

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS DIGEST

NO NEWS OF THE WORLD OR SUNDAY TIMES BECAUSE OF FIRST NIGHT TROUBLE AT WAPPING PLANT.

POLITICS

- Labour 5 point lead in Harris pol - 36/Conservatives 31/Liberal SDP 30
- Kinnock, in Mirror sets out his industrial strategy.

WESTLAND

- Some Conservative MPs want you to make it a vote of confidence.
- Hattersley says the deception is in no doubt. Crucial question is for how long was the Prime Minister actively and intentionally deceiving the country. If your story is true, it demonstrates terrible fact about your Prime Ministership - your Civil Servants knew without even having to ask, that you would be a party to fraud and intended leaks.
- People P2: Maggie on trial. Your future could be decided on make or break 30 minute speech to Commons tomorrow.
- Mirror P2 - Tories rally to Thatcher. Pressure mounting on you to restore your crumbling credibility. Tories likely to rally to your support .
- Express P1: Mrs T faces her D-Day. Tories rally to support of embattled Premier. Indications that all sections of the party were rallying to her support. Even being said Heseltine was likely to support the Government.
- Telegraph: Tories rally round. Brittan pledges Thatcher support for Backbenchers. Lord Whitelaw advised you on Thursday that all the facts should come out in your statement, but some of your colleagues think you didn't do this. Reports that No 10 took the initiative in proposing the leak.
- Mail on Sunday P1: Maggie's new crisis over Westland letter - Was she told? Your future hinges on the exact time you learned No 10 officials had agreed the letter should be leaked and your task is to persuade MPs that somehow you were not told.
- 43% think you should resign, but 48% think you should stay.
- Top Tories warn No 10 - come clean. Close friends of Mr Brittan say you and No 10 were up to the hilt in the decision to leak the letter. You know you have many unanswered questions to clear up, not least why you ordered a leak inquiry when you knew your own officials were responsible, and when your private office expressly sanctioned the leak. Friends speak of Mr Brittan's bitterness over the way he has been treated by Downing Street officials. A particular object of his anger is Bernard Ingham. He is said by Mr Brittan to have been instrumental in persuading the Prime Minister to back down from a direct confrontation with Heseltine in his role in the Westland affair. You had proposed sending a minute Heseltine warning him that you would not hesitate to sack him if he continued to breach collective responsibility.

WESTLAND (CONT'D)

- Mr Brittan is also in a position to reveal, should he wish, what part you played in causing the Solicitor-General to write his initial damaging letter to Heseltine.

Comment

- People says that 2 weeks ago when Heseltine walked out they said the wrong man had resigned. Government has evaded, deceived and misled. You turned your back on Mr Brittan.
- Victor Knight, in Mirror, says Tories are falling out of love with you - it's the political 7 year twitch.
- Chris Buckland, in People, says it has become a week of decoy and rehearses.
- Geoffrey Howe and Peter Walker as alternative eventual successors.
- Express says the Opposition are a bunch of humbugs. Do Kinnock, Steel, and Owen believe they are better fit than you to lead us. Do they believe they will throw away all the progress of the last six years because Brittan leaked a letter to the press and because you tried to stand up for him. The British people are not daft.
- Tom Utley, in Express, says Mr Brittan was a fool but everything Mr Heseltine has said and done since he flounced out of the Cabinet room reeks of pique, self importance and downright treachery.
- Crossbencher, in Express, says Bernard Ingham's part in the leak affair is extraordinary, giving authority for the leak but not telling the Prime Minister that he had done so, not even after you had ordered an inquiry.
- Telegraph: Whatever the Opposition may say, the reason for the crisis is a suspicion among your supporters that, after six years in office, you may be tiring or losing your grip. Your handling of the affair has not been such as to inspire confidence. But you are in no immediate danger. Your party will rally round you but you must know you still have the vigour and determination to lead the Conservatives into the next election. The country needs you still.
- Edward Pearce, in Telegraph, says anger with Leon Brittan is only part of the problem but the most discontented people around are the law officers, and there have been other encounters between law officers and very senior civil servants which have left the law speechless with anger at the paremptory, cavalier notions of proper conduct shown by men in private offices.
- Ian Waller, in Telegraph, focuses attention on Private Office and Press Office and says what happened on January 6 was a Press Officer's enthusiasm led to dubious attempts at news manipulation rather than neutral, factual presentation and failed to sense the danger of the method used.

WESTLAND (CONT'D)Comment

- Alan Williams, Observer, says Mr Brittan carries the can. If you had known of No 10's involvement the inquiry would be shown to be bogus and you would be exposed not as an incompetent who did not know what was going on but as a humbug, a liar even, who elected to deceive Parliament and people. Role of chief bully being allotted to Charles Powell.
- Observer leader says the issue is no longer what originally occurred but the Government's and your efforts to conceal what was got up to not just in DTI but all too evidently in No 10. Did you know about Solicitor General's letter before it was sent or even instigate it? If so, it would explain why no one, even among your closest confidants, felt the need to refer to you the use to which it was subsequently put. If you stick to your story that a vast number of facts had not been given to you before you made the statement, the presumption arises that you asked no questions because you knew the answers already, or suspected they would prove compromising or embarrassing.
- Adam Raphael, Observer, says Mr Brittan was determined that he and his officials should not swing alone and insisted you acknowledge your own direct role. You said you would not concede direct responsibility for the leak. Small statement last Thursday was a tortuous compromise. If, as you claim, you were not consulted by your aides on January 6 there can be only one explanation - the leak tactic had been cleared in advance. To believe anything else is to assume that the Prime Minister's Private Office and Bernard Ingham were totally out of control that day on a matter that was at the forefront of her concern. You were determined to bring Heseltine to heel and you were not too fussy how this was to be achieved.

BERNARD INGHAM