

27 May 1987

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS DIGEST

Kinnock under concentrated Tory and Alliance fire on defence; Reagan tells *Independent* that it would take more than an election to change the special relationship with the USA; Conservative advert on Labour's defence policy: surrender.

Norman Tebbit dubs Kinnock the "runaway leader"

Nicholas Ridley says rates would soar under Labour

Alliance attack concentration of hard Left in Labour Party

Labour on the offensive over Conservative's law and order record and renew scare over payments for school lessons and books; Home Secretary gets extensive coverage in *Express* on Hard Left's plan to shackle police.

Alliance offer big improvements for worst off pensioners

Sun poll gives you 9% lead - 42/33/22; *Mirror* makes much of Harris rolling poll which cuts your lead to 5%: 42/37/21. Marplan gives you 7% lead - 42/35/20. Harris on London gives a lift to Alliance who take 4% of Conservatives 5% drop - 42/34/23. Average of last five polls gives you 8% lead - 42/34/21. Pound drops on strength of dollar and election poll advance by Labour.

More resignations by Asians from Hattersley's constituency party

More lightning strikes by Customs men over pay affect Channel ports

Midland Bank says Britain's economy will be one of the fastest growing in the West for years to come.

Star says Reagan is set to blow Labour's defence policy out of the water on the eve of polling day - a major statement expected from him after seeing you in Venice; you challenge Kinnock's right even to put himself forward as a potential Prime Minister in view of his defence policies.

Sun leads with report that a former rent boy who served time in prison for fraud has been appointed governor of two schools in Victoria by ILEA - described as a new shock for Kinnock; Tories declare Kinnock unfit to govern because he doesn't take defence seriously enough, inside Lord Harris's claim that only 1m are genuinely out of work is featured.

Sun leader attacks "Socialist myths" about the NHS; they are disguising the real causes of the trouble - people living longer; developments in medical techniques; and union bloodymindedness bequeathed by Socialists. It needs a Lord King or Ian MacGregor to sort it out.

Mirror puts its comment on front page under heading "Don't let her get away with it" - you are the issue and the years haven't tamed the shrew, as it puts it. It then lists a large number of ways in which it says you don't care. Inside it runs a scare over extension of VAT: the Tory VAT trap, as it describes it.

Today has you still on course for an election hat-trick, though with a vastly reduced majority; inside its main heading is "Capt Kinnock fires off a blank - broadside on defence fails to lift siege of Dad's army."

Daily News leads with Tory lead halved, according to Harris poll in London. Inside you lead attack on Kinnock's guerrillas. Anne Sofer (SDP) column says that to understand the Labour manifesto you need a fine grasp of inner party politics and the mind of a confidence trickster. However you can experience it simply by living in Lambeth or Southwark or Camden or Haringey or Brent or Islington... Centre page photo-feature on Thatcher's children - the poverty alleged to be haunting Bloomsbury supplementary benefits office.

Express leads with "White flag" Kinnock accused and Cazenove's saying inflation will soar to 15% under Labour - and trade deficit to £7.5bn. Leader headed "Who do you think you are kidding, Mr Kinnock?" says that if he wins this election his Government would need only one extra piece of equipment for our armoury - a white flag. Cecil Parkinson feature has a message for all those who want to keep Britain booming - don't throw it all away; Labour's empty promises and spend, spend policies can only end in ruin.

Mail leads with "Kinnock: the man with a white flag" - savagely attacked from all directions for his amazing defence statement. Tories, Liberals and SDP united in contempt. Leader says Kinnock, as no Labour leader before, has marketed his own personality as his party's prime asset so he can't complain if he now becomes the main target. He is no joke. His nice smile conceals a thoroughly nasty prospect for Britain if Labour were to be given power. Another leader says there is no mystery about our complaints about the NHS - it is the price we pay for our cleverness in devising ever more advanced and often expensive treatment. But the Government is doing better on waiting lists than Labour ever did.

Inside the Mail features "Kinnock's road to ruin" - your warning that he will take us back to rule by union bullies. Another story has Kinnock owning up to his party having a few police bashers.

Telegraph leads with you putting Kinnock under fire - Labour forced on to the defensive for the first time. Inside it reports Bryan Gould, in Marxism Today, admitting to Labour having a credibility problem. Leader on law and order says that under Labour the police would not in practice be able to undertake large-scale operations without permission from their authority. In the name of democracy Labour is proposing to abolish the independence and impartiality of the police.

John Keegan, in Telegraph, on how Kinnock is preparing to die for his country, says the idea that occupation by a stronger foreign power may be resisted by a weaker population after its military defeat is an established fantasy of the Left.

Guardian leads with Tories uniting in Kinnock "unfit to lead" attack, ferocity of fusillade appeared to surprise some experienced Labour figures. A leader on the allegedly rough time you have been having at your press conferences notes that Kinnock "will actually be available in London for questioning" tomorrow; it expects a lot of journalists will feel there's some catching up to do. Leader on law and order says the great strength of the Labour and Alliance policies on the police - and the great weakness of the Conservatives' - is that they recognise the necessity of police reform.

Hugo Young, in Guardian, says Labour commercials have been admired for their evasion, not their substance; their blurring, not their clarity. The time has come to examine Labour policy.

Independent leads with Kinnock under fire as election battle heats up. Inside it has the Chancellor keeping open option of VAT changes. Leader on "time for the Alliance to hold fast" says it entered the campaign with an unfocussed manifesto and its heavy guns trained on the wrong target - ie Conservatives. Kinnock has created a telegenically new style but little of Labour substance has changed. The Alliance should concentrate its fire on Labour while expressing more robustly its social market alternative.

Times leads with Tories attack Kinnock policy of surrender; Labour's astonishing blunder over rates. Hurd warns on the perils of Left's police policies. Geoffrey Smith thinks the international respect you command is one of the strongest Conservative arguments in this election.

Times leader headed "Mr Kinnock's mujahadin" says the last time the population of an urbanised European country tried to resist an invader was Hungary and effective resistance lasted only a matter of days. It is possible that Mr Kinnock had in mind was passive resistance of the kind advocated by early CND. If so, a Soviet occupier has even less to fear.

FT leads with Thatcher and Alliance leaders focus attack on Labour's hard Left. Features on Mr Heseltine tirelessly active in the wilderness, conducting his own campaign to secure the return of a Tory Government.

B Ingham,
May 27, 1987