

March 23, 1990

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

Prime Minister sees Norwegian Prime Minister

The Queen visits Royal Military Police, Chichester

EC: Informal Internal Market Council, Dromoland Castle (to 24 March)

STATISTICS

BSA: Building Societies monthly figures (Feb)

CSO: Engineering sales and orders at current and constant prices (Jan)

CSO: Retail prices index and tax and price index (Feb)

CSO: Cyclical indicators for the UK economy (Feb)

PUBLICATIONS

DES: National Curriculum Council Guide 3 on Cross Curricular Issues

HO: Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Business: PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Mr Robert Adley: Railway Investment Criteria and Public Transport Policy

Mr John Bowis: Public Transport in London

Mr Charles Wardle

Adjournment Debates: The proposed closure of Haberdashers Askes Schools, Hatcham (Mr J Maples)

Lords: Starred Questions
European Parliament Electoral Reform Bill (HL) (Lord Bonham-Carter): Second Reading
Motion that an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty praying that the Firearms (Variation of Fees) Order 1990 be annulled
Town and Country Planning (Compensation for Restrictions of Mineral Working) Amendment: Motions for Approval

PRESS DIGESTMain News

Mail leads with "Maggie's Day of Disaster - misery at polls and a poll tax climbdown".

Labour landslide widely predicted on basis of exit polls in Mid Staffs - biggest by-election success for 50 years - Star: 10,000 majority; Sun: 8,500-10,000; Today: 10,000.

Kenneth Baker says the Mid-Staffs result will have no effect on you. You will remain the leader and take us to victory at the next election, he says (Independent).

Sun leader describes Mid Staffs as a kick in the pants for the Govt and a warning to Govt they must do better. But by-elections are deceptive and come the General Election the mass will return to traditional loyalties. Everything will depend on the economy.

Today - Govt cannot write off result as an aberration. Much more than a protest. A clear warning you risk losing touch with deepest roots of your support. People need a new vision of peace, compassion and prosperity.

Express leader headed "Warning to Thatcher" says you had better get the simple message - the community charge will lose you the next election unless you pile on every conceivable balm to ease the pain. You must put domestic politics first. There could be worse afflictions for Britain than community charge - the chief among them a Labour Govt. Decision to give ex gratia payments to Scots an excellent start.

An Independent editorial says Jhn Major made a grotesque mistake by failing to foresee the Scottish reaction to his community charge rebate changes. The failure has been compounded by other Ministers, notably you. The whole episode might have been designed to confirm the worst fears of the Scots about the English. Your behaviour towards Scotland threatens to assure you a place in history as the Prime Minister who promoted, however inadvertantly, the disintegration of the United Kingdom.

Robin Oakley in the Times says Labour has joined the club of parties who can achieve big by-election turnarounds. The question is whether it has done so with a community charge spasm, a protest vote which will vanish as quickly as others have done in the past, or whether this is the beginning of a subterranean political shift.

PRESS DIGEST

Times reports Kenneth Baker saying Labour has been a passive beneficiary of the protest vote and predicting that the Conservatives would pull back the position. He went on to say it was not a referendum on your position.

Tory Party changes rules governing challenges to leadership - proposer and seconder must declare themselves, but party rejects more radical reform.

Maggie's £4million U-turn on community charge.

Malcolm Rifkind denies he threatened to resign but press assert he did.

Mail says the episode reflects lamentably on Treasury's forward thinking before Budget but it is a U-turn it can commend.

Independent says this was your worst Commons embarrassment since the Westland affair as you announce a backdated £4million payment for charge payers in Scotland. Two backbench revolts expected next week - on community charge and residential homes .

Times says the episode has left Tory MPs angry about the Govt's failure to anticipate the outrage that would be felt in Scotland.

Times leader under the heading "Big Storm in Teacup" says John Major's failure to backdate community charge thresholds in Scotland deserved the award for political ineptitude. The one real question in Westminster this past 24 hours was just how long it would take Downing Street to eat humble pie. It concludes that the Scottish Secretary has been one of your most consistent and principled supporters in maintaining that Scotland's interests were best served by hardline Unionism. Yesterday, circumstances scored yet another triumph over the community charge. How many more are to come?

Tony Newton planning £100million buy-off of Tory revolt on community care - but rebels may be unconvinced because it would only apply to nursing homes (Independent).

Ferdy Mount, in Telegraph, says a Heseltine Govt might be rather like a rocket - taking off in fine style but lasting how long?

Gorbachev orders Lithuanian leaders to disband voluntarily civil defence units.

PRESS DIGEST

Bush convinced Gorbachev won't use force. But Gorbachev's message, according to Independent, shows Kremlin may be preparing the ground to justify use of force in the last resort.

More unrest in Romania and in Yugoslavia.

Shevardnadze softens his opposition to a united Germany being in NATO but he signals that this would need to entail the creation of a new mechanism for European security (Times).

Kohl suffers setback as East German rightwing parties reject his demand that they should form a parliamentary bloc (Independent).

Foreign Secy meets Mandela in Windhoek.

Havel reveals that Libya holds 1,000 tons of Czech Semtex; exports to stop.

Times says Mandela made it clear he still disagrees with British Govt's policy on reducing sanctions and is also opposed to high level visits to Pretoria.

Trade gap narrows by £600million. Justifies Chancellor's stand against raising interest rates (Express).

Govt's anti-inflation strategy came under further pressure last night when trade union leaders said that they would press for double figure wage rises and ignore requests to curb pay demands (Times).

Sun finds Haringey, after Islington, is handing out £5million to 107 voluntary causes, many of them "potty".

Govt pledges to peg electricity prices until 1995. £10billion supply improvement programme announced.

Times says investors could be in line for a better deal than expected from the privatisation of the power industry, due to start this autumn, to judge from John Wakeham's latest announcement.

BR Property Board and National Freight are to fight a High Court ruling that they should sell 43 acres of land at King's Cross to 2 charities for £53,000.

NUM appoints Gavin Lightman QC to inquiry into NUM strike cash. Hearing will be in private. Mirror and Central TV likely to shun the investigation.

PRESS DIGEST

More than 1,200 policemen from four forces have issued writs against their chief constable alleging they are owed hundreds of thousands of pounds in overtime payments for policing the miners dispute (Times).

Rail workers reject 8% and raise fears of summer disruption.

BAe Kingston workers reject 2-hour cut in working week accepted by others in company and continue 18 week strike.

Senior Tory backbenchers have called for Fayeds to be removed from control of Harrods bank (FT).

Derek Hatton's PR firm in Liverpool being investigated by Companies House over failure to declare profits.

War on Want charity expected to be wound up today with debts estimated at £2million (Times).

Chris Patten delays theme park at Rainham Marshes amid fears of the presence of low-level radioactive waste (Times).

More than 90% of firms fail to reply to CBI's survey about their attitude to the environment (Times).

Your Royal Society speech

Today: You were shocked by Norwegian Premier's call for Britain to participate in research involving killing of whales.

Express: I'll cut acid rain pledge by Thatcher.

Times: You called last night for European countries to set up data banks for wildlife to enable scientists to study the effects of global warming. Leader says your recent remarks that some "airy-fairy" environmentalists wanted to go back to living in medieval villages needed swift corrections to save your green credentials. In substance and sympathy, your speech last night does not make quite such a ringing sound bite as your earlier dismissive utterance.

Mail: Maggie's £6billion bid to beat acid rain.

Independent: You warn against the danger of politicians responding too quickly to pressure from environmentalists, and confirm unequivocally that Britain will meet its acid rain commitments.

PRESS DIGEST

Telegraph: Thatcher pledge to cut surplus acid raid sources.

Guardian: Thatcher says privatisation will reduce acid rain.

Home Secy accuses Chris Mullin MP for failing to produce his evidence on Birmingham 6. Today says Home Secy is right to be angry.

Ludovic Kennedy calls for resignation of Lord Chief Justice over Birmingham 6.

Michael Heseltine surprises some of his supporters by calling for police to sweep Britain's streets of unemployed drop outs and those living rough.

£100,000 Japanese figurine stolen from British Museum while visitors tour it.

More than one in three - some 2,000 - drugs cost less over the counter than prescription charge of £3.05.

Govt warns that millions of tons of food contain dangerous levels of tin.

Allan Roberts MP for Bootle dies, 46 in AIDS hospital.

Scientists claim a significant breakthrough in establishing a genetic cause for lung, breast and bowel cancer (Independent).

Teachers of pupils are flocking to join self governing schools (Express).

Mail feature on one of the most innovative and daring reforms in education - to let parents and teachers take over running of schools.

NatWest Bank agrees to run its own pioneering student loans schemes for the Royal College of Art and the London School of Economics (Times).

Geoffrey Dear is to head an inquiry into claims by retiring Chief Constable of South Yorkshire, Peter Wright, that the Taylor Inquiry did not get to the bottom of the Hillsborough disaster - and that drink played a much bigger part than Taylor indicated (FT).

BSB goes on the air this weekend.

PRESS DIGEST

Guardian says you deserve congratulations for your frankness in expressing shame over Munich.

Mirror says you should have gone further at dinner for Havel and publicly apologised for the harm we did Czechoslovakia 50 years ago. And now we owe it to Czechoslovakia, democracy and ourselves to give practical and generous help immediately.

Mail leader on NAS/UWT complaint that its members are suffering from too much pen pushing and overwork says if they are to catch up with standards a more stringent regime is required.

Britain will help pay for £1billion US radar system in West Wales, but the benefits for us are not clear (Independent).

You back Manchester's bid for the 1996 Olympic Games as political dispute erupts over alleged remarks by Denis Howell (Times).

Exxon Valdez tanker skipper cleared of drunkenness.

Soviets attack publicity given to KGB defector Gordievsky in British press. Whitehall sources see Soviet move as old-style KGB behaviour (Independent).

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DEN: Mr Wakeham visits North Western Electricity Board headquarters, Manchester
- DH: Mr Clarke lays the foundation stone for the new Wansbeck Hospital, Ashington, Northumberland
- HO: Mr Waddington visits HM Prison Dorchester and local Probation Service Pay Centre
- DEM: Lord Strathclyde visits Liverpool
- DEM: Mr Eggar tours Inverness region; later addresses NFSE annual conference
- DEN: Mr Baldry visits Lakeland Power, Barrow in Furness
- DH: Mrs Bottomley visits Bexley re Community Care
- DH: Mr Freeman visits Portland Court
- DTI: Lord Trefgarne addresses Joint CBI/Royal Institute of International Affairs Conference Europe on "Trading with the World, Goodbye to Fortress Europe", London
- DTI: Mr Forth launches education/industry initiative project with Rover and Park Hall School, Castle Bromwich
- HO: Lord Ferrers visits Fire Services College, Moreton-in-Marsh
- WO: Mr Roberts opens Riverside Caravan Park Leisure Centre, Bronllys
-

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

- DTI: Mr Redwood attends EC Informal Council, Ireland (to 24 March)
- FCO: Mr Waldegrave attends Council of Europe meeting in Lisbon
-

TV AND RADIO

"What the Papers Say" BBC (7.15pm) New series presented by Paul Foot

"Public Eye" BBC 2 (8.00pm) The Doctor's Dilemma - Cash or Care?

"Any Questions?" BBC Radio 4 (8.05pm) With Peter Lilley, Margaret Beckett, Ian Wrigglesworth and Sarah Hogg
