

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS ASSOCIATION INTERVIEW

You have agreed to give Chris Moncrieff, Chief Political Correspondent of the PA, an exclusive 10th anniversary interview tomorrow morning for an hour from 9.30am.

He will be accompanied by Julie Cockcroft, a reporter (who, he says, is very sympathetic) to cover the women's angle; and a photographer, Malcolm Croft.

PA will run the story for Thursday morning's papers as they did so successfully when you became the longest serving Prime Minister this century. They are intending to do it as a straight verbatim Q&A piece.

In practice this interview and pictures will go round the world as well as to every British media outlet.

You will also dominate the world's press tomorrow with the picture with Michael which you have agreed to give to PA and a television pool camera from 10.15am.

Interview

It is clear that both Mr Moncrieff and Julie Cockcroft will wish to concentrate on the personal aspects of your 10 years in office - eg:

- your greatest achievement?
- your greatest mistake?
- is there anything you would prefer not to have done or done differently?
- the greatest challenge you have yet to face?

- whether you can ever see yourself retiring?
- what it is like to be a grandmother?
- how have you coped with the last 10 years?
- what or who have you found your greatest support?
- how do you cope with what President Reagan described as the lonely hours?

Mr Moncrieff will then turn to newsy topics:

- Green issue - have you grasped it in time or will the world suffer irreparable damage?
- Politics - Opinion polls - the way in which you are held more in respect than affection. How close are you to the destruction of socialism? What do you regard as the worst feature of British life?
- Industrial strife - are you perturbed by what appears to be the emergence of industrial strife - a spring of discontent?
- NHS reform
- NATO (though the interview seems likely to concentrate heavily on the domestic scene)

Opportunity

This interview, coming on the eve of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election and county council elections, is a wonderful opportunity to present yourself in a relaxed, confident light; and your policies as a major gain for Britain.

The major anniversary questions which arise are:

- how much longer do you see yourself going on?
- your views on the orgy of criticism and unflattering opinion polls which have greeted your 10th anniversary

- your determination to proceed apace with the reform of Britain, or to allow time for the reforms so far enacted to be digested?
- what you feel personally and physically about becoming a grandmother in your 10th year as Prime Minister?

In practice, you do not need to be very choosy about what you say - though it will help to say it fairly succinctly as it will appear in Q&A form - since it will all be faithfully reproduced. Different journals will then angle it differently according to their particular interest.

But you can be pretty sure that on this memorable occasion your thoughts - and the woman's (grandmother's) angle - will get biggest play.

Things to Avoid

This interview needs to be controlled, fairly disciplined in length of answers, frank and open. All my instincts tell me that it is not the occasion for sentiment, but a sense of achievement and a determination to go on doing for Britain what you have so successfully done for the nation so far.

If you can, I think it would be wise to avoid altogether discussing your successor, since the media only make mischief out of this. It should suffice to say that you will know when the time has come to go - and it's not yet by a long chalk - and you will do so safe in the knowledge that the country will continue to be governed wisely and well.

Points to Get Over

You will find some useful briefing in the Annexes, though I have not overloaded you with material.

Whatever else you do tomorrow, I do hope you will get over a few simple points which play to your strengths. I offer the following five points which you may care to use by way of an opening gambit with Mr Moncrieff:

- your greatest satisfaction over the last 10 years has been the way Britain's prosperity - and ability to prosper - has been transformed and the country's standing abroad has been raised.

- your conviction that you are broadly on the right lines has been immensely reinforced by the disparaging nature - indeed venom - of the orgy of criticism by opponents who have been trying vainly to damage this milestone
- what you are seeking right across the board of policy - for example, capital and property ownership, housing, NHS, education, legal services, environment is a better deal and opportunity for the ordinary people of this country - regardless of their background; you will continue to challenge vested interests in the service of people
- you derive great encouragement from the respect in which you are held, even by opponents, if public opinion polls are to be believed; you have never sought to be loved - politicians who want to be loved are dangerous; what matters is taking the right decisions however tough they may be. No Prime Minister can be loved and be an effective political leader of their country; but there is nothing incompatible between being effective and respected.
- Britain now occupies an important position in the world with influence both in Washington and Moscow, Peking and Tokyo, and both sides of the River Jordan and both sides of the Limpopo, not to mention the authority we derive from our position in the EC, the 7 Economic Summit nations and the Commonwealth. You take pride in having restored our position of influence, by standing up for what we believe to be right, and in the respect in which Britain's word is held in world counsels.

Content?



BERNARD INGHAM
May 2, 1989

ANNEXES

1. Previous records
2. Chris Moncrieff's interview with you on beating Asquith's record
3. List of Ten Major Achievements
4. Sunday Telegraph opinion poll

PREVIOUS RECORDS

Longest serving post-War Prime Minister
(beating Harold MacMillan): February 6, 1987

Longest serving Prime Minister this
century (beating Asquith): March 1, 1988

Longest serving British Prime Minister -
Lord Liverpool June 7, 1812-February 17, 1827

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FROM JAMES LEE FOR COI RADIO TECHNICAL SERVICES

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER, AT NO. 10

DOWNING STREET, ON SUNDAY, 3 JANUARY 1988

INTERVIEWER: CHRIS MONCRIEFF (PRESS ASSOCIATION)

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INTERVIEWER:

First, Prime Minister, I would like to congratulate you.

PRIME MINISTER:

You are very kind.

INTERVIEWER:

And do you now feel a great sense of achievement at having surpassed Asquith's term of office?

PRIME MINISTER:

Do I feel a great sense of achievement? No, I just feel that there is still a lot more to be done.

I am very pleased that one has been here for, what is it, eight years, two hundred and forty-four days. I find it is difficult to believe, because it has gone so quickly, and as you climb one peak, so you find another peak ahead that still needs climbing.

INTERVIEWER:

What has been your most pleasant surprise during your term of office? Have you had one?

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PRIME MINISTER:

The fantastic loyalty and teamwork that you get in No. 10 Downing Street. We are a very happy ship, all working in a dedicated way to achieve our objectives.

INTERVIEWER:

Can you name your biggest disappointment since you came into office?

PRIME MINISTER:

It always takes longer to achieve things than you think, and you get a little bit impatient. You really want changes; you have to get the changes in policy agreed, then the legislation agreed; then it takes a year to get the legislation through, and then it takes a year or two years to implement it, whereas you started off seeing the need and wanting to get it implemented quickly, and it is the time taken that makes one a little bit impatient sometimes.

INTERVIEWER:

You quoted St. Francis of Assisi in 1979 when you first came into power. How much of what you said then do you think has been achieved in that sense and what is there still to do?

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PRIME MINISTER:

Well first, there is a lot more harmony in industry in this country. That is because most people wanted it to be that way, wanted just to get on with working hard and well.

Truth. Yes, we have never flinched from telling people the truth and never flinched from the steps necessary to get honest and sound money again; and never flinched from telling the truth, whether it be about defence, whether it be about the many aspects of policy in this country. Always, it has been first find the facts, tell people what they are and then try to take the long-term view to put them right.

Faith. I think no-one can ever accuse me of not having faith in the policies and not sticking to them very very firmly.

And hope. I think we have not only brought hope, but we have brought a better future and we have brought, to the acknowledgement of the world, a more confident and more prosperous Britain, and whereas they used, when I first came in, to talk about us in terms of "the British disease", now they talk about us: "Look! Britain has got the cure! Go to Britain to see how Britain has done it!" That is an enormous turn-around, and it has brought hope to others as well.

INTERVIEWER:

Which of your predecessors has given you the most food for thought and stimulation and inspiration, Prime Minister?

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PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Winston Churchill, of course, because he had to fight so much for what he believed in and his visions, whether it be of integrity in finance, in the fact that political policy should consist of both a ladder of opportunity and a safety net to catch you when you fall; and his international visions.

He had everything: the integrity in finance, the opportunity and a safety net, and international visions. Secure defence, but working with Europe, and always the great Anglo-American alliance. Freedom. So long as we work together, so long will liberty live.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you most enjoy about being Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh goodness me! I think it is a feeling of being at the centre of things and having some influence on them.

The formation of new policies, to me, has always been the most exciting thing throughout all my political life. Getting a new idea, getting people in to talk about it, talking it through, thrashing it out, deciding how we can present it and always looking at it: is it right for the long-term? Sometimes, you have to do things in the short-term, but you like to take them in a direction which is right for the long-term. So this is really, I think, the most exciting thing and you think that when you have achieved one or two things, that you would just be very pleased and sit back. It acts as a kind of appetiser of other things still to do.

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INTERVIEWER:

What aspects of being Prime Minister do you find the most unpleasant?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think that you are constantly in the limelight - not only you yourself, but your family as well, so there just is no private life.

INTERVIEWER:

Does that constrain your family very much?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think we have got used to it over the years.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you find the most significant change in political life today, compared with when you started out? You may have answered that already.

PRIME MINISTER:

Politically, it was that we somehow expected ourselves to be a failure. Now, we have got back to knowing we can succeed.

In the general conduct of political life, I think the most significant thing since I first began, which was in 1949 when I was first adopted as a candidate, is that there was no television, there

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was nothing like the same demand for communication on politicians. We communicated through the press and through meetings much more than now - meeting and actually discussing through meetings played a much bigger part than at the moment, but I think the most difficult thing is that I know if I leave here in the morning and go out and about on tour, that if there is something that happens mid-morning or late morning, I may never have heard of it because I have been out and about, and I shall be asked for an instant comment.

Now, it is very very silly, because the most important things are that you think things through before you comment on them, so that we do make a comment but the comment is usually the kind: "Look! Let us first find the facts and then we will see what is the right thing to do!" But it is the need for the instant comment which leads to the thought that things can be instantly solved, whereas most things are much more deep-seated than that, and the instant comment, the instant aspect of political life has got much bigger, and the longer-term maturity of policies and the need for longer-term solutions, one has to work much harder for than ever one did.

INTERVIEWER:

What advice would you give to a young man or woman considering entering politics today?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think first, it is very much better to have a non-political career to start with, so that you know some particular trade,

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profession or industry well, because Parliament should be a Parliament where somewhere among its members you can find someone who is prettywell an expert on almost everything by virtue of his or her own achievements, own experience. That used to be so, I think far more so, in the past than it is now.

So I would say first: be confident that you can tackle something in life that is in industry, in commerce, in the professions or in the arts, in the environment, so that you have some particular experience to bring to politics, which is of all the arts, the sciences, the finances, the trades and the commerce.

Then, you will probably by that time have sorted out your beliefs and your ideas. Work jolly hard at them and never be afraid, once you have sorted out your ideas, of standing up for what you believe in. Do not go for woolly compromises. Stand up for what you believe in and go on communicating that, explaining it - what you believe in and why and how you intend to do something about it.

INTERVIEWER:

Has your womanhood been a disadvantage to you in your political life?

PRIME MINISTER:

I have no idea if I had been here if I had been a man or not, no idea at all - neither can anyone else have.

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INTERVIEWER:

If you could nominate 1988 as the year of some particular achievement, can you think what you would like that to be?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh yes, but alas, it will not come about.

I think one of the worst things we have to grapple with is cruelty to children. Here we have a more prosperous Britain than we have ever had before; there is still a need for the National Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children; there are still terrible cases connected with children.

I have been associated most of my life with the NSPCC. We had a centenary year about 1984/85. When it was founded, they must have hoped - we were not here then - that over a century later there would be no need for it. The need actually is even greater than ever. I think it is the biggest blot on civilised life that there is.

Apart from that, which is the part of the law and it would be, greater respect and observance of the law which is, of course, the prerequisite to a civilised society and civilised life and also the fundamental manifestation of human rights and respect one for another.

INTERVIEWER:

I know there is no point in asking you when you want to retire, but have you now got Lord Liverpool's tenure of office in your sights?

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PRIME MINISTER:

Well no, I have not. I did not when I came here have Asquith's tenure of office in my sights. I was just trying to implement the things I believed in, because I believed those were right for Britain, and we shall just go on that way.

No, if you sort of start out saying: "I want to beat Asquith! I want to beat Liverpool!" that is not the way. I want to do certain things and get on with doing them, and there is a lot to do, so we just get on with it, you know. It is like a birthday. You feel the same on your birthday as you did the day before and you will the day after, but you are aware that by the time you are over sixty that there are not quite so many years ahead as you have always assumed there were, so it becomes even more important to do the things you want to do.

I mean, the idea that you become less interested in the future as you get older is just not right. The fact is that the older you get the more interested in the future you become because you are so anxious to make your own contribution to it for succeeding generations and the time in which you have to make that contribution diminishes.

INTERVIEWER:

How do you respond to those who accuse you of presiding over a divided nation - as some do - the so-called "north-south divide"?

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PRIME MINISTER:

I think the north-south divide is grossly oversimplified.

We have difficulties in the inner cities. There are parts of London where the difficulties are just as great - every bit as great - as they are in the north-east.

I think the north-west is making a great revival; I think the midlands is making a great revival and I notice, as we ask more and more people go up and look at what is called the "north" and the "north-east", they go up there, they go up thinking that there are dark satanic mills and it is all grey and unwelcome. They go up there and come back and tell you: "Do you know what it is like? The countryside is fabulous; the people are marvellous; there are thriving industries there! Have you seen the shopping centres!" and you are finding many many places in what is known as the "north" where the arts and music flourish. You have got good universities, and it is just that they have, in their minds, been influenced by this north-south divide - until they go there, and then they find a real thriving society with terrific character.

Of course, there are problem areas because they were over-reliant on certain industries and some of those industries have become the industries of yesterday, but you know, the north used to be the rich part of Britain. There was industry. There was manufacturing and, as I say to them when I go up there, that very enterprise which made the north the rich wealthy part of Britain - go round and look at some of the houses; you have only to see that they were rich in manufacturing, rich in merchanting - the enterprise is still there and our task now is to bring that

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enterprise out.

Certainly in some areas - take the Sunderland area - they were very heavily reliant on shipbuilding and steel and coal and the problem there is to get new industries going. It must have been a tremendous boost that Nissan chose that area to go and it is expanding, because it has found a welcome up there, because it has found excellent workmanship, because it has found loyalty to the company and it has found productivity every bit as good, if not better, than Japan, so everything that once made the north the prosperous part of our country is still there.

INTERVIEWER:

What do you think should be the priority for Britain between now and the Millenium?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have to keep going the things we have achieved. We have to keep going the sound finance; we have to keep going, and increasing, the sense and spirit of enterprise, because that is what made this country great, and the sense of personal responsibility.

We have to keep going our reputation as being sound on defence and a loyal staunch ally and one of the bastions of liberty and law. All that we have to keep going.

Beyond that, we have to enlarge opportunity, and that is why this Parliament is so significant. Enlarge opportunity to those whom it has not yet reached. That is why we are putting so much

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emphasis on education, because not every child is getting a good education in every area; why we are putting so much emphasis on improving housing in some of the areas and in trying to break up the monolithic nature of the council estates and give more people more opportunity to choose a landlord as a housing association or a private landlord if they choose.

It is this opportunity, because passionately we believe that there is so much in the British character, so much talent in Britain, to give it the opportunity to develop, it will develop.

But also other things as you come up to the Millenium:

If you look, the things for which Britain used to be known were a fundamental sense of fairness, integrity, honesty and courtesy for your neighbour and for people who came to visit us. Now that means that really influences the whole environment in which we live.

Let us take sport, for example. It would be very nice if once again we could recover our reputation and in soccer we could become once again the soccer gentlemen of Europe.

We have just seen Henry Cotton honoured. He set the most fantastic standards for golf that are still observed by all people in it.

You look sometimes at the state of litter in Britain. People go to beauty spots. They do not always observe them. We see graffiti on walls. It is horrid. You cannot blame governments for this. The real reason is that people do not think of others when they throw the litter down, when they throw the cigarette

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packet out of the window, cigarette out of the window, the toffee paper out; when they come out of a take-away and cast away the litter. It is total discourtesy and lack of thought and consideration to others and we ought to restore, really, the beautified Britain as part of the standard of courtesy to one's neighbour and pride not only in the countryside but in the state of property and the cleanliness of streets in the towns.

So it is that sense of fairness and courtesy and honesty which is the whole standard. You know, some young people used to say to me "There aren't any rules any more!" and they are crying out for a set of rules and standards by which to live and we owe it to them to try to restore these standards and just as we can now take pride in our country, so they will take pride in our countryside and pride in the standards of the towns - that they are clean, nice, attractive places to be.

This is one reason why when we had the hurricanes, we phoned up immediately: "We simply must restore the trees! We must look after the shrubs!" We must beautify Britain and be just as proud of that as we are of the achievements of our country. We have the most fantastic countryside. We have lovely villages. We have very nice towns. Let us keep them really nice and clean and tidy. Take as much pride in that as you take in having your house clean and nice like a bright new pin.

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INTERVIEWER:

How would you answer that question between now and the Millennium on the international front? What would you like to see happening?

PRIME MINISTER:

I would like to see security - international security - at a lower level of weaponry. One always, but always, has to be prepared to defend liberty and because new weapons take a long time, you have to watch that you never place your security in jeopardy, and therefore you have to negotiate.

We do not fear to negotiate. We are strong. We do not fear to negotiate, because we know we negotiate from strength - strength in defence, strength in belief, belief in ourselves, and so I would like to see that come about.

I would also like to see some of the fundamental problems that have dogged us for years internationally, tackled. The Middle-East perhaps is one of the outstanding problems.

There are, of course, other problems which afflict South-East Asia, the Vietnam-Cambodia problem, that is part of the East-West problem really.

Obviously, one would like to see the trend towards increasing personal responsibility and a little more liberty in the Soviet Union succeed.

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It would be marvellous, too, if we could feel that the problems of South Africa had been solved by the suspension of violence and the negotiation between all peoples - and there are many different peoples - in that country.

That is quite a lot!

INTERVIEWER:

I am very much obliged! Have a splendid day!

PRIME MINISTER:

I am very busy actually. We have a week in Africa, a very intensive week, and people say am I not having a celebration? No, we have not the time to celebrate. We only have time to get on with the work in hand. Business as usual.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT) HHHH

TEN MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

1. **Economic revitalisation** - balancing Britain's budget, getting inflation under control, promoting the 'enterprise culture', encouraging business confidence and urban regeneration.
2. **Trade union reform** - eliminating the "British disease" with industrial relations legislation, promoting individual responsibility and dismissing fatalism.
3. **"Popular capitalism"** - returning nationalised industries to the private sector and advancing wider share ownership.
4. **Property ownership** - encouraging people to become owner-occupiers, with the sale of over one million council houses.
5. **Local government reform** - abolishing the GLC and metropolitan county councils, increasing local accountability through the community charge.
6. **Regaining the Falklands.**
7. **East/West thaw** - increasing Anglo-Soviet contact while maintaining the special relationship with United States.
8. **Strong defence** - maintaining the nation's safety through nuclear deterrence and NATO, helping to achieve the INF Treaty.
9. **Zimbabwe independence** - leading to a gradual development of trust and respect in most black African countries.
10. **EC change** - reforming CAP, achieving a balanced budget and working towards the single European market: closer contact symbolised by the Channel Tunnel.