rubble hits each room, so it tilts the floor upwards towards the huge hole being created.

Flooring, carpets, beds and people are turned almost upside down as they tumble into the void.

Those on the top floors fall through the chasm first, passing through lower rooms before they too follow in the rush of rubble.

Five of those caught up in the nightmare will not survive.

Mrs Jeanne Shattock, wife of the Conservative Western Counties chairman, is already dead. She was in room 628 and has taken the full force of the bomb, which exploded just feet from her. She stood no chance.

Soon the death list will include three more names: Sir Anthony Berry MP, Eric Taylor and Roberta Wakeham. All by now are dying under the merciless weight of rubble bearing down on them. A fifth victim will die later in hospital.

Above them Cabinet minister Norman Tebbit and his wife Margaret are lying entombed in the debris — wrenched from their second floor room and trapped in a 12ft. pile of jagged bricks and splintered timbers in the foyer.

Suspended five floors up like a human bridge across the gaping shaft, Harvey Thomas prays on. His silent pleas are shared by all the other victims weeping in the remains of the once stately old lady of Brighton — the Grand Hotel.

But as the shocked survivors of the blast begin to spill out of the shattered hotel the bombers' prime target waits on in a first floor corridor.

Mrs Thatcher is barely shaken by the terrorist bomb set to kill her. Those guarding her have one job — to make sure she stays alive.

For the armed detectives who kicked their way into her suite the



Shocked, bleeding and dazed with horror — two of the victims of the terrorists' bomb



Dust and smoke and grief as the victims fight their way to safety



A victim of the outrage lies injured outside the hotel. A policeman, looking almost as dazed as the victims, looks up at the devastation

A new

—but their target is calm and unruffled

instant the explosion rocked the building it is a moment they have been trained for — and have prayed would never happen.

There is no time for relief that Mrs Thatcher is unharmed. The bombers might not give up that easily, they reckon. And the fear of a second bomb is over-ridden by the bigger danger of a sniper's bullet finishing off the task the initial blast has failed to achieve.

A figure has been spotted on a rooftop nearby. The security men are taking no chances.

Within seconds of the blast Mrs Thatcher, still in her evening dress is hustled away from her suite into the relative safety of the dust-filled corridor.

By chance, one of the first rescue ladders rests against her balcony and a fireman waves her towards it. The guards say no.

A lone figure clambering down a ladder in the full glare of street lights would be an easy target for any gunmen.

They decide that until a safe escape is assured, Mrs Thatcher must stay where she is, surrounded by the stench of dust and the pitiful cries for help echoing through the devastated building.

Mr Gummer, face to face with Mrs Thatcher in that devastated corridor, shivers with fear. His wife — is she all right?

He knows she was sleeping in their second floor suite, and he is comforted by his first impression — that the bomb was downstairs.

It is only later that the couple discover the sixth floor source of the blast and realise Mrs Gummer has come terrifyingly close to death in the rubble.

Woken by the explosion which sent shock waves through her elegant bedroom, she runs to the bathroom to grab her dressing gown before searching for her husband.

Instead of entering the room, she puts her hand round the door to unhook the robe — an unconscious decision which may have saved her life. For the bathroom has disappeared — ripped out by tons of masonry falling from above.

Had she crossed the threshold,

Mrs Gummer would have fallen into the gaping hole and been buried in the debris.

But there is no time to reflect on that as the hotel crumbles. For one thought is searing through her mind: Mrs Thatcher must be the target — and her husband has been working with her.

Mrs Gummer decides to find him and stumbles through the gloom out into the hallway. Just yards away Mr Gummer is coming up the stairs towards his wife.

As he climbs, the dust rises, making him look like a pantomime demon with smoke billowing around him. The choking dust clinging to his hair and clothes is so thick that when Mr Gummer meets his wife at the top of the stairs she does not recognise him for a moment.

As they rush hand in hand down the stairs, the Gummerts do not realise the fate which has befallen the couple sleeping in the room next to their own — Norman and Margaret Tebbit.

They are already lying trapped and gravely injured under a mountain of rubble two floors down. And it is to be agonising hours before they are pulled clear.

Elsewhere in the wreckage, the cries for help echo. They are cries Dame Anne Springman, vice-president of the National Conservative Union, and her husband Michael will never forget.

Although their home is just a few miles from Brighton, in Uckfield, they have decided to stay at the Grand for the conference because they think it will be more relaxing than travelling.

Any hopes of relaxation are shattered when they are woken in their fourth floor room by the rumbling sound of the explosion and glass showering around them.

Their room fills with dust. They clutch wet cloths to their mouths to stop choking, grab what they can and stagger into the corridor. Their first instinct is to get out of the building and away from the falling rubble but they cannot ignore the sounds that surround them.

People they had been drinking and laughing with just hours beforehand, are crying out for help. The couple know they cannot get to everyone but they have to try

fear: Snipers

Barefoot in the dark . . .



Sir Keith Joseph — dazed and visibly shaken — is comforted by two policemen

AFTER the blast, Brighton seafront is peppered with top Government figures still dazed and in their night-clothes.

Education Minister, Sir Keith Joseph, in silk pyjamas and dressing gown, is visibly shaken. He waves reporters away as he walks from the scene.

He looks frightened, and stares into camera lenses as if in disbelief at what is happening.

Behind his back, a bodyguard says nothing, but gesticulates to reporters to leave the Minister alone. He is unwell and not up to interviews, is the message.

In complete contrast, Health Minister Norman Fowler is calm, collected and relaxed. He leans against a wall, hands in pockets, and tells how he was on the third floor asleep when there was an

“enormous bang” and the sound of falling debris.

The Lords' Chief Whip, Lord Denham, pads along the seafront barefoot. His lungs are still full of the dust from room 329 — right next to the deadly shaft of rubble.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson, wearing his suit trousers and pyjama top, is expressionless, even nonchalant, as he strolls by.

He was sleeping on the Grand's first floor and is unharmed by the blast.

Deputy Prime Minister William Whitelaw is staying nearby with friends and is one of the few Cabinet members not at the Grand that night.

One minister has slept through the big bang, Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin says the first thing he heard was the alarm bells.

to answer some of the frantic pleas.

Rushing to one room they try the door. It is jammed, so they break it down and guide the stunned occupants to a nearby fire escape.

Half way down they meet police rushing up to hunt for survivors.

Again Mr Springman returns to the building, guiding police through the mayhem and leading them to the rooms where he has heard screams.

His wife, dazed and dressed in a nightdress and overcoat, joins the crowd of victims wandering, bemused, shocked and bleeding, along Brighton's debris-strewn seafront.

Those gathered outside stare with frightened eyes at the huge gash ripped into the Grand's facade. They will never forget this night.

Some have had miraculous escapes. On the Thursday morning Roy Bradford nearly asked hotel staff to switch him and his wife to a room with a sea view.

He had noticed an empty one across the corridor and the scene from the balcony looked more enticing than the buildings they could see from their window in 638.

His wife Hazel said it was not worth shifting all their belongings for one night and they decide to stay put. The empty room is directly to the right of the IRA bomb.

During Thursday the Australian High Commissioner, Mr Alfred Parsons, had moved in. And as the Bradfords stand outside after the blast, Mr Parsons is on his way to hospital—one of the casualties of the outrage.

The bombing has a fearful irony for Mr and Mrs Bradford.

Mrs Bradford, chairman of the Ulster Unionist Party and mayor of North Down, and her husband, a former Unionist MP, have seen first hand the violence of Northern Ireland. But it is in a seaside hotel in Brighton, a world away from the trouble-torn province, that they become the victims of terrorism.

Mr Bradford has woken to find himself lying on the bedroom floor. All around him is a roaring sandstorm of plaster and dust.

The bedroom wall has gone and the floor is littered with rubble. The Bradfords, coughing and choking from the thick dust, are convinced the hotel is on fire.

Only a small part of their bedroom wall remains—but the section behind their beds has held

good and sheltered them from the full force of the blast just a few feet away across the corridor.

Mr Bradford manages to grab his wife's hand and together they clamber over the piles of masonry. As they leave their room the sight which meets their eyes leaves them dumb with horror.

Instead of the passageway and blank walls of the room opposite, they find themselves staring at the open sky through dangling rafters. The front of the Grand has disintegrated.

Crunching over broken glass, the couple grope their way to the main staircase. Clinging to the balustrade, they fight their way to safety.

Descending the staircase with them are Lancashire MP Sir Walter Clegg and his wife Lady Elise. To a man with wartime service in the Royal Artillery, the distinctive acrid smell filling the shattered hotel is unmistakable — Sir Walter knows it is a bomb.

The bang and subsequent roar of destruction has shocked him awake minutes earlier in room 728.

Hardly noticing that the room is now missing most of one wall, Sir Walter, 64, and Lady Elise, 61, jump out of bed and begin to dress.

Earlier they have been remarking how nice it is to be back at the Grand, with its genteel air and plush surroundings. Now they are picking their way barefoot through its remains.

They are covered in dust but, underneath, their ashen faces are as white as the coating sticking to them. They are too stunned to show emotion — or even to realise they have been injured by flying glass.

On the staircase, as police direct them out of the building, word comes through that Mrs Thatcher is all right. But the destruction and cries for help all around make the couple fear for many of their colleagues.

Only when they are outside does Lady Elise look up at her husband. What she sees makes her gasp — his face is pouring with blood.

Back inside the Grand, the nightmare continues for those pinned under shattered stone and timbers. Many are conscious but unable to move under the crushing weight of rubble.

Each cry for help brings more dust into their already coated mouths and throats.

Some are badly injured, trapped alone in darkness where

the only sound is the ringing of alarm bells. Some are already dead.

On the sixth floor, Mrs Muriel Maclean, wife of the Scottish Tory Party president, lies seriously hurt in the debris that had once been room 629. One floor down her husband Donald is up to his neck in rubble, choking on dust and sheets which have wound their way round him.

Nearby, Harvey Thomas is still suspended over a gaping hole, still praying for his strength to hold out.

Downstairs, the once-elegant foyer is buried under a mountain of jagged stone and twisted wreckage stretching up to where the flooring of the second storey once stood.

Seven people lie trapped in the pile of debris. Only four will come out alive.

Lodged 12ft. up, above a doorway in the foyer, Norman Tebbit and his wife Margaret lie inches apart.

Lady Sarah Berry also lies near her husband but for her there is no comforting hand. Sir Anthony Berry, MP for Southgate, is already dead.

It is still hours before Government Chief Whip John Wakeham

How Fred met the challenge

IN the ghostly silence of the moments after the blast, Fred Hutchings left his flat at the nearby Metropole Hotel and stepped out into the still, dark street.

It was deathly quiet. No-one shouted or cried at first and the dust settled like a pall.

Mr Hutchings, general manager of the Metropole, knew he had to act quickly. Within minutes his

emergency security team had checked his hotel — and were ready to receive the Grand evacuees.

By 3.45 a.m. the crowd of people in the Metropole had swollen to 800, nearly twice the number on its guest list. But they weren't allowed to rest for long.

A second bomb scare forced them to flee the warmth of the hotel and head for the Bedford, still further along the seafront.

The all-clear signalled a return to the Metropole and staff found themselves catering for 1,000 people.

The Winter Garden function room was hastily opened, the kitchens became centres of activity and the bar shutters were pulled up.

Fred Hutchings saw his hotel transformed. Men and women in nightclothes moved like sleepwalkers among others in dinner suits and ball gowns.

Dirty and dishevelled, they sipped coffee and brandy, clinging together for comfort, some crying uncontrollably, as porters, waitresses, maids and desk staff handed out food and blankets.

The hotel was at full stretch — but it coped. And Mr Hutchings is proud of the way his staff kept their cool.

Despite the horror of the mo-

ment, the evacuated Grand guests did not forget to show their gratitude. One woman borrowed some towels to clean herself — then apologised for dirtying them with the dust caked over her skin.

Another woman later wrote to apologise for mislaying the blanket hotel staff had draped over her.

She had been woken by a bomb, seen friends and colleagues injured . . . and still had time to think about a lost blanket.

A bath full of shattered stone is bearing down on his chest and a girder rests across his ribs. But Mr Thomas is alive — and has been praying for strength.

The floor below him has literally been blown away in the explosion, and there is little between him and death . . . only the strength of his faith and the power of his 6ft. 4in. body.

Firemen quickly attach themselves to safety ropes and begin the delicate task of freeing him. All the time they are deluged with water from the burst tanks.

Severed electrical cables constantly arc around them in white flashes, and the firemen struggling to reach Mr Thomas now have a new peril: Electric shocks.

Hell must be something like this, they think.

As soon as they reach Mr Thomas they tie a safety line round him in case he and the surrounding material suddenly give way. They fight to clear the debris around him, all the time aware that moving the wrong piece at the wrong time can spell disaster.

As they work, the rescuers keep up a conversation with Mr Thomas and they are soon on first name terms.

They talk about anything and nothing. Just the sound of a human voice is enough to reassure Mr Thomas that the nightmare will soon be over. For the firemen, the contact serves another purpose — to keep Mr Thomas conscious so he can help them pull him clear.

Mr Thomas's sheer bulk — 6ft. 4in. frame and more than 18 stone — has probably saved him from plunging into the cavernous shaft he now bridges. But when it comes to dragging that bulk free from the debris, rescuers will need all the help they can get.

As the rubble clears, Mr Thomas uses every ounce of effort to heave and wriggle his body free. Slowly, painfully, he is pulled away from the gaping hole and dragged to safety.

Water is splashed in his ears, eyes, nose and mouth to clear the grit and dust which has showered down on him. Gashed and bruised but without serious injury, his first question to rescuers is: "What time is it?" To firemen it seems a strange request — but to Mr Thomas it is vital.

The previous day he had recorded a television interview to be shown on Friday morning, and his wife Marlies, expecting their baby any day, was planning to get up early to watch. Throughout his ordeal Mr Thomas has been terrified that he wouldn't be freed before the early news.

He fears the shock of waking

will be pulled miraculously alive from the debris. But for his wife Roberta it is already too late.

One other person lies trapped — Eric Taylor, a member of the Conservative National Executive. He is alive — but destined to become the bombers' fourth victim before rescuers can reach him.

In the basement, Mr Taylor's wife Jennifer stumbles over the debris in deep shock. Minutes earlier she and her husband were asleep on the fifth floor. Now she is wandering alone, clutching the remnants of her nightclothes. Her husband is dying just a few feet above her.

Nearby another dazed survivor picks his way over the basement wreckage. Gordon Shattock, Western Counties Conservative chairman, is remarkably unscathed . . . but he doesn't know his wife Jeanne's body lies six floors up in what had been their room.

Four dead and four widowed — a night's work for the IRA.

At the back of the hotel, a black car and police van draw up to whisk Mrs Thatcher and her Cabinet colleagues away to the safety of Brighton police station.

Despite the chaos, the Iron Lady is still icy cool. On her way out, she grabs a suit, two clean blouses, shoes and two cases — one containing Cabinet papers, the other full of make-up.

Hurrying down to her car, she bumps into fireman Dave Norris. With hardly a hair out of place, she says: "Good morning, pleased to see you." Then security men lead her to the waiting vehicle.

Mrs Thatcher is safe. But within hours she will know that four people are either dead or dying in the twisted wreckage of the Grand — and that one of her right-hand men is bleeding under the rubble as she drives off.

Even before the Prime Minister is whisked away to safety the rescue operation has started. And the crowds of emergency workers, firemen, policemen, ambulancemen and doctors all face a chaotic scene.

Survivors are pouring out of the hotel through any route they can find. Some come from fire escapes at the rear. Others clamber through smashed windows. Some, cut and bruised by flying glass and debris, are carried out.

The rescue workers look at the huge mound of twisted wreckage piled beneath the gaping hole in the Grand — and shudder at the thought that people are still in there — somewhere.

As the dust settles, cries for help echo through the darkened building: Piteful, plaintive cries, straining above the ringing of alarm bells.

Firemen head for the base-

She gasps . . . his face is pouring with blood

ment, where two voices can be heard. They find Gordon Shattock and Jennifer Taylor huddled together at the top of a flight of steps. Both are in deep shock, unable to believe the horror.

Mr Shattock has fallen 130ft. from his sixth floor room, his body tossed about like a rag doll.

As he falls, he sees slabs of concrete as big as rooms tilting towards him. Tons of bricks and twisted timbers follow him. For a split second, his eyes catch the lights of the dining room as he plummets past.

But he lands in one piece, his fall miraculously arrested by the debris cascading around him.

Stumbling around in the basement he hears the frightened voice of Jennifer Taylor, desperately calling for her husband. She has suffered the same horrific tumble, this time from the fifth floor. Like Mr Shattock, her injuries are incredibly slight.

The pair now shelter from the masonry still falling from above until firemen hear their calls and lead them to safety outside.

As they escape from the choking dust and gloom of the basement, they do not know that they will never see their spouses, Eric Taylor and Jeanne Shattock, alive again.

Outside, in the confusion, Mrs Taylor is frightened and distraught. As she wanders about, hugging a blanket round her tattered nightdress, she is spotted by her friends Sir Walter and Lady Elise Clegg.

Although they too have been injured in the blast, they rush to comfort her. She repeats again and again: "Where's Eric?" and

sobs out her fears that he is still buried in the mound of rubble.

As Lady Elise holds Mrs Taylor tight she moans: "I don't know where he is. I can't see Eric."

Lady Elise is holding her own grief and hurt in check to help the stricken woman. But later, when she reaches the hospital, the grim enormity of the night's events sink in and Lady Elise breaks down in tears.

Although the two victims found in the basement escape almost unscathed, rescuers know there must be others trapped above them who have not been so lucky.

Mr and Mrs Shattock were in room 628, next to 629 where the bomb was planted. That area is now a huge black void and around the chasm people can be seen and heard crying for help.

The teetering debris looks as if it could crash down at any minute, taking the injured, already precariously balanced, with it. Rescuers know they must act quickly.

Up on the fifth and sixth floors each step is a nightmare. One false move may set off a new chain of destruction and possibly death for those trapped.

As rescuers edge through the wreckage they are drenched with water flooding from burst tanks. Their eyes strain to see through the darkness and dust which hangs like a thick fog around them.

Following the cries for help, they clamber along the sixth floor corridor. Once there were rooms on either side. But now, as fire and ambulance workers and a doctor pick their way over the rubble, one side of the corridor

has disappeared and they can see the night sky and sea.

Through the darkness, they spot a figure lying on the remains of a bed, surrounded by superficial debris. It is Mrs Muriel Maclean, wife of Scottish party president Donald Maclean. She was in room 629 — at the heart of the blast.

Mrs Maclean is conscious but badly injured. As rescuers approach they can see why. Her right leg rests at an unnatural angle, twisted and obviously broken. It is later to be amputated.

First aid treatment must be fast and basic.

The ceiling and walls around her look frighteningly unsafe and what matters most is getting her out.

As rescuers try to ease Mrs Maclean's pain, the fire brigade bring in one of their latest acquisitions, a huge turntable ladder. Mrs Maclean is strapped to a stretcher and fixed to a special carrier on the ladder's cage.

Slowly and gently she is lowered down the crumbling facade of the Grand to the ground, where an ambulance waits to speed her to hospital.

But four weeks later Mrs Maclean is to die from her terrible injuries — the fifth victim of the IRA terrorists.

The rescuers have no time to reflect. For all around them is chaos and destruction . . . and now a new voice, bellowing to be heard.

Through the gloom they see an astonishing sight — Harvey Thomas, his head and feet trapped by rubble, and his body suspended over a gaping void which drops five floors.



Rescue services arrive at the stricken hotel. How many are trapped in the rubble, they wonder

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Ambulances stand by as the rescuers fight their way through the rubble, steered by pitiful cries for help



Firemen move in on the upper floors of the Grand. They fear the worst at this stage

Seven lie trapped in the debris

up to news of the bomb will be too much for his wife. So he breathes a sigh of relief when firemen tell him it is 4.45 a.m.

Meanwhile, up on the fifth floor, the rescue operation is still going on. Close to where Mr Thomas was found firemen now find Donald Maclean, the Conservative Scottish president — led to him by his cries for help.

Firemen shine their torches through the darkness and spot Mr Maclean's head, the only part of his body free from the debris.

Working him free is a perilous process. Firemen and a doctor are lowered down to him on ropes.

They stand on sloping wreckage. With each movement they can feel the pile shifting under their feet, threatening to slide down into the street 130ft. below. But they work on, trying to ignore the movement beneath them and the chunks of masonry still crumbling from the building.

With no power tools available, they have to claw through the wreckage by hand, again constantly talking, comforting and reassuring.

Any slip can bring new injury to the already shocked man. Gently, piece by piece, brick by brick, they manage to clear more space around him.

Bed sheets that are wound around him are tugged free when he complains they are strangling him. A length of carpet, which has wrapped around his body, is cut away. But it is this padding that probably saved his life.

The bomb was timed to explode when top Tories were helpless in bed. But for many the force of the blast and the falling wreckage has wrapped sheets and blankets around them, like a protective shroud, padding their flesh from the stone and timber.

As more debris is cleared from around his body, Mr Maclean finds it easier to breathe and slowly feeling returns to his crushed body. The rescuers dig deeper until finally they can pull him out.

Badly battered, he is put on a stretcher and lowered to the ground by the turntable ladder. He is alive and in pain — but he too has helped the rescuers do their job.

The time is 6.01 a.m. Mr Maclean has been trapped for three hours and seven minutes.

As the rescue workers dig to reach more victims, the story switches to Brighton police station.

The figures gathered in a room

The rescue begins

in the grey stone building read like a Who's Who of British Government.

Mrs Thatcher is there with her husband Denis, all thoughts of sleep forgotten in the night's events. Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe and Lady Howe, Home Secretary Leon Brittan, party chairman John Gummer and wife Penny — all trying to come to terms with what has happened.

Mrs Thatcher and some of the Cabinet have been whisked to the station from the Grand because it was the best "safe house" available at short notice.

One police officer is later to say that the Prime Minister steamed through the building like a battleship.

Once inside, she is immediately taken to the modest third floor office normally occupied by the area's divisional commander, Chief Supt. Dennis Williams.

The station is already at full alert. Most senior officers are at work and at one stage the narrow corridor outside the police commander's office becomes clogged with political big-wigs.

Mrs Thatcher asks an officer: "Are they getting in your way?" He says he's sorry, but yes, they are. So Mrs Thatcher goes out into the corridor herself and speaks: "You people, come in here out of the way."

Mission accomplished, and with a glint in her eye, she looks at another police officer standing nearby and says: "I'm playing the schoolmarm today, aren't I?"

The Iron Lady is already showing her determination. She has decided that the conference will go on no matter what. Anything less would give the bombers —



Sir Walter and Lady Elise Clegg with rescuers. Despite their agony the Cleggs were able to comfort other victims of the blast



Dazed survivors, some still in nightclothes, stand on the seafront

One false move



Harvey Thomas — saved by the strength of his 6ft. 4in. frame. He was suspended over a chasm with a bath full of rubble on his chest

unknown at that stage — a moral victory, she decides.

But this is a time of worry and strain for the gathered ministers. They are safe, hurried away from the shattered hotel minutes after the blast, but no one knows for sure who remains in the building.

Which friends and colleagues have not been so lucky and are still under the debris?

A master list of room allocations is brought to the police station and Mr Gummer begins the grim task of checking off who has been found and who is not yet accounted for.

It is a painful job, and fears grow for those in rooms directly below the bomb.

Word comes through that people are arriving at hospital — husbands without wives and wives without husbands. Mr Gummer shivers with dread.

News that Mrs Thatcher is at the police station has leaked out, and a small band of reporters and camera crews set up camp outside.

They do not have long to wait. Mrs Thatcher decides this is no time to dodge the media and, having changed her clothes and composed herself, she emerges from the front entrance just over an hour after the bomb that was sent to kill her.

Questions come from all sides and cameras flash in her face but she resists an escort's attempts to guide her through the throng, and for the first time speaks publicly about the blast.

Pale but resilient she says: "You hear about these atrocities, these bombs. You never expect them to happen to you. Our worry is whether there is anyone under that rubble. It is pretty awful."

At this moment Mrs Thatcher believes her Cabinet is safe. She does not know that her right hand man is still trapped.

Her voice grows louder as she delivers her main message to the cameras: "Life must go on as usual. Conference will go on."

At that moment, somewhere

under a mountain of rubble, Norman Tebbit stirs and moans.

But that small, pathetic whimper is deadened by the muffled roar of the sea and the wind and the crumbling masonry. The rescue teams, by now three hours into their search through the rubble, look up in alarm as the top storeys of the Grand sway and creak, sending more chunks of plaster and showers of dust raining down.

Somehow, with skill, daring and courage, they have dragged three people clear from the precipice. Now they can hear no more cries for help or moans of pain. The upper floors are empty at last and somebody whispers: "Thank God."

As they make their way back down from the destruction on the fifth and sixth floors the rescuers feel a sense of unreality. For after the nightmare scenes above, some of the lower parts of the building seem almost unscathed.

In the bars and restaurants

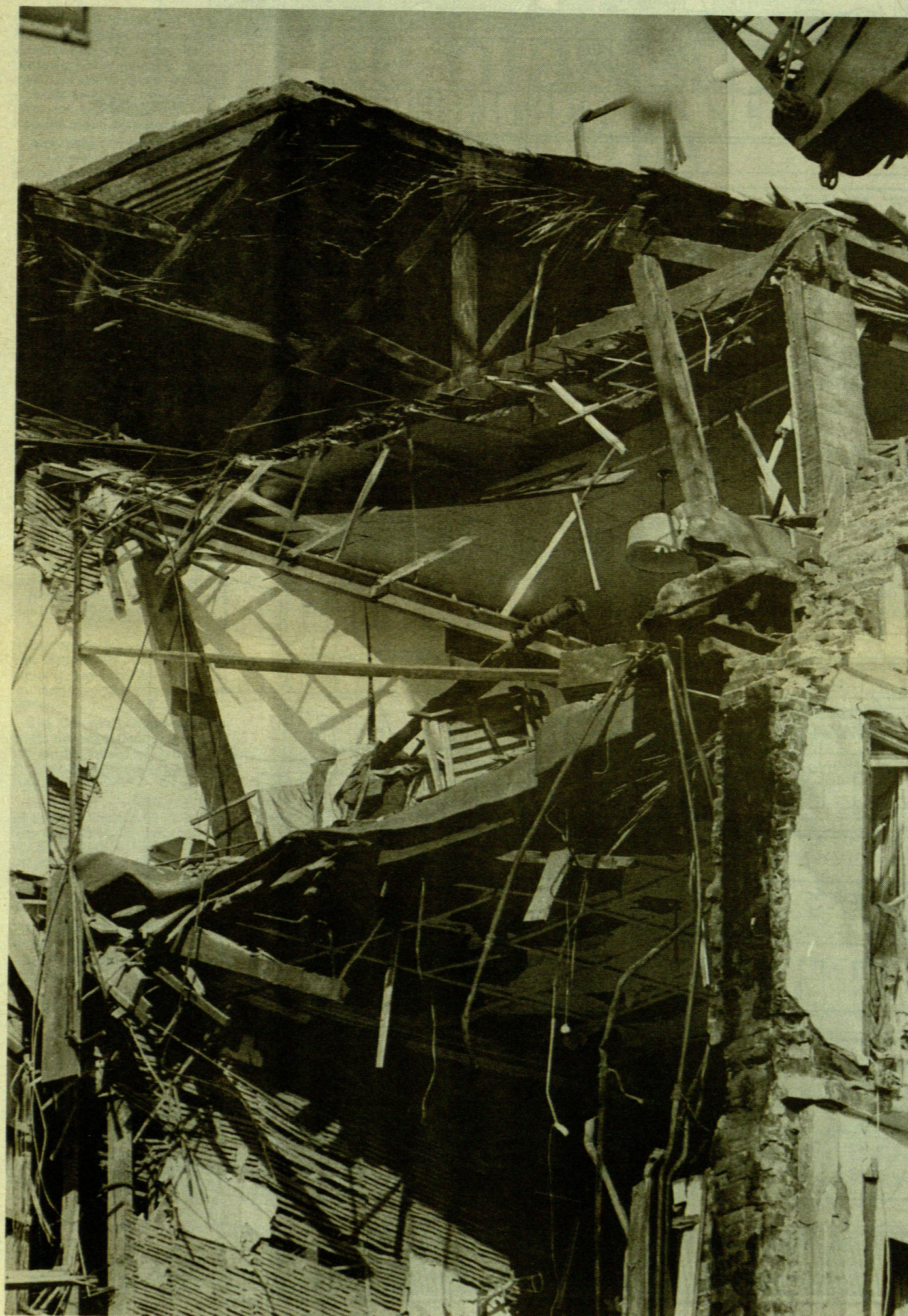
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A whimper from under the debris



Mrs Thatcher, cool and organised, speaks publicly about the blast for the first time. She has been sheltering at Brighton police station

spells death



The wreckage that was once the elegant seventh floor of the Grand. Now firemen are searching the building for trapped victims

The shy hero in the thick of it

WEEKS after the explosion, rescuers were still asking who he was. They remember a man in a track suit suddenly appearing from nowhere and plunging into the thick of dangerous rescue operations.

He administers pain-killing drugs and provides expert advice on how and when to move the injured.

Without any regard for his own safety, he climbs into the wreckage of the fifth and sixth floors to help firemen claw and cut debris from around a victim. Below him — a dark void.

Next, he is in the foyer helping with the main bulk of rescues in the huge pile of rubble stretching from the basement to the second floor. Above is tons of masonry and timbers which could bury him in seconds.

Firemen, police, ambulancemen and medical staff show great bravery during those dreadful hours, but there is one difference between them and David Skidmore. He is a volunteer.

An unsuccessful Tory candidate for Stockport South, the 44-year-old Harley Street consultant surgeon is attending the conference as a delegate.

By the end of it he has lost two friends — and gained the admiration of every emergency service in the county.

Urgent

Seasoned firemen like Divisional Officer Roger Hayto find it hard to find the right words of praise. In the end, he feels no embarrassment in describing him as "superman."

Mr Skidmore's first emergency call that night came four hours before the bombing. It was the Conservative Party Ball, where he had just completed the first circuit of the dance floor with his wife when there was an urgent call for a doctor.

His own constituency treasurer, Wilfred Hall, had collapsed with a heart attack. Mr Skidmore helped ambulancemen ventilate Mr Hall and assisted again at the Royal Sussex County Hospital. But Mr Hall later died.

Just a few hours later Mr Skidmore was to lose another friend, Eric Taylor, chairman of the north west area Conservatives and one of the fatalities in the Grand Hotel bombing.

While helping in the rescue, Mr Skidmore hears Mr Taylor calling from under the rubble, but he doesn't realise who it is. But the 54-year-old magistrate is dead before firemen can reach him.

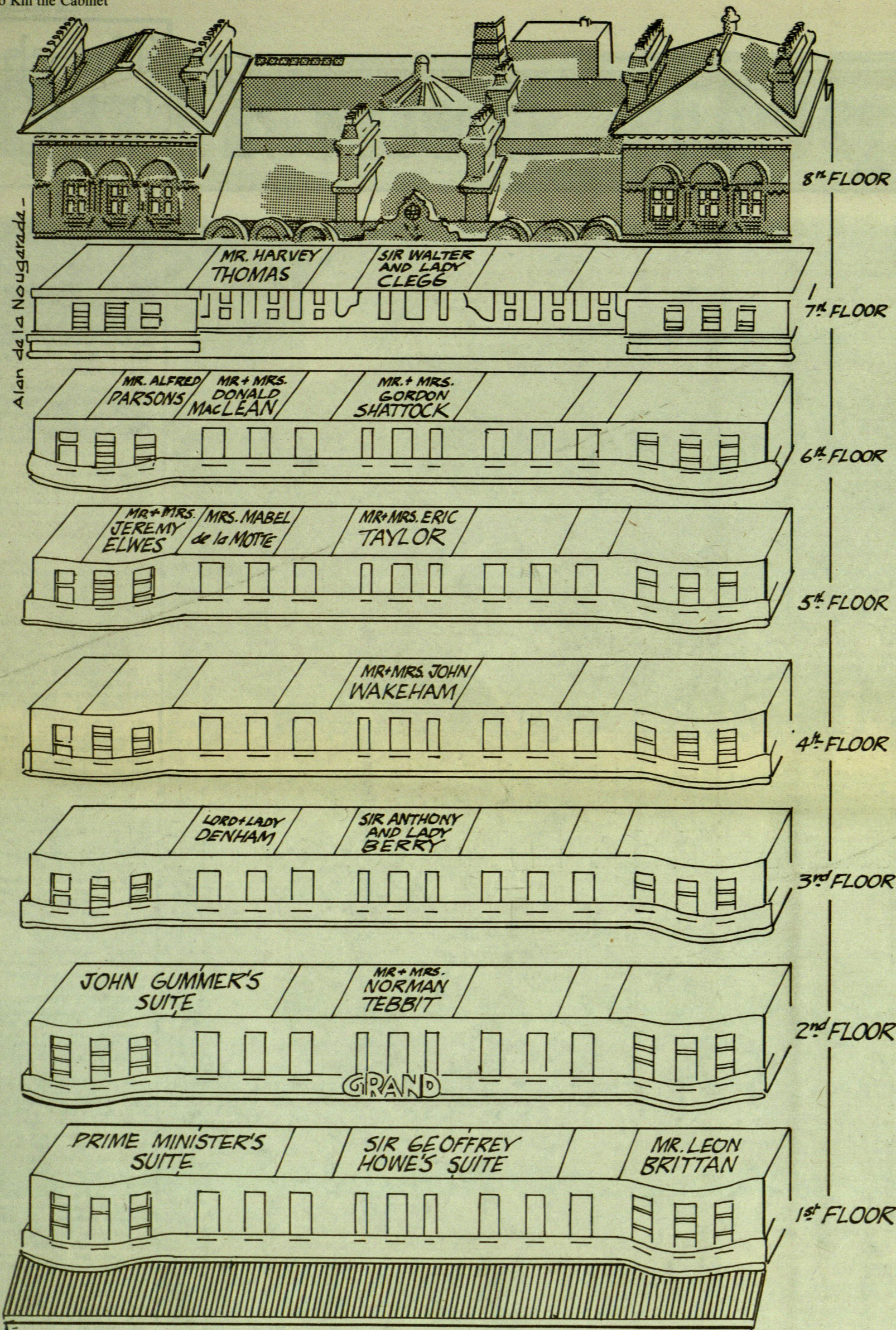
Confidence

Mr Skidmore was asleep in his room at the nearby Old Ship Hotel when the bomb went off. He grabbed a tracksuit and training shoes and ran up to the Grand, rushing straight into the building to help rescuers on the upper floors.

His experience in RAF mountain rescues was invaluable, but it doesn't explain why he did so much. He just shrugs his shoulders and says: "You do whatever seems necessary at the time."

East Sussex fire chief Eric Whitaker says: "His information was invaluable. He spoke our language and gave us confidence when we wanted to move someone."

Mr Skidmore is equally complimentary about Mr Whitaker's men. He says: "I think it was the sheer guts and determination of the fire service that impressed me most. You see films of firemen tackling disasters, but this really was a superhuman effort."



A floor-by-floor guide to where the main characters in the horrific drama were staying. Miraculously, most people escaped. But the IRA managed to claim five casualties

Slide of horror

The blast that turned life upside down

Where the victims ended up — page 20

tables full of glasses are intact. Half empty bottles of Champagne stand as if waiting for the party to continue. The night's dinner menus lie where diners left them — a thin coating of white dust the only clue to the horror that has befallen these same guests.

All is calm and quiet — but not in the foyer. For there the nightmare continues.

The cascading masonry, wood and furniture ripped out by the falling chimney has compressed into a horrifying avalanche that has penetrated the basement.

The main bulk has tumbled into the foyer, forming a huge mountain of debris stretching up through the first floor to where the floor of the second storey should be.

Firemen look at it in horror. "It's like a massive chimney blocked up with rubble," said one.

But for those buried alive inside, it is a tomb of terror.

Now begins the job of burrowing through to those people. It is to be a long, intriguing and incredibly dangerous mission.

One false move by rescuers and the tons of rubble balanced above will come crashing down. Each movement of a piece of wood or brick, every cut of a length of carpeting, must be painstakingly tested and planned.

The order goes out to the rescue crews: Stay on the section you started with, however many hours it may take. It is vital you are familiar with every brick and stone.

The men test various moves to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the debris mountain. All the time faint cries for help guide their path.

It becomes a cruel parody of a game as rescuers inch their way forward towards the pitiful voices. A massive Pick Up Sticks contest, such as when children throw down a handful of matches and pick up each one without disturbing the others.

Only this is no game. This is life and death.

It is 3.30 a.m., half an hour after the explosion, when the first voice is heard somewhere inside the mountain of debris in the foyer. Firemen hold their breath as a woman's voice, accompanied by the insistent yelping of a dog, comes from near the floor of the ground floor foyer.

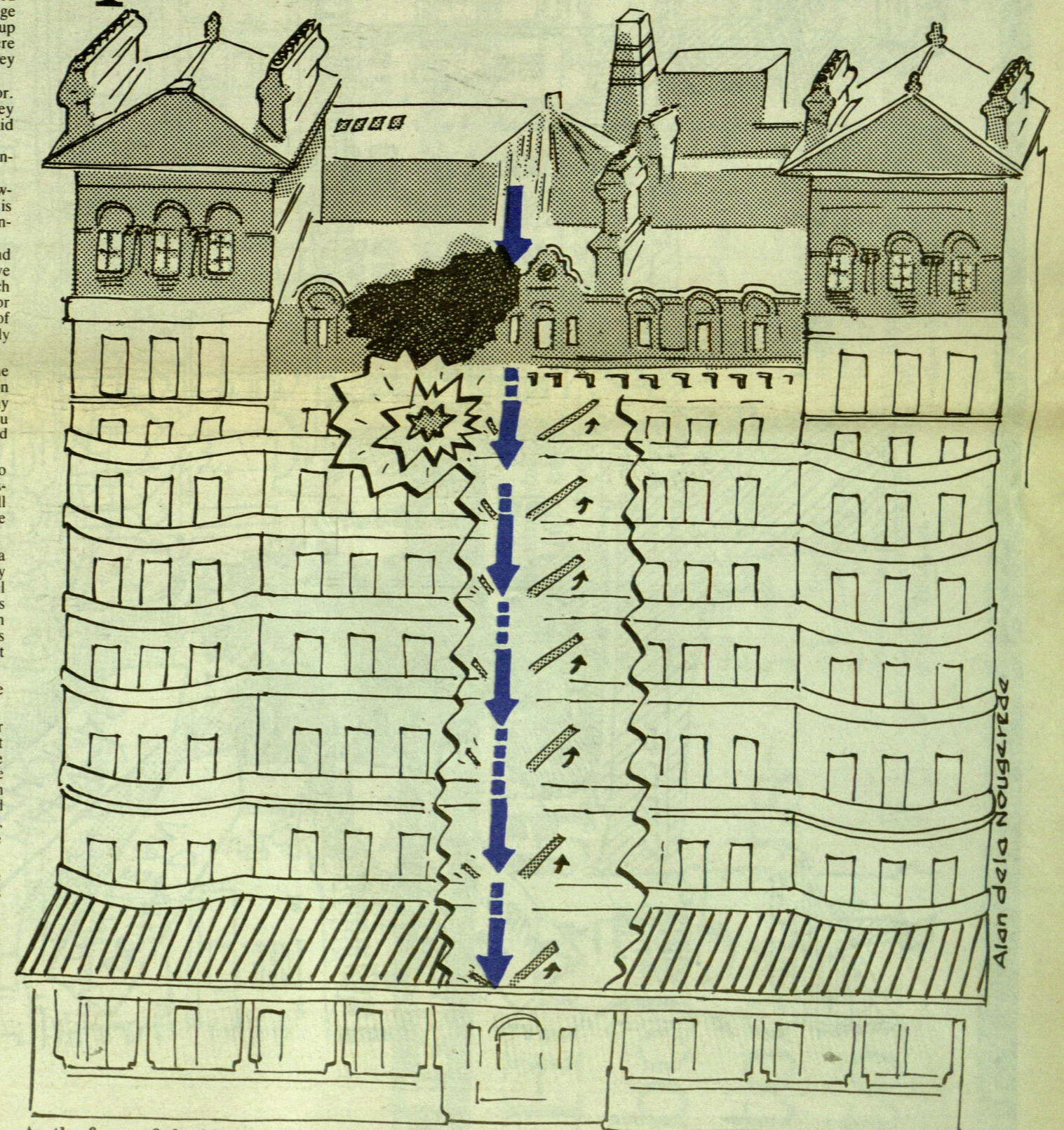
A fireman shouts: "Where are you love?" The answer comes back: "On the third floor."

Lady Sarah Berry was asleep in room 328 when the floors above her came ploughing through her ceiling and sent her crashing down two floors. Now, in her confused mind, she is still on the third storey.

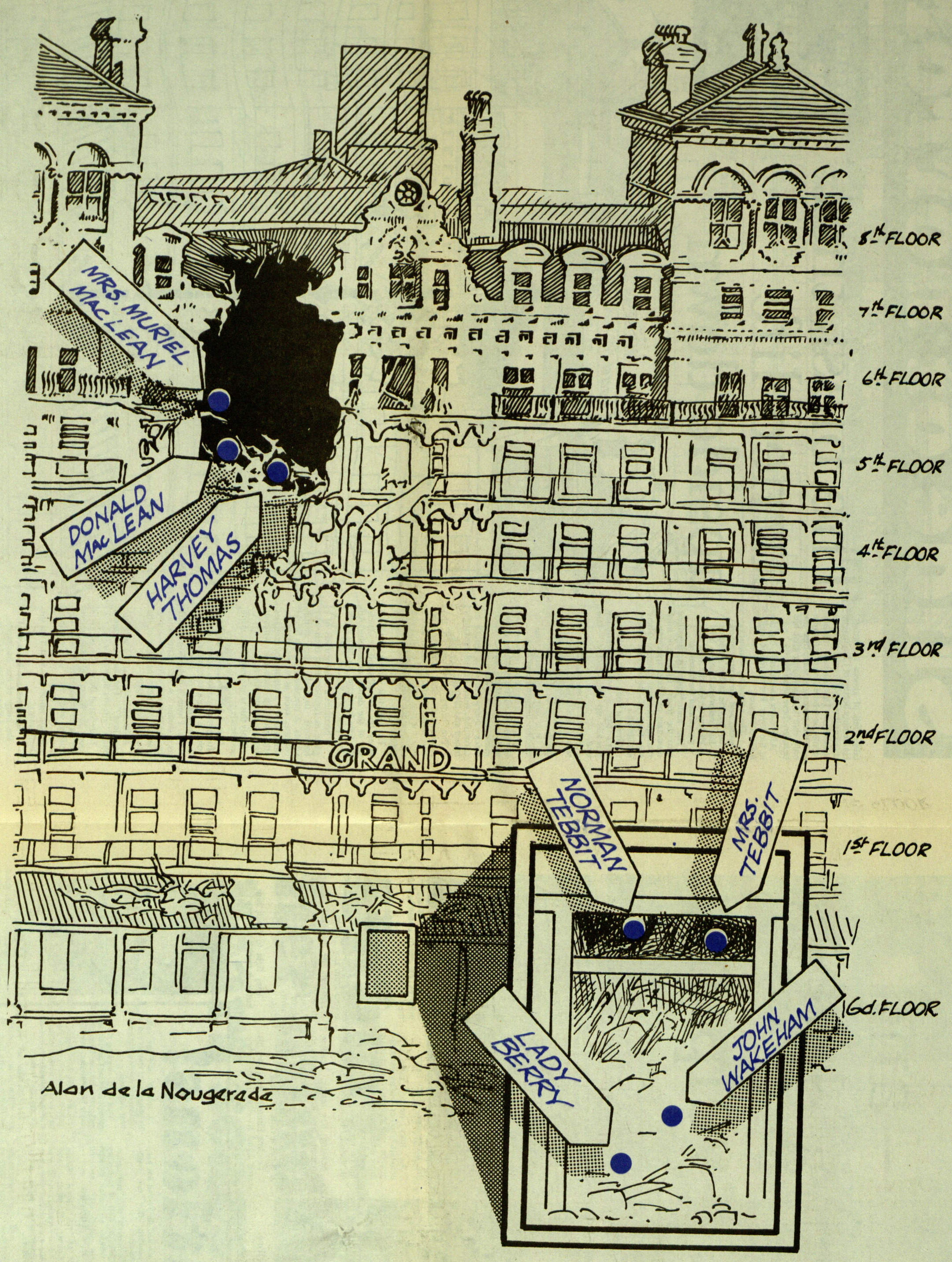
She does not know that the body of her husband, Sir Anthony Berry, MP for Southgate, is just a few feet away.

The firemen edge closer to the

TURN TO PAGE 22



As the force of the blast shot upwards it dislodged a chimney. As the chimney plunged down it tipped the floor of each room up and sent the occupants flying into the maelstrom



From the 7th floor to the foyer—in a horrifying tumble

How the bomb took its toll . . .

THE deafening blast inside Room 629 hurled chunks of masonry, glass and woodwork hundreds of feet in the air and across the sea-front to the beach.

It gouged a huge black void from the 5th to the 7th floors, where three dramatic rescues were later carried out.

As firemen clawed through the rubble around the foyer area they found victims who moments earlier had been asleep in bed several floors up.

What puzzled them most was how people on the 6th and 7th floors had ended up in the debris beneath victims who had started their downward plunge on the lower 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors.

How could this have happened?

Firemen over the next few days pieced together a timetable of tragedy and came up with an incredible theory.

It meant that the IRA, far from being "unlucky" in their bid to kill top Cabinet

members, were, in fact, lucky to have done as much damage as they did.

The explosion dislodged one of the two massive chimney breasts and stacks in the central part of the hotel.

Senior fire brigade officers believe the great weight of bricks and mortar simply crashed through the floor below and the next floor and so on. As the tons of rubble hit each room so it tipped floorboards upwards.

Victims and their beds

were thrown into the abyss and they tumbled down the hole created by the debris. Those higher up in the hotel went first.

Gordon Shattock started his descent on the 6th floor and landed up in the basement. After him came people like Lady Berry and John Wakeham from the 3rd and 4th floors. Following them came the Tebbits from the 2nd.

This picture shows where they landed. The inset picture shows the foyer area looking towards the sea.



The devastated foyer. Somewhere, deep in the pile of rubble before them, are victims of the blast

A voice —and a dog is yelping

front of the building until they estimate they are as close as they can get to the cries and barking. Then begins the slow task of digging through to Lady Berry . . . inch by inch.

She is three to four feet inside the rubble, trapped between the hotel's revolving doors and twisted flooring.

Miraculously, her bed has provided her with a small pocket of safety from the surrounding debris — and has saved her from almost certain death.

With her in the dark prison is her yelping Jack Russell dog.

Rescuers now fear a sudden collapse in the finely balanced debris. They bring in hydraulic equipment and poles to support the rubble above Lady Berry.

As they tunnel they talk constantly to her, but as the hours tick by, she becomes more and more anxious and frightened. The initial shock is abating and, as the full horror of her situation sinks in, she is hit by new waves of fear.

Sensing her terror, Leading Fireman Chris Reid manages to stretch his arm through the wreckage to comfort her. Lady Berry grabs it and holds on tight. It is her lifeline to safety.

Leading Fireman Reid uses his free hand to clear more debris

away. It is difficult — but he knows Lady Berry needs human contact. Eventually, enough rubble is cleared to allow more rescuers to crawl through the small space to help.

But the digging has brought more dust and rubble down, and Lady Berry begins to choke. It is difficult to breathe in the clogged atmosphere. She is handed an oxygen mask and gulps gratefully at the clean, cool air.

At 6.45 a.m. both Lady Berry and her dog are carried to safety. She has remained dignified throughout the terrifying ordeal, and wins words of praise from her rescuers.

Thanks to her bed and incredible luck she is barely injured — but her mind will always bear the scars of the three hours and 51 minutes she spent entombed in the Grand.

As the rescuers were battling to reach Lady Berry, they could hear other voices deep in the mound of rubble. The voice no one who heard it will ever forget comes from Eric Taylor.

Through the mangled pile of rubbish comes a faint sound. Again firemen call for silence and shout back, asking who it is. Faintly the answer comes back: Eric.

They fight to reach him but he is buried too deep in



Other victims are met by emergency teams at the hospital

Unhurt—but her mind bears scars

the stone and timber mountain. The cries stop long before they can get to him.

Eric Taylor, a 54-year-old magistrate and member of the Tory National Executive, is dead.

But there are so many cries, so many fears — and so much rubble. And the firemen must work on . . . just in case.

Suddenly Leading Fireman Steve Tomlin, perching on a ladder leaning against 12ft. of debris, makes an astonishing discovery — three hands.

Two of them are inches from each other. They are moving — someone, or possibly two people, is alive. Steve joins the two hands, hoping the touch will comfort the victims buried in the rubble.

Then he hears voices — the hands belong to Norman Tebbit and his wife Margaret. And they are alive.

A doctor climbs up to check their condition, giving each hand a reassuring squeeze.

But the third hand is cold and lifeless. Firemen shudder: Not another fatality, they think. But at this stage the living count more, so rescuers dig their way through to Mrs Tebbit. One look at her tells them she must come out first.

Her neck is bent in an awkward position and her head is compressed by tons of rubble. She cannot move her limbs and the doctor suspects his worst fears are realised — a spinal injury.

Slowly, carefully, the rescuers

ease the wreckage from around her, trying to keep her as still as possible. They try to start a conversation but Mrs Tebbit only cares about what is happening to her husband. All the time rescuers are digging, she repeats: "Get Norman out. Get him out first."

Under medical direction, a fireman manages to place a surgical collar around Mrs Tebbit's neck as she lies with her back to rescuers.

They are now convinced that her neck is badly injured. It is vital to protect it.

Again, guided by a doctor, firemen carefully clear a path around her body, making sure they do not disturb any more of the debris piled above her. Then gently, they ease her inch by inch



A near thing — the wreckage of Mrs Thatcher's bathroom

Action stations!

AT 2.54 a.m. on Friday, October 12, an urgent voice rings its chilling message through East Sussex Fire Brigade's emergency system: "Fire, fire, Grand Hotel."

The voice, a recorded message, is triggered automatically by the hotel's alarm system the instant the IRA bomb releases its terrifying force through the building.

The message is short—just a few words—but it is enough to put B Watch at brigade headquarters into full emer-

gency action stations.

Back at the Brighton station, a warbled alarm tone alerts the Green Watch crew that something is wrong.

Within seconds, a voice sounds through the station broadcast direct from headquarters at Lewes.

"Pump escape, water tender, turntable. Fire alarm ringing at the Grand Hotel."

But as they speed to the scene, the fire crews are almost certain it is a false alarm—something accidentally triggering the Grand's complex alarm system.

Somebody jokes that maybe the fire bells have been set off as a trick to get Mrs

Thatcher out of bed.

But the instant the engines, with sirens howling, turn on to the seafront, the joking stops.

The driver hears a voice ask: "Is that fog or smoke or what up ahead?"

It is dust. A massive cloud of dust from the shattered hotel still wafting into the cool night air.

The time is 2.58 a.m.—four minutes after the explosion.

At Brighton ambulance station the men on the late watch hear a dull bang minutes before 3 a.m.

They think it is a gas explosion nearby. When they

are told the Grand has been bombed, they are dumbstruck.

Seconds later ambulances join the fleet of emergency vehicles screaming through the quiet early morning streets of Brighton.

At the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Sister Eileen Brencher, in charge of the accident and emergency department, picks up a phone.

A policeman's voice on the line says: "There's been an explosion at the Grand Hotel."

Her mind swims with possibilities. What sort of explosion—a gas cooker?

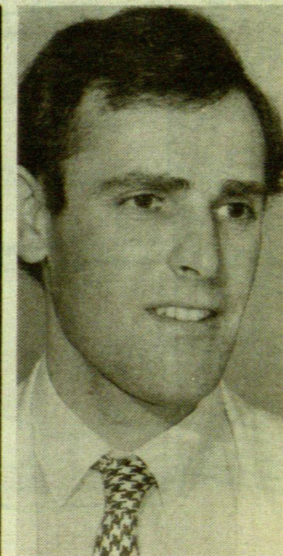
A minute later she calls Brighton police station and is told several rooms at the hotel have collapsed.

That brief, shocking call is enough to bring Cascade, the nickname for the hospital's major incident plan, into life.

Sister Brencher begins a massive call-out system. Doctors, nurses, porters, canteen staff and administrators—all are woken at home.

They in turn call others and within minutes Cascade has flowed to more than 100 members of staff.

Before the dust of the blast has settled, Sussex emergency workers are in action and ready to help.



Dr David Bellamy — he worked with the rescuers



Lady Berry's dog is carried to safety by a rescuer

A faint sound... can we reach it?

on to a stretcher before rushing her to a waiting ambulance.

Mrs Tebbit's courage holds as she arrives at the Royal Sussex County Hospital. As staff rush towards her stretcher, she says: "Don't worry about me. Treat the most important people."

By this time the hospital's accident and emergency department is at full stretch.

Beds have been cleared and staff called in from home. Injuries are instantly assessed as victims arrive, to give those who have suffered most top priority.

Many are in shock, but there is an air of calm. No panic, yelling or screaming — just quiet controlled answers to the doctors' simple questions.

Names, addresses and room numbers all help staff to build up a picture of the blast scene and pass vital information back to rescue workers still hunting for survivors.

As the shock wears off, the injured begin to ask about their loved ones — and nurses find themselves facing new pressures.

They have treated the fractures, cuts and bruises. Now the best help they can give is to sit quietly holding somebody's hand during the agonising wait for news.

The strain is too much for some nurses. In a coffee break, snatched when the rush quiets down, they burst into tears.

A few minutes later they are back on duty, tears dried and ready to help, comfort and reassure.

Their job is not yet over. For

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Norman



This is how Mr Tebbit was trapped 12ft. up a mountain of rubble in the hotel foyer. His circulation was cut off to one arm and rescuers at first thought it belonged to a dead body. The mattress protected him from further injury

Tebbit's agony



Firemen can hear Mr Tebbit — but they can't get to him



His legs are clear — now the stricken minister can be pulled free



The pain is terrible — but Mr Tebbit asks: "Is the Prime Minister safe?"



Mr Tebbit is loaded on to a stretcher ready to be rushed to hospital



Please get me out, he begs

more people lie buried in the wreckage — including Norman Tebbit.

He is moaning quietly under several tons of rubble. The previous day he was the darling of the conference, milking the applause for his hard-line speech and riding on the crest of Tory adulation.

Now his battered body is wedged painfully above a door 12ft. up in the Grand's foyer. One thought now sustains him — his wife has been freed.

As the rescuers dig closer to the minister's imprisoned body Assistant Divisional Officer Tom McKinley worries about the mystery arm poking out through the rubble.

He can see Mr Tebbit's right hand and it is moving slightly. But that other arm is cold and lifeless. The firemen fears a body is trapped there.

Then a thought strikes him. The unclaimed arm bears a striking similarity to Mr Tebbit's free limb!

Firemen clutch the "dead" hand and ask the minister if he can feel anything. No, he says.

A doctor is called to give his opinion. Although the arm is limp with no sign of a pulse, he too is suspicious. He is sure it belongs to Mr Tebbit.

Carefully, almost tenderly, firemen move the rubble from around the "dead" hand. Within seconds the Minister feels a tingling sensation as life-giving blood begins to pump through.

Mr Tebbit has recovered his "lost" arm. It has been trapped by debris tight enough to act as a tourniquet, stopping the circulation, but, incredibly, leaving it unbroken.

But for the rest of his injured body, release is a long way off.

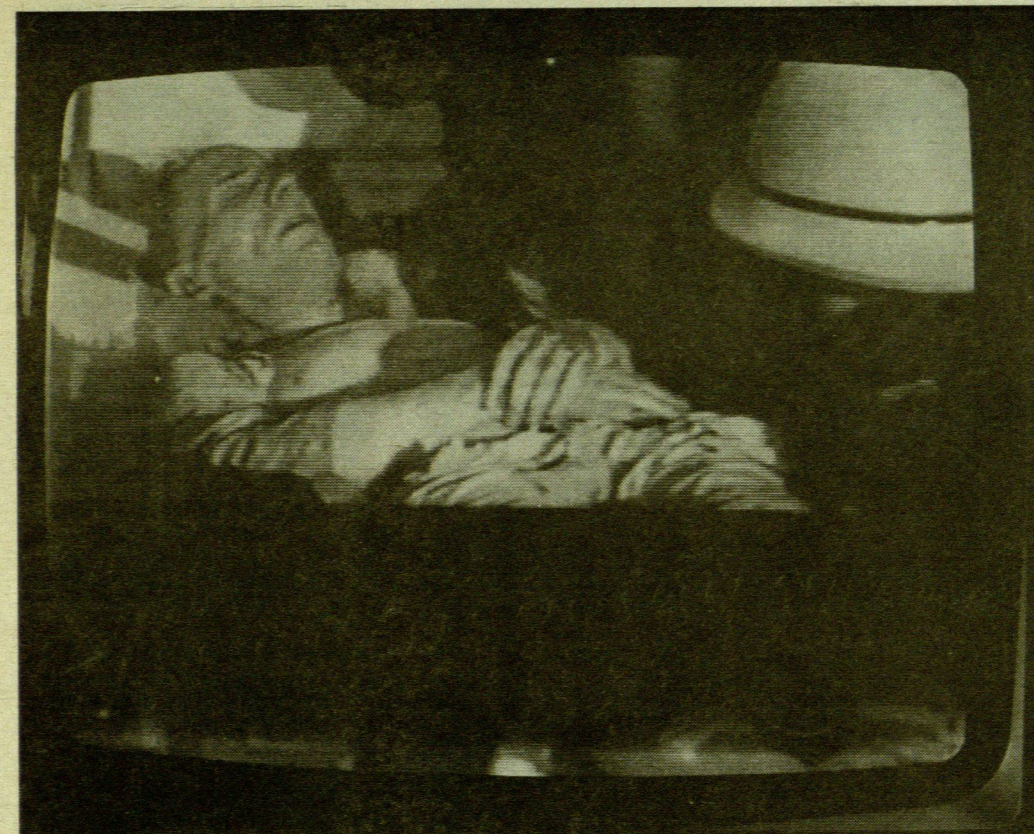
Mr Tebbit is doubled up over the doorway with his knees pressed almost to his chest in a foetus-like position. A splintered floor joist is digging into his back while another squashes his knees. A third joist presses hard against his left hip.

Completely covering his upper body is the mattress he was lying on in his bedroom two floors up. It has proved a life-saver, protecting him from falling masonry — but now it is blocking his path to freedom.

As the rescuers claw through the shattered stone they come across their first major obstacle — a thick electrical conduit. Is it still live? No matter — it is in their way.

A fireman cuts through the cable. There is a loud bang and blinding flash and the foyer plunges into darkness. Rescuers curse. This is all they need.

A BBC crew who are filming



How television viewers saw Mr Tebbit's rescue. The TV arc lights had helped firemen reach the injured Minister

A moment of pain — captured by the TV cameras

Time's running out

nearby are called in and their bright lights are trained on the debris. Firemen dig on.

It is only when Dr David Bellamy climbs down from the pile of rubble that the crew, led by reporter Michael Cole, know they are filming the rescue of Mrs Thatcher's right hand man.

Firemen can hear Mr Tebbit and talk to him, but their progress is hampered by the mattress covering his head and back. But they must get through somehow.

They use hotel kitchen knives and scissors to cut and slice the thick material. Wire cutters take care of the springs.

Finally, the mattress is pulled away. Mr Tebbit is still jammed fast but now he can move a little easier . . . and can be seen by his rescuers.

The pain of cracked ribs and a deep gash in his side makes every movement agony, but Mr Tebbit keeps up contact with the firemen.

"How is my wife?" he asks. "Fine" is the answer — but the firemen know Mrs Tebbit is seriously injured.

Mr Tebbit speaks again, his voice rasping through the choking dust which coats his mouth and throat: "Is the Prime Minister safe?"

Again he is reassured: "Yes, she is fine. She got out in the early stages with the rest of the Cabinet." Mr Tebbit mutters: "Thank goodness."

Rescuers are now seriously worried about the condition of the trapped Minister. He is obviously suffering pain and deep shock. It is vital to free him as safely and quickly as possible, they decide.

One final superhuman effort . . . and he is free

Attempts to cut through a huge wedge of timber in front of him are taking too long. They abandon the job in favour of clearing the debris from either side of the wood.

A doctor confirms that Mr Tebbit is showing more signs of anxiety. The elation he felt on seeing rescuers for the first time has faded and the realisation that freedom is still far away threatens to plunge him into despair.

They hear him mumbling pitifully: "Please, please get me out as soon as possible." It is heart-breaking.

Firemen manage to free the lower part of Mr Tebbit's legs, but tell him he will have to achieve the next part of the rescue mostly by himself.

His backside is wedged between rubble and timber. He must lift himself clear before he can be dragged free from the wreckage.

Encouraged by his rescuers, now on first name terms, he strains to move. The agonising effort gets him nowhere.

Again and again he pushes, with rests to regain his strength and let each fresh wave of pain subside. But it is not working.

There is nothing nearby for the Minister to grasp and lever himself on. He does not dare use the rubble in case the pressure brings a new fall of masonry.

Then firemen come up with the answer. They wind their arms around his waist for him to hold — and ask him to try one more time.

Grimacing with pain and grifting his teeth, Mr Tebbit musters every last ounce of strength. With one great heave of his body he forces himself clear.

It has taken all he has to give — but now he is free of the tomb of rubble.



John Wakeham — rescuers cheered his bravery

Slowly he is lifted feet first through the fanlight. "Please, please be careful," he begs the firemen.

As they move him, Mr Tebbit exclaims: "Get off my bloody feet, Fred."

The cry is aimed at Station Officer Fred Bishop, who has built up a friendly rapport with the Minister during his long ordeal. But Fred has not touched Mr Tebbit's feet — the Minister is so sensitive to pain at this stage that the slightest touch is agony for him.

The film crew watch in awe as Mr Tebbit's ashen face twists in agony as he is lifted on to a stretcher.

A drip is attached to his arm and an oxygen mask is clamped over his face as Mr Tebbit, his blue pyjamas torn open and his body smeared with blood, is carried to an ambulance.

The time 6.53 a.m. He has

been trapped for three hours and 59 minutes.

Elsewhere in that choking heap of rubble other rescuers work on. They do not know how many people could be trapped.

Four hours after the explosion they hear a faint groan. Is it possible someone is still alive in there?

The rescuers call for silence and the firemen strain their ears. The moaning gets louder.

It is impossible to get any idea where the sound is coming from in the vast mountain of debris — but there is definitely someone under there.

Rescuers start shouting: "Is there anyone in there — can you speak up?" No reply.

Minutes later Divisional Officer Roger Hayto calls: "Can you hear me?" Silence.

Then a distant voice croaks: "Yes."

Who is it, they call. What's your name? John, says the voice.

Then the faint voice comes back, spelling out his surname: "W-A-K-E-H-A-M."

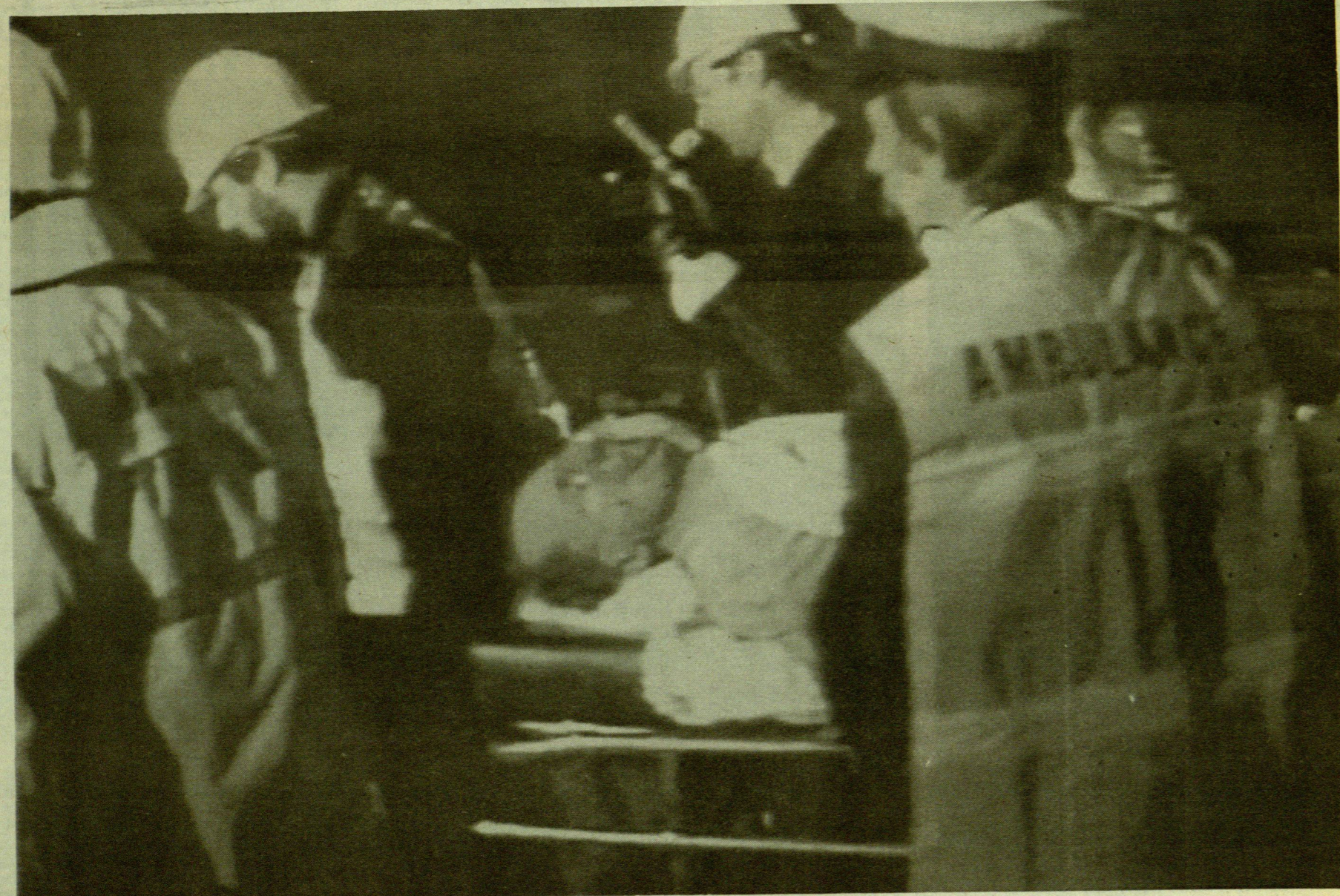
A fireman asks: "Does anyone know him?" Another replies: "I think it's the Conservative Chief Whip."

The message is passed among the rescuers — and once again the digging begins.

Trapped in darkness under tons of masonry, Mr Wakeham tries to keep the conversation going, desperate that the first human contact he has known in four hours of terror is maintained.

Keep talking, he begs. Say anything. Keep me alive.

Someone asks him his old army number and he strains to recall it



Safe at last — Norman Tebbit is moved to an ambulance. He does not yet know that his wife is seriously injured

as the rescuers dig deeper and deeper into the pile.

Mr Wakeham cannot tell firemen what his injuries are. His body is numb under the weight of debris — and as they edge towards him he tells them the pressure on him is getting heavier.

Rescuers shore up a huge section of flooring which appears to be directly above where he is lying. But they decide a rescue attempt from above would be too dangerous.

They cannot risk moving the wrong piece of the grim puzzle at the wrong time. That could send a shower of masonry down on the helpless man.

Men are redirected to the foyer, but they cannot speak to or hear Mr Wakeham from there. Contact is vital, so a few men stay at the top of the pile of debris to carry on the conversation.

A human chain of information relays bulletins on his condition to the foyer.

Adjustable props are now brought in to hold up massive chunks of flooring in danger of crashing down on rescuers. Carefully, they start cutting away at sections of floorboards, threatened all the time by collapses and slides.

Eventually, a whole section of floor is cut away, revealing the underside of a bed and some carpets. Still no sign of Mr Wakeham.

But as a fireman squeezes his hand through the springs and prods the underside of the bed's

Tears and cheers for a hero of the blast

surface, suddenly the word comes from colleagues above: Mr Wakeham can feel pressure on his back. They have found him.

The Grand Hotel timbers still blocking the rescue path are tough to get through. The only way is with heavy duty chainsaws, hastily borrowed from a nearby plant hire firm.

The mass of carpeting and bedsprings make the job worse, but as rescuers cut and inch their way forward, they finally hear Mr

Wakeham talking. At long last, they are getting close.

A few dusty strands of hair are the first sign that rescuers have reached their target — after 90 minutes of digging.

Mr Wakeham tells firemen the pressure on his back is becoming very severe, and more props are brought in to take the strain of debris and ease his pain.

His spirits are still good but the conversation is drying up. He is finding it harder to keep talking.

Piece by piece, bricks and wood are clawed away until at first his shoulders are free and then his trunk down to the waist. His right arm is still trapped under him and he complains of pins and needles in his legs.

Firemen use hydraulic jaws to force apart some of the wreckage to free his trapped arm — but now Mr Wakeham must help free himself.

With help from all sides, he tries desperately to drag the rest

of his body free. But each effort takes its toll. He has little energy left.

A doctor takes another look at him — and confirms that time is running out. He gives firemen a ten-minute deadline. After that, he says, he must put Mr Wakeham on a drip to treat his shock. And the extra complications of drips and tubes will make the rescue much more difficult.

The last ten minutes see a superhuman effort from Mr Wakeham. A series of small, agonising pushes send waves of pain through his crushed legs, but with one massive heave he manages to release his own legs and firemen pull him out.

The effort has taken its toll. As soon as he is free a doctor rushes forward with a pain-killing injection and attaches him to a drip. He is battered and has suffered severe leg injuries — but he is alive.

Suddenly, the strain and nerve-shredding tension of the past hours breaks and there is an outburst of elation from the rescuers and back-up team of firemen, ambulancemen and police.

They cheer and applaud as Mr Wakeham is taken to a waiting ambulance.

The relief swells up in their throats and some feel tears pricking at their eyes. It is 10.16 a.m. — the end of a marathon rescue operation that started more than seven hours earlier.

From the moment that first faint moan was heard, rescuers have worked tirelessly and pain-

Now the questions

stakingly. All the time they were shadowed by the threat of tons of rubble collapsing on them — and the possibility of more IRA bombs.

All are deeply proud of their role but, to a man, they deflect some of the praise on the victims themselves.

They are amazed at how cool and calm the victims have stayed through their ordeals, particularly John Wakeham. He owed the final effort of his release to his own courage and strength, they agree.

As the ambulance speeds him away, the rescuers walk from the gloom and dust of the foyer into sunlight and fresh air. It is over — thank God.

That same morning the Prime Minister drives away from Brighton police station vowing: Business as usual.

But for those left to pull together the fragments of the shattered conference it is an immense task.

Already questions are being asked about security, about how this dreadful night could have been allowed to happen.

Home Secretary Leon Brittan has teamed up with senior police officers in a constant rush of activity between the police station and the Grand.

For Sussex Chief Constable Roger Birch, the strain is intense and ceaseless. He has been at the Grand from the moment the scale of the outrage emerged. Later, grim-faced, he has driven his Jaguar to supervise operations at the police station.

There, the hastily formed incident room is full of frenetic activity. Messages and snippets of information are plastered across one wall — a jigsaw of facts. A team of officers scans them hunting for a clue.

There is little time for etiquette in these fraught hours. One policeman, frustrated by a stocky frame standing in front of a vital written message, shouts: "Get out of the bloody way."

It is only when the figure moves sharply to one side with a quick apology that the officer realises he had been addressing the Home Secretary!

Almost before the dust has settled, police are hunting for leads that could point towards the bombers. Reports of people seen running away from the hotel are followed up immediately and descriptions are compiled and circulated.

Police know the mystery figures are more likely to be terrified bystanders — but everything must be checked and double-checked.

Forces around the country soon join the hunt. Checks are set up at air and sea ports as the security net spreads across Britain.

Brighton becomes like a town under siege with police roadblocks stopping and checking everyone going in or out. The seafront around the Grand is sealed off, causing chaos and confusion for early morning traffic.

Shortly after 6 a.m. the police have held what was to be the first in a series of press conference for the hordes of reporters and



Sober faces at the police Press conference. Left to right, Chief Constable Roger Birch, Home Secretary Leon Brittan and John Gummer.

Pressmen ask: Was security tight enough?

camera crews hungry for information.

For Roger Birch and his senior police colleagues it proves a trying time. The massed ranks of press in Brighton for the conference have been on the scene since the start of the drama. They have seen what happened — but now they want to know why . . . and how.

Police face a barrage of questions and criticism about alleged security lapses. More than once, Mr Birch is asked if he intends to resign. He answers: "Nothing could be further from my mind."

But for Roger Birch, every police chief's nightmare has come true and the strain is showing.

At his side, Home Secretary Leon Brittan does what he can to keep the criticism at bay. He says: "A ghastly event of this kind is very worrying but there is no way in a free society that total security is possible."

As the world wakes up to the full horror of the bombing, Tory party chairman John Gummer is helping police check the hotel guest list, trying to see from the hundreds of names if any are still not accounted for.

But although that is his first priority, there are other tasks for Mr Gummer to perform. For as ministers fled the hotel minutes after the blast, red despatch

boxes were abandoned. Now vital Cabinet papers lie in the wreckage.

Mr Gummer, accompanied by police, goes back to the hotel to collect the boxes — and to pick up some clothes for his wife Penny, who is still in her nightie at the police station.

For the first time Mr Gummer can see the extent of the havoc wreaked by the parcel of death in room 629.

By this time the building is awash in four or five inches of water. It has turned the clouds of dust into thick dirty sludge.

Outside a crowd of sightseers has gathered. They gaze in horror at the dark hole ripped into the heart of the majestic hotel.

But Mr Gummer has no time to think. Mrs Thatcher has ordered business as usual.

Somehow, by 9.30 a.m., the Prime Minister has to walk on to the conference platform as planned. The show must go on.

But Mrs Thatcher will not want to be faced with an audience in nightgowns and slippers, so something must be done quickly.

Most delegates ran from the hotel without a thought for grabbing clothes and shoes. Now they huddle like refugees, clutching blankets over their dressing gowns.

razor blades — Marks and Spencer does not stock them.

Then one member of the staff manages to rustle up a supply of disposable razors, and in hastily provided bathrooms and changing rooms the Conservative hierarchy returns to normal.

As more staff arrive at the store for their normal shifts, they rush to help their VIP customers. One thing stikes the girls only how calm the bomb victims are.

Some of them are still in shock. Others have lost their glasses or contact lenses in the hotel and can hardly see. Yet there is no hysteria or panic.

Soon the delegates, loaded down with a sea of emerald green carrier bags, climb back into taxis to return to the seafront. No money has changed hands — the majority of the shoppers do not have a penny piece on them.

Staff have noted the goods going out of the store. The £6,000 bill for the shopping spree will later be paid from party funds.

As the delegates drive away from the store none realises the fate that has befallen some of their colleagues.

Rumours of deaths and terrible injuries have been circulating since the early hours but no one really knows.

They do not know that Norman Tebbit is in surgery, rushed in for an exploratory operation to check for internal injuries.

Despite his pain, Mr Tebbit still manages a flash of humour. As his stretcher is wheeled towards surgery, a doctor runs through the standard questions.

"Are you allergic to anything, Mr Tebbit?" he asks. The minister winces. "Yes, bombs," he says.

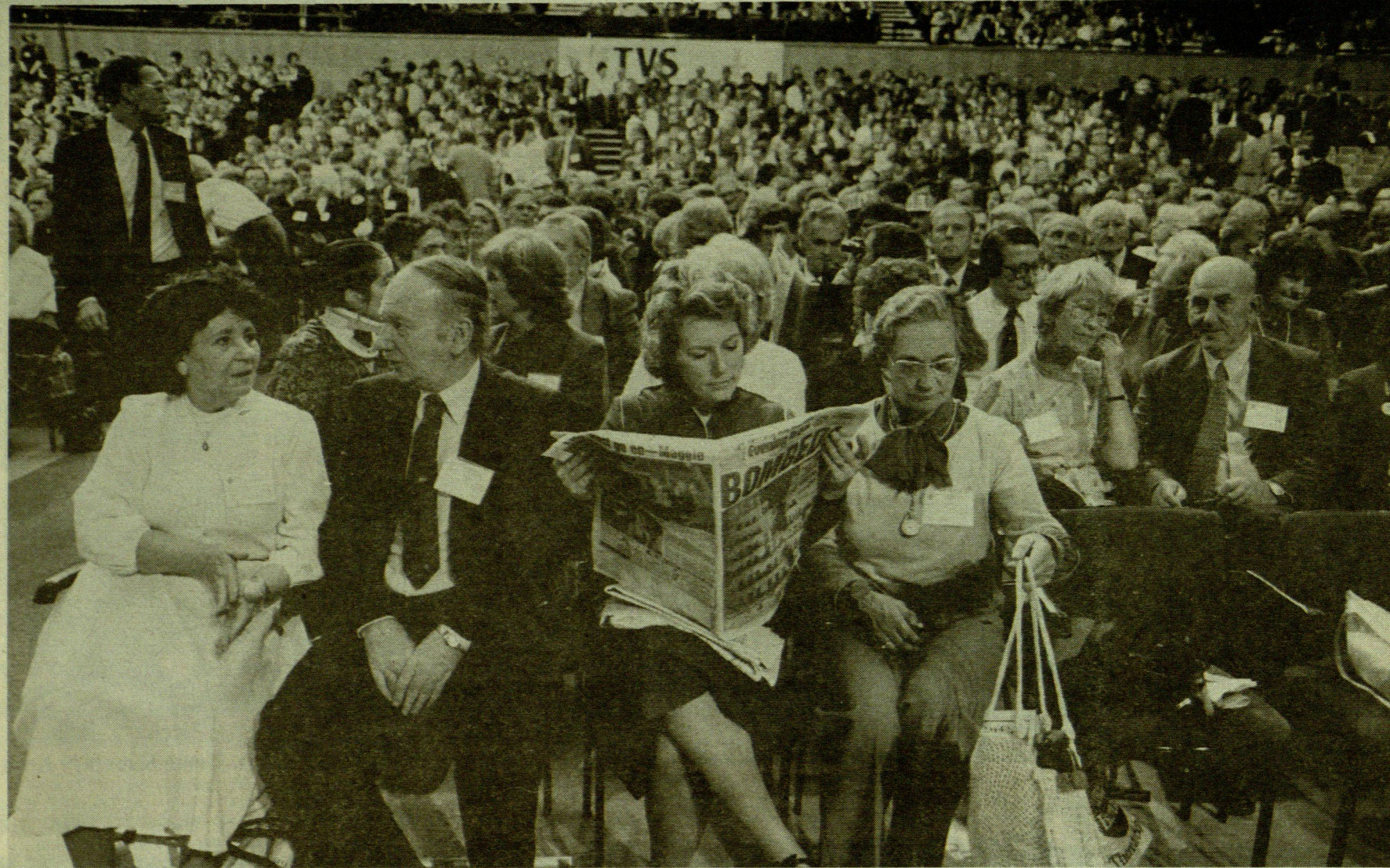
Back at the scene, Mr Gummer is working to get the conference back on the road.

The first debate is to be on Northern Ireland, which turns out to be a bitter irony when the IRA

Now there's time to sweep up



Outside the Grand the street is deep in rubble — but the priority was to get the injured out of the hotel



A grim determination to carry on . . . the conference after the night of horror. In the front row a delegate reads the Evening Argus, which printed a special early-morning edition

Business as usual, vow Tory chiefs



A night of drama — but Mrs Thatcher is determined not to be cowed by the bombers

claims responsibility for the bomb an hour or so later.

The debate is proving quite a headache for the party chairman. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Douglas Hurd, is due to arrive that morning for the debate. His instructions were to go to the party office in the Grand Hotel to pick up his pass for the conference hall.

Now, thanks to the terrorists, there is no office left for him to go to. Arrangements have to be quickly revised.

Security for the morning's session has to be tight, especially as many delegates have lost their passes in the rubble of the Grand.

But despite the checks and searches, the conference hall is gradually filled. Delegates speak in hushed tones: The casual, chummy atmosphere of the previous day has gone.

Instead, a sombre defiance flows through the massed ranks of Tories. They are shaken and they are shocked — but they are determined not to be beaten.

Some of those caught up in the night's drama — like Harvey Thomas — are already in their seats.

At 9.30 a.m., Mrs Thatcher

enters the hall by the front door and takes her place on the platform to applause, cheers and a few tears.

As she makes her way to her seat, she is embraced by Deputy Prime Minister Lord Whitelaw.

Then John Gummer, his voice breaking with emotion, says: "We intend to continue with our conference in exactly the way we would have done had this outrage not happened."

"We shall do so because those who wish to interrupt democracy must be shown that whatever means they use must fail."

Delegates stand for two minutes' silence in tribute to the dead. Again emotion takes over and several break down in tears.

It is a time for reflection and prayer, led by the Rev. John Milburn, vicar of the nearby St. Paul's Church and a friend of Mr Gummer.

Then it is down to work — and the Northern Ireland debate.

Mr Hurd tells delegates: "There is a contrast here which we must all feel. A contrast between what happened in darkness a few yards away and a few hours ago."

"That work, in darkness, of killing and maiming in-

nocent people and what we do here in the light of day. Democracy, which we have, will outweigh their bombs and bullets."

All around the hall heads nod in agreement. The Government is alive — and not beaten by the terrorists.

As the television newsmen flash the horror of the night on the screens the IRA top brass watch and savour their moment of triumph.

Mrs Thatcher and her Cabinet are alive. But the Provos know their survival does not mean their plot has failed.

They smile. To have come that close to wiping out the British Government is a triumph in itself, they say.

Their bomb, they tell themselves, has ripped into the heart of the hated British establishment and delivered a cold, contemptuous message to Mrs Thatcher and her Tories.

See how close we can get. See how hard we can hit. This will make them sit up and take notice.

The word goes out to the mas- terminds of the bombing: "You've done well."

Nine hours after the blast the

The IRA sends a message of hatred

IRA releases a chilling statement through its publicity bureau in Dublin.

It reads: "The IRA claims responsibility for the detonation of 100lb of gelignite in Brighton against the British Cabinet and Tory warmongers.

"Thatcher will now realise that Britain cannot occupy our country, torture our prisoners and shoot our people in their own streets and get away with it."

The message of hatred finished with a grim warning to the Government: "Today, we were unlucky. But remember, we only have to be lucky once. You will have to be lucky always."

At the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Lady Berry, Gordon Shattock and Jennifer Taylor carry on the bleak wait for news which they know in their hearts can only be bad.

John Wakeham, Norman and Margaret Tebbit, Muriel Maclean and others lay semi-conscious with terrible injuries.

Through all the death, heart-break and destruction, the IRA speaks of luck.

At the same time as the terrorists are issuing their statement, Sussex Chief Constable Roger Birch is delivering his own message in Brighton.

Throughout the morning, the pressure on him has been growing, with criticism about security arrangements flying his way. To some it seems as if Fleet Street wants someone to pin the blame on. And Roger Birch seems the prime candidate.

Although keeping up constant denials that security has been lax, he announces an independent inquiry into the bombing to be

headed by John Hoddinott, Deputy Chief Constable of Hampshire.

Looking tired and drawn, Mr Birch breaks the news at a Press conference. He tells the massed ranks of reporters: "In fairness to my own team, it's important we should have an independent look."

While life is proving difficult for Roger Birch, it has been totally shattered for Paul Boswell, manager of the Grand Hotel.

While the questions and accusations fly, he sits quietly in the bar of the Old Ship Hotel, a few hundred yards along the seafront from his shattered workplace.

Friends console him as he sips half a pint of bitter and nibbles a few salted peanuts. But there is little anyone can say to ease his pain.

The hotel he has come to love has been wrecked by terrorism just weeks before his retirement. He feels so bitter.

Since the explosion he has found time to slip back into his flat on the second floor of the Grand to change into a suit. Going back into the building has been an eerie and depressing experience.

Everything has been left as if time stood still the split second after the explosion.

Bedrooms are strewn with watches, jewellery, fur coats — even underwear. In the bar area, half-consumed bottles of champagne stand alongside half-eaten sandwiches. Glasses, chairs and tables are littered across the floor.

Covering everything, from the

untouched rooms to those with gaping holes where walls and floors have been, is a carpet of thick grey dust.

Paul Boswell heaves a deep sigh — and strides back along the seafront with his head held high for the benefit of the watching cameras.

Meanwhile at Brighton police station, a new face has appeared.

Commander William Huckleby, head of Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Squad, has swept into the building. The commander, known as Posh Bill because of his dapper suits and highbrow tastes, heads a crack team of expert officers trained in the tactics of terror.

Now his squad, wearing blue boiler suits, begin the painstaking operation of sifting through the mountain of rubble inside the Grand, hunting for the tiny particles they can piece together to give them a clue.

But the operation is being hampered by a round of hoax bomb calls in the area. Pubs, shopping centres — even the hospital where the Grand victims are being treated — all become targets for the cruel hoaxers.

Officers who have been on duty all night with no sleep find themselves rushing out on one wild goose chase after another.

Returning from yet another false call, one weary officer sums up police opinion on the hoaxers: "It's sick. It's bloody sick!" he says.

Back at the Brighton Centre Mrs Thatcher is about to begin her speech — the speech she was finishing when the Grand erupted, the speech the IRA hoped she would not live to make.



Pale but composed — Mrs Thatcher begins her speech

In the wake of the blast, much of it has been rewritten. The more partisan passages have been cut as messages of sympathy and shared horror have come in from her political opponents.

Her arrival on the platform, still dressed in the clothes she grabbed before fleeing the devastated hotel, is greeted with applause and cheers.

Now, less than 12 hours after the bomb sent to kill her, the Prime Minister prepares to speak.

She is pale but composed. Her only sign of emotion is a white handkerchief with which she dabs her nose and face.

A hush descends on the hall as the Prime Minister's voice rings out clear and strong: "The bomb attack on the Grand Hotel this morning was, first and foremost, an inhuman and indiscriminate attempt to massacre innocent and unsuspecting people staying in Brighton for our conference."

"Our first thoughts must be with those who died and with those who are now in hospital recovering from their injuries."

"The attack was not only an attempt to disrupt and terminate our conference. It was an attempt to cripple Her Majesty's democratically elected Government. That is the scale of the

outrage in which we have all shared.

"The fact that we are gathered here, shocked, but composed and determined, is a sign that not only has this attempt failed, but that all attempts to destroy democracy by terrorism will fail."

Even as the grim search through the rubble goes on a few hundred yards away, Mrs Thatcher pays tribute to the emergency services for their work through the dreadful night.

She finishes her speech with a phrase that is echoed by every delegate in the hall: "This Government will not weaken. This nation will meet the challenge. Democracy will prevail."

The hall erupts into applause. As one, the delegates rise to their feet, clapping and cheering her words. This is not the standard end-of-conference ovation. For everyone in the hall is united by the night they have shared.

Each ringing shout and cheer is a release of the emotions that have built up in the past hours.

For Mrs Thatcher, her aim has been achieved. The conference has gone on and the speech has been delivered. But many are already wondering if British politics can ever be the same again.

Now, the conference over, Mrs



'Today we were unlucky. But remember, we only have to be lucky once . . . you have to be lucky always'

A word of comfort to ease the pain...



The bombers' legacy — a gaping chasm through the centre of the Grand. It was down this hole that guests on the upper floors hurtled as the chimney collapsed and tilted rooms in a helter-skelter of fear

Thatcher has one more task to perform before she can leave the horror of Brighton behind.

Vans packed with police begin pouring into the car park outside the accident and emergency department of the Royal Sussex County Hospital, signalling that the Prime Minister is on her way.

Their ranks swell the already tight security set up to protect the injured from further terrorist attacks.

It is time for the Prime Minister to visit the victims — to see first-hand the effects of the bomb in room 629.

She arrives amid a convoy of police cars and motorcyclists, flanked by guards on all sides. Without a word, she strides quickly into the hospital. The silence is shattered only by the clicking of cameras and a group of bystanders who clap her.

The cheers of the conference hall seem a million miles away as the Prime Minister, accompanied by party chairman John Gummer and his wife, walks through the quiet hospital corridors.

They visit all the injured, offering words of encouragement and reassurance. But for some, sympathy is not enough. No one has told Jennifer Taylor or Gordon Shatock their spouses are dead. Their bodies have not yet been found, and somehow the waiting makes the pain harder to bear.

Mr Gummer is to recall later: "It was a terribly empty time when people very much needed someone just to talk to or cry with.

"We felt so totally powerless to help people, people who feared they had lost their husbands or wives but didn't know because they hadn't been found.

"We couldn't even comfort them. They would not yet believe that they had to be comforted but they knew deep down they needed to be."

For once, Mrs Thatcher's Iron Lady image drops as she sits for ten minutes with the distraught Gordon Shatock. As he cries, she stays holding his hand, murmuring words of comfort.

Later she emerges from the hospital looking pale. It is as if the strain of re-living the horror with the victims and sharing their grief has drained her.

After a few quiet words to waiting reporters, she climbs into her car. Her parting words are: "It was not a night we ever wish to see repeated."

Dusk is falling as the Prime Minister's official car speeds through Brighton at the end of the blackest day in its history.

The Brighton Centre, just hours ago full of delegates, stands dark and empty. A few yards away, police and firemen carry on sifting through the rubble of the Grand Hotel.

At the top of the shattered building, a Union flag hangs tattered and forlorn, its broken pole swaying gently in the breeze.

Fire chief's proudest moment

ERIC WHITAKER was looking forward to a series of farewell parties as he wound down to retirement in November as East Sussex fire chief.

His men had planned a host of surprises including a Rolls-Royce journey to Lewes fire station, where he would be "knighted" in a mock ceremony.

Mr Whitaker's slight figure and rather delicate features camouflage years of experience in

handling major disasters. With 32 years of service under his belt he had already tackled refinery blazes in Hampshire, huge factory fires in Birmingham and fatal hotel fires.

The Grand Hotel was different. There was no fire, yet it easily outstretched all the other disasters in terms of the size of the explosion and rescue operation.

Mr Whitaker was asleep in his Seaford home when the telephone rang 15 minutes after the first tenders raced to the scene.

He was on the road in five minutes. A road block at Newhaven dispelled any doubts about the magnitude of what had happened.

At the scene, he and his men worked tirelessly for hour after hour, through the night and well into the next day.

He later described his men's reaction as "superb."

But he added: "It was fortunate it wasn't a cold night and there was no wind or rain. It was also fortunate that the damage done was probably the minimum one could expect from such an explosion. It is an absolute miracle that more people were not killed."

East Sussex Fire Brigade, and the back-up team from West Sussex, received more than 100 letters of thanks and congratulations for their handling of the disaster. Many were from church leaders

and politicians, including Mrs Thatcher.

But perhaps the most touching were from individual watches and fire stations around the country.

There was even one from firemen in Northern Ireland which read: "We meet this every day but your lads were superb."

Mr Whitaker said: "I'm extremely proud of my people. This was the big one and they came out on top."

tered and forlorn, its broken pole swaying gently in the breeze.

Police know the flag cannot be left where it hangs. It is too poignant. The emblem of Britain is drooping, dirtied and torn in the aftermath of terrorism.

But to let it be lost under the rubble when the unstable top of the building is demolished seems just as wrong.

Instead, a call goes through to Downing Street. Do they want the flag? They agree, and the Grand's once proud Union Jack is pulled down, folded and sent to Mrs Thatcher — a permanent reminder of October 12, 1984.

Not that those who lived through the bombing will ever need reminding. No-one, including the Prime Minister, will ever be able to forget.

But it is not until two days after the outrage that her dry-eyed public mask is finally allowed to slip.

After all the death and destruction, it takes a sunlit morning in a country church to crack her composure.

In the calm of the morning service near Chequers, the country home of prime ministers, she reflects: "This is the day I was meant not to see."

Her thoughts turn to those colleagues and friends not able to share the day — those killed and injured by the IRA. For the first time publicly, Mrs Thatcher weeps.

Back in Brighton, others shed tears as four bodies are removed from the debris of the hotel. The hunt for them has been a grisly task and the last, Mrs Shatock, is not taken out until almost 48 hours after the blast.

As each is identified by friends or relatives, the news is broken to their spouses, still recovering in hospital. For the bereaved, the awful waiting is over and the mourning can begin.

The removal of the bodies means police can start in earnest on the long and dangerous job of sifting through every inch of rubble at the hotel.

At first it seems an impossible task, but there can be no short cut in the hunt for the particles which could point towards the terrorists.

One officer, surveying the mountain of wreckage, says: "Somewhere in that lot is the identity of the bomber. We have got to try to find it."

But it is not easy. Large parts of the building, particularly the upper floors, are unsafe. They cannot be pulled down until they have been searched, however.

The workers, wearing masks to protect their lungs from the dust still filling the building, are allowed in 20 at a time. Any more may cause a new collapse — and

A tattered memento is sent to Number 10

Grub up for the heroes of the blast



A hard-earned break for just three of the many rescuers, who risked their own lives to save people from the devastated hotel

Mrs Thatcher weeps for her friends

add more names to the IRA statistics.

Around that gaping hole on the sixth floor, men are tied to safety ropes and colleagues hang on tight as they clamber around the huge drop to remove debris.

Outside, an officer with a whistle stands staring intently at the building. No one speaks to him or does anything which could break his concentration. For any sign of movement in the rubble will be a signal for him to blow the whistle — and send men scampering from all sides of the building.

For 18 days, local police work shoulder to shoulder with members of the anti-terrorist squad in the rubble.

At times it seems more like a treasure hunt as jewellery and furs are uncovered from the mounds of dust, bricks and wood. All are tagged and removed, ready to be returned to their owners.

It is a dirty and often dangerous job. But great friendships strike up between the men of the two forces as they dig.

By the end of their search, they have removed 4,000 bins of rubble — a total of 900 tons of

material — for forensic examination.

At the police forensic laboratory in London, experts can now get to work examining fragments — sometimes smaller than a pin-head — to piece together the remains of the bomb.

On the last day of their clear-up the men who have combed the Grand Hotel celebrate a job well done.

To the astonishment of passers-by, they run from the building and on to the beach before plunging fully clothed into the cold sea, delighted to be washing away that choking dust for the last time.

The night before, Sussex officers have thrown a party for their London workmates at Brighton police station. Each is presented with a tie embroidered with a dustbin motif, and the anti-terrorist men are given a decanter engraved with the words: "Thanks for a Grand job."

The celebration that the job is over is echoed through Brighton for throughout the search the seafront has been closed off,

causing traffic chaos few will forget in a hurry.

All Brighton's main streets have been constantly clogged with cars and lorries and, although everyone knew the reason and tried to be patient, by the end of two weeks tempers were frayed.

But while the reopening of Kings Road means Brighton's traffic can get back to normal, in other parts of the town the aftermath of the blast continues.

At the Royal Sussex County Hospital armed and uniform police keep up a 24-hour guard on the victims of the bombing.

Staff, visitors and patients are checked in and out in case of more terrorist attacks on the wounded.

In the wake of the bombing, security at Brighton police station has never been tighter. Two uniformed officers guard the front of the building and every single entrance is covered by a check-point. Civilian cars are not allowed to park within 100 yards of the station.

At first, police feared the IRA might try to "improve" on its propaganda coup with a follow-



The Prime Minister weeps publicly for the first time since the blast. It takes a sunny morning to crack her composure



The massive operation to sift through the rubble takes two weeks of concentrated effort in perilous conditions

Clean at last!



After two dusty, dirty weeks in the rubble, police searchers enjoy an impromptu paddle in the sea opposite the Grand. Their faces show the relief that this part of the job is over

up attack, perhaps on the police station itself.

In the days immediately after the blast, many of the Government's top figures have visited the building to make statements or claim belongings rescued from the rubble.

Some of the items are classified, including Cabinet documents and papers, and must be guarded.

As the days pass and the police investigation intensifies, a new target for terrorism is identified — the police computer.

Experts from other forces are drafted in to operate the machine as the storage and retrieval system becomes more and more complex.

Elaborate security measures are put into effect to protect the information — much of it highly

sensitive — stored in the computer.

All civilians working at the station are ordered to wear identity cards so any strangers can be instantly challenged. People stopping outside the building, even if only to deliver papers, are asked who they are and their car numbers are checked.

Inside this net of security the hunt for the terrorist murderers goes on.

Every lead has to be followed up as forces around the country and hundreds of officers work on the case.

The head of the anti-terrorist squad, Commander William Hucklesby, has already come up with some theories on the bombing.

Rejecting the IRA claim of the 100lb bomb, he judges that about

20lb of gelignite was placed in room 629.

And, knowing the technological advances made by the terrorists, he voices the theory that Brighton's grand old lady could have been primed weeks before the Tories even arrived.

That idea gives police something new to work on. The hotel was refurbished before the conference, so they set to work tracing building workers and combing hotel lists to find anyone who stayed in the Grand in the weeks prior to the bombing.

As the hunt goes on, detectives follow up each new lead — but most don't lead anywhere.

Two men are arrested just hours after the explosion. By the next day police rule them out of the inquiry.

Figures seen running from the

scene in the moments after the bomb went off are also eliminated.

A chambermaid's description of a bearded man seen on the sixth floor of the hotel days before the bombing gives police a new line. Descriptions of the man are circulated nationwide.

Within days of the attack, police are bowing under the weight of information pouring into the incident room.

In the week following October 12, 900 inquiries are launched, 500 statements taken and 1,500 messages received.

The hunt spreads to Ireland and the USA as 25-year-old Evelyn Glenholmes, a known Republican, is revealed as a prime suspect.

But the terrorists close ranks

Now a new fear— are the IRA trying to wreck the police computer?

and, weeks after the outrage, the search goes on.

And even if the people who actually planted the bomb in room 629 are traced it will be only the first step towards finding the real villains who planned the attempt to kill the Cabinet.

Against this backdrop of police activity, the inquiry into security at the conference continues.

Police chief Roger Birch says he would be prepared to "consider his position" if the full investigation uncovers serious security lapses. But many of the accusations levelled against him and his force are overshadowed by new facts emerging about the bombing.

Police have been criticised for not checking everyone who entered the Grand on the fateful night but if, as Cdr. Hucklesby believes, the bomb was already there, all the checks in the world could not have stopped the inevitable.

That fact makes the events of October 12 even more frightening. Now police are wondering how they can protect the country's leaders from such calculated attacks in the future.

Over in Ireland, the IRA is still celebrating its "coup". At the Sinn Fein conference in Dublin, the republicans revel in the grim news from Brighton.

Speaker after speaker is cheered as they call for support for the terrorists. Around the hall, posters and republican newspapers spell out the message of a war against the British establishment.

One, showing a masked gunman with the backdrop of the

Full alert as police hunt for suspects



An artist's impression of one of the men police were hunting

wrecked Grand Hotel, carries the headline: IRA Blitz Brits. It receives approving glances from delegates.

Gerry Adams, MP for West Belfast and president of Sinn Fein, claims the Brighton bombing was the IRA's attempted execution of the British Cabinet and was "a blow for democracy."

But away from the prying eyes of police and press, a nameless young man speaks for the IRA, using chilling, calm words.

He shows no hysteria or obvious fanaticism — just a cold dedication to the policies of

bloody murder. Of the attack on the Prime Minister, he says: "We wanted to get her." Then he warns of more bombs in Britain.

He tells the secret meeting that the bombing was planned from the moment the Irish hunger strikers died. Bobby Sands would be avenged in the blood of the British Government — a life for a life, he announces.

As he speaks, police outside the conference hall are helpless. All their instincts are to storm the building and arrest him — but they know that even if they took him, there would always be 100 others to take his place.

The IRA man finishes his speech. Mrs Thatcher and her Government colleagues have been warned. They must be prepared to walk in fear, surrounded by security, never knowing if a bullet or bomb waits around the next corner.

But to many the terrorist outrage which shook the world is much more than an assassination attempt. It has been a strike at the very foundations of democracy.

The Tory leaders insist they will not bow to the bombers, but it remains to be seen whether

almost the entire Cabinet will be allowed to sleep under one roof again.

The casual chumminess with which top politicians mixed with party members may lie buried in the rubble of the Grand.

The annual jamborees will always be overshadowed by Brighton. The delegates will come, but will they ever be able to sleep easy again?

No one blames Brighton for the outrage. The Tories will be back — they have already booked their 1988 conference in the town. But, as party chairman John Gummer

Our coup, by the terror men of the IRA

comments, it will revive painful memories.

He says: "I will never be able to go along Brighton seafront again without that memory being foremost in my mind. You can't live through such a night without that being so."

The single comment sums up what the IRA has tried to do to Brighton.

The safe, sunny seaside resort of candyfloss, dirty weekends and saucy postcards was meant to crumble like the walls of the Grand Hotel.

The hotel will be rebuilt and restored to its former glory, but many will always see it as it was on that dreadful morning — shattered and scarred.

It could be many years before the town returns to normal. Maybe it never will. Because for many people, Brighton could be remembered as the place where the bomb went off.

They will remember what they were doing when they first heard the shocking news. They will remember the newspaper pictures and headlines, the agony of Norman Tebbit, the cool Prime Minister, the brave rescuers.

They will remember the five dead, not their names, perhaps, but their suffering and that of the 31 injured.

They will remember the tragic futility and waste of life on the day Brighton became the target of a plot to kill the Cabinet.



The Irish newspaper that won approval from Sinn Fein supporters

'It has been a strike at the very foundations of democracy'



Traffic chaos in Brighton during the hunt through the rubble



The hunt for clues — every particle could help



A life for a life —we sought our vengeance in blood, republicans are told

NOW FOR THE GRIM STATISTICS

THE DEAD

Five lives cut short by an IRA bomb



Sir Anthony Berry: Dead

THE first body to be pulled from the wreckage of the Grand Hotel was that of Sir Anthony Berry, 59, MP for Enfield Southgate since 1964.

The 6ft. 3in. former Welsh Guard was one of the Tory Party's most colourful characters, and was deputy chief whip.

He was the youngest son of Press magnate Viscount Kemsley and inherited his father's talent for journalism. He worked on the Sunday Times, edited the Sunday Chronicle and eventually became managing director of the Western Mail in Cardiff.

Sir Anthony had six children, four by his first wife and two by his second wife Lady Sarah Berry, who was injured in the Brighton bombing.

He was knighted in 1983 — and in the same month voted against hanging for terrorists.

Two hours after finding Sir Anthony, rescuers brought out the body of 45-year-old Roberta Wakeham, wife of Conservative chief whip John Wakeham, who was seriously injured.

The couple married in 1965 and had two sons aged nine and 11. They had homes in London and Hampshire and a farm in Wales.

Shortly before the bombing, Mrs Wakeham told an interviewer she was looking forward to having the family together during the summer recess from Parliament.

She said: "After all, in politics you never know what will happen from one day to the next."

The third victim dragged from the rubble was 54-year-old Eric Taylor, a member of the Conservative Party's National Executive Committee.

He had been married for 24 years to Jennifer Taylor, who was injured in the blast. The couple lived near Oldham.

For ten years until 1977 he was chairman of his local Conservative association in Oldham, and was awarded the OBE in 1974.

The manager of a data marketing firm, he was elected chairman of the North-West area Conservative Association in 1981.

The last body recovered from the hotel was that of Jeanne Shattock, the wife of Conservative Western Counties chairman Mr Gordon Shattock.

She died instantly when the bomb went off just feet from her.

Mrs Shattock was a Devon magistrate and governor of the private Maynards School. She had two children.

She and her husband, a 56-year-old vet, were involved in charity work and Mrs Shattock was chairman of the Dunsford Cancer Committee.

The death toll rose to five when Muriel Maclean, wife of the Conservatives' Scottish president, Donald Maclean, died in hospital a month after the blast.

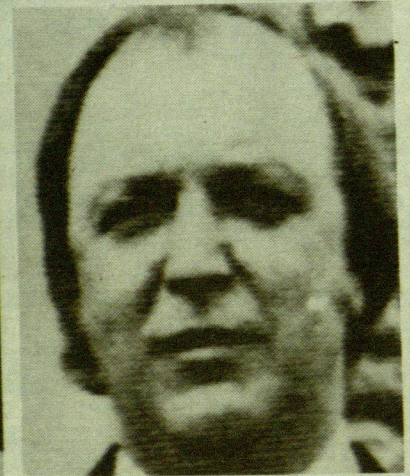
Mrs Maclean, 54, never left the intensive care unit after suffering severe leg injuries. Ten days after the bombing her right leg was amputated, and she finally lost her fight for life on November 14.



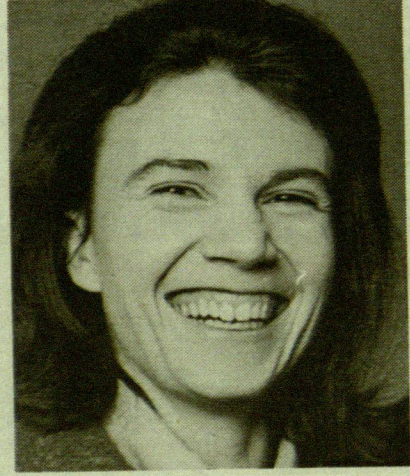
Mrs Jeanne Shattock: Dead



Mrs Muriel Maclean: Dead



Mr Eric Taylor: Dead



Mrs Roberta Wakeham: Dead

The toll of terror grows . . .

THE violent conflict of Ireland spread to mainland Britain in 1972 in the wake of Bloody Sunday.

In the last 12 years Irish extremists have murdered more than 80 people and injured a further 1,000 in mainland Britain.

The catalogue of Irish terror in Britain includes:

1972

February 22, Aldershot: Car bomb outside military barracks. Seven dead, 19 injured. Man later sentenced to life imprisonment.

1973

March 8, Old Bailey and Whitehall: Car bombs. One dead, 244 injured. Eight IRA members given life sentences and one given 15 years.

December 18, Westminster: Car bomb outside Horseferry House. Parcel bomb in Post Office sorting depot. Car bomb outside Pentonville Prison. Total of 56 injured.

December 21, Westminster: Explosions in three streets. Five injured. December 24, Swiss Cottage: Pub bombing. Seven injured.

1974

January 5, London: Explosions at Madame Tussauds, Cadogan Gardens and Earls Court Boat Show. Eight Irishmen sentenced to 20 years.

February 4, Yorkshire: Coach carrying servicemen and their families blown up on M62. 12 dead, 14 injured.

February 12, Latimer, Bucks: Bomb at National Defence College. Ten injured. IRA woman given 20 years for coach bombing and ten years for college explosion.

June, London: Explosions at Westminster Hall and Tower of London. One dead, 46 injured. October 5, Guildford: Bombs at two pubs used by soldiers. Five dead, 35 injured. November 7, Woolwich: Bomb near army barracks. Two dead.

November 21, Birmingham: Bombs at the Tavern in the Town and the Mulberry Bush. 21 dead, 184 injured. Six provisionals jailed for life.

1975

August 27, Caterham: Bomb in pub used by soldiers. 35 injured. September to November, London: Series of bomb attacks on restaurants and hotels used by MPs. Total of five dead, 100 injured.

October 23, London: Bomb outside home of Tory MP Sir Hugh Fraser. One dead — cancer specialist Prof. Gordon Hamilton Fairley. November 27, London: Anti-IRA campaigner Ross McWhirter gunned down outside his home. December, London: Couple held hostage in their flat in Balcombe Street by IRA terrorists for five days.

1976

March 15, London: Underground driver shot dead chasing Irish gunman after bomb exploded on train. Gunman later jailed for life.

1978

December 17, Bristol, Coventry, Liverpool, Manchester and Southampton. Series of incendiary device attacks. Nine injured.

1979

Canvey Island: Bomb in storage tank at oil refinery. March 30, London: Airey Neave, Tory spokesman on Northern Ireland, killed when his car exploded at House of Commons.

1981

October 10, London: Nail bomb explosion at Chelsea Barracks — first use of remote control detonator on mainland. Two pedestrians dead, 40 injured.

October 17, London: Car bomb. Lt-Gen. Sir Stuart Pringle, Commandant General of the Royal Marines, critically injured. October 26, London: Bombs in Oxford Street shopping centre. Bomb disposal expert Kenneth Howorth killed.

1982

July 20, London: Bomb attacks on Household Cavalry and band of the Royal Green Jackets in Hyde Park and Regents Park. 11 soldiers dead, more than 50 injured.

1983

December 17, London: Bomb attack on Harrods during Christmas rush. Six dead, 90 injured.

1984

October 12, Brighton: Grand Hotel bombed during Tory conference. Five dead, 31 injured.

THE SURVIVORS



HARVEY THOMAS: Quickly recovered from slight injuries. His baby Leah Elizabeth weighed in at 7lb 13oz a week after the bombing. Family now happily settled down after a nightmare night.



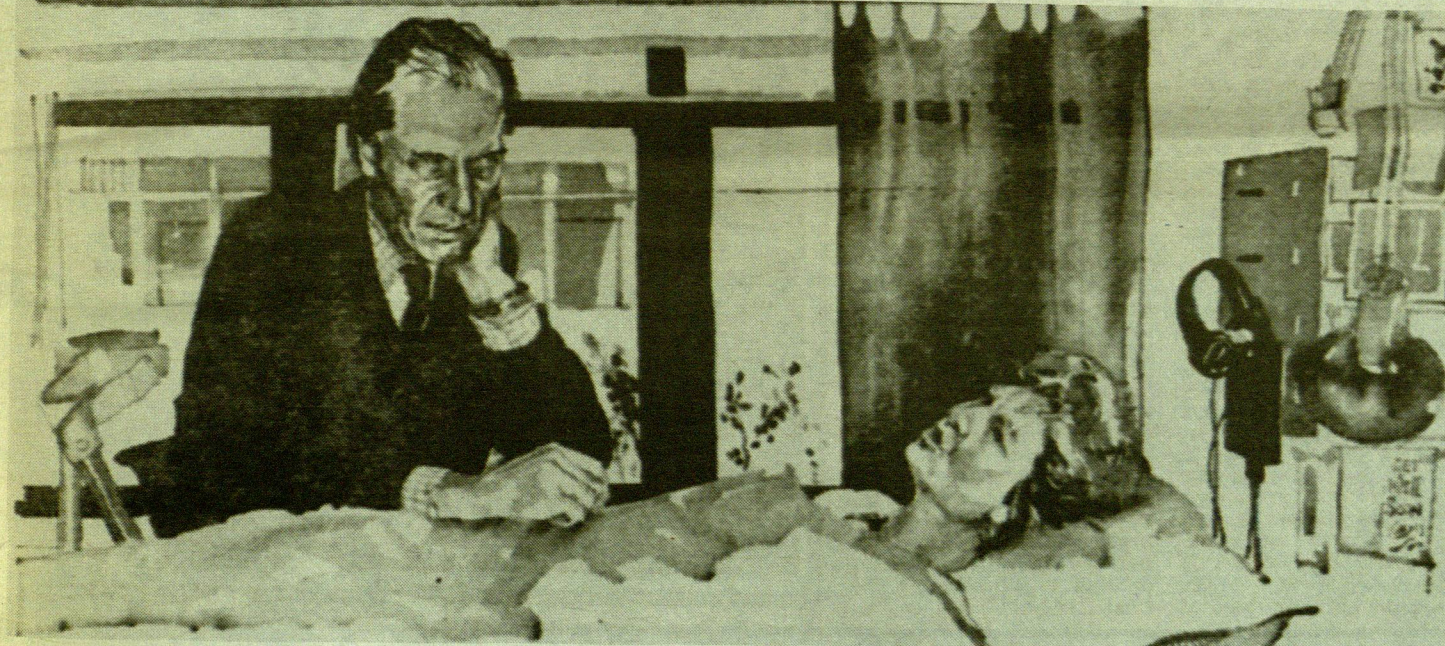
JOHN WAKEHAM: Slowly recovering from severe leg injuries. In mourning for his wife, but full of praise for rescuers. Now becoming more involved in his work as Chief Whip again.



MABEL de la MOTTE: The 72-year-old secretary of the Conservative Foreign and Commonwealth Council, released from hospital two weeks after the bombing. Multiple cuts and bruises nearly healed.



SIR WALTER and LADY ELISE CLEGG: Discharged from hospital the day after the bomb after being treated for cuts, bruises and shock. Throughout their stay, the couple did their best to console their friend Jennifer Taylor, whose husband Eric was killed.



NORMAN and MARGARET TEBBIT: Both were seriously injured, worse than at first believed.

They stayed in hospital in Brighton for two weeks after the bombing before being airlifted to the spinal injury unit at Stoke Mandeville.

Mrs Tebbit is still partly paralysed from the neck down, and she may be in hospital for more than a year. Even then there are no guarantees of complete recovery, but there are hopeful signs.

Mr Tebbit has a temporary office at the hospital but he too is still recovering from injuries. He has received treatment for cracked ribs, severe bruising and swelling and a deep gash in his hip.

Praise from Mr Tebbit:

FROM his hospital ward, Trade and Industry Secretary Norman Tebbit sends this exclusive message:

"The dreadful bombing of the Grand Hotel at Brighton has been recorded in hundreds of television programmes and newspaper articles.

There is little that I could add to those accounts. After all, my own part was passive, when not totally unconscious.

What I am able to record better than most, is the skilled and caring reactions of those in Brighton responsible for picking up the pieces and looking after the survivors.

My wife and I know how much we owe to all of them: to Fred Bishop, Tom McKinney, Stan Tomlin and the other firemen, who found us amid the wreckage, cheered us once found, and carefully extracted us; to the police who organised the rescue; and to the medical and other staff at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, who cared for both of

us with skill and devotion which could not have been greater.

They all had their training, experience and skill tested to an extent no one could have expected or predicted. They all emerged from the test with flying colours.

So, too, does Brighton as a whole.

The brave rescue work of the emergency services and the skill of the medical teams were matched by the response of Brighton as a whole; the promenade cafes that opened un-

prompted to give refreshments to survivors and their rescuers in the early hours of the morning of the explosion; Marks and Spencers opening to rekit those who had lost their clothes and belongings.

I know that the people of Brighton are deeply hurt that an outrage of this scale—the attempted murder of a Prime Minister and her Cabinet—should have taken place in Brighton.

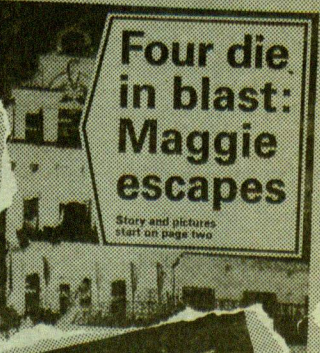
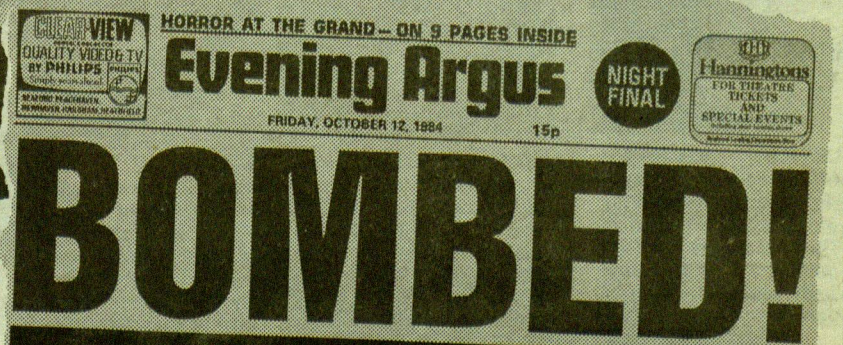
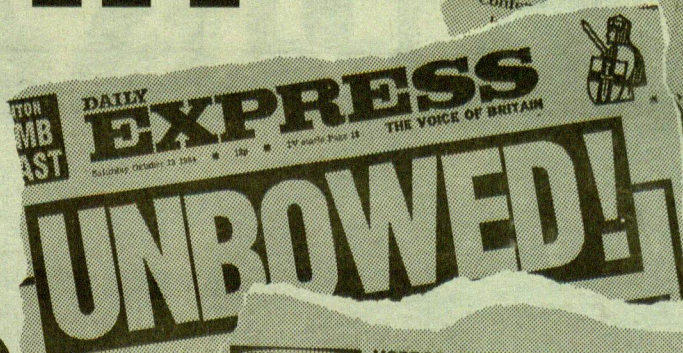
I know from many messages I have had that the people of Brighton wish to make clear their

rejection and loathing for what has happened. Those are qualities of which we should all be proud.

Now my wife and I prepare to pick up the pieces of our lives. I look forward to returning to what is, in House of Commons language, described as "my normal rude health," and to my normal work.

That process will be made easier because we are conscious of the enormous goodwill of the people of Brighton whose town became the scene of such ugly violence.

THE NIGHT THAT ROCKED BRITAIN



The man who missed a world-class story

THE world's Press were in Brighton to cover the Tory conference. When the bomb went off, scores of reporters and photographers were on the scene in minutes. But there was one face missing from the crowds of journalists vying for the best stories and pictures out-

side the blitzed hotel — that of the highly-paid Washington Post reporter. As colleagues from all countries hunted for interviews and information he was still fast asleep in his room at the Old Ship Hotel . . . just 100 yards away. He had slept through the ex-

plosion and knew nothing until breakfast time the next day. His newsdesk in Washington rang to ask when he was going to file a story on the bomb. He spluttered: "What bomb?" before staggering half-dressed into the lobby to ask what the heck was going on.

