

March 12, 1990

PRIME MINISTER

MAIN EVENTS

The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh attend the Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey; both later attend a reception at Lancaster House

EC: ECOFIN Council, Brussels

EC: European Parliament Plenary, Strasbourg (to 16 March)

DEM/ Press conference to launch Pressure Systems and Transportable Gas

HSE: Containers regulations and new guidance publication

Mr Skogan, Norwegian State Secretary visits United Kingdom

STATISTICS

CSO: Retail sales (Feb-prov)

CSO: Producer price index numbers (Feb-prov)

HO: Notifiable offences recorded by the Police 1989

PUBLICATIONS

DES: National Curriculum Initial Advice from the Modern Foreign Languages Working Group (prov)

PARLIAMENT

Commons

Questions: Transport; Attorney General; Foreign and Commonwealth (Overseas Development Questions)

Business: Motion on the Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions)(Continuance) Order
Afterwards
Motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order
Motion on the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order (Consolidation Measure)
Capital Allowances Bill (Lords) All Stages (Consolidation)

Adjournment Debates: Speech therapy services (Mrs R Michie)

Select Committees: Home Affairs
Subject: National Identification Bureau
Witness: Home Office & Metropolitan Police

Treasury and Civil Service
Subject: The Civil Service Pay & Conditions of Service Code
Witness: Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO, Cabinet Secretary & Head of the Home Civil Service

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PARLIAMENT Cont'd

Lords: Starred Questions
British Railways Order Confirmation Bill: Third Reading. E
Strathmore and Kinghorne
Education (Student Loans) Bill: Committee
Appropriate (Northern Ireland) Order 1990: Motion for Approval

PRESS DIGESTMain News

Guardian poll of polls says Govt ended February at lowest electoral point of this Parliament (down to 34% and behind Labour 16%) but it has yet to sink as low as some governing parties in the past.

The fight back against the fainthearts and plotters begins.

Strong supportive leaders in Express, Mail (which leads with 'Stop the Hysteria') and Times which condemns the loss of nerve by Backbenchers.

Mail leader speaks of "another synthetic crisis".

Cecil Parkinson presented as swinging behind Heseltine over future leader while telling rebel MPs to cut it out and get on with the job.

Michael Heseltine denies he has been urged to challenge you; he thinks you will lead party into next election.

Mirror says Douglas Hurd is being put forward as a challenger.

Marcus Fox says 1922 Cttee knows who the fifth column of Tories are who are plotting against you and they had better watch out.

George Gardiner says any Tory challenging you this autumn will be slaughtered.

Paddy Ashdown calls on Cabinet Ministers to reassert their collective responsibility and either control you or remove you to end confusion which, he says, is undermining the pound (Independent).

Bryan Gould says community charges are being set at high levels because Treasury kept councils £3.8 billion short.

Today says community charge will be cut by up to £200 next year, using part of proceeds for electricity privatisation. Survey finds Tory, Labour and Lib Dem councils setting similar charges (Independent).

Labour bracing itself for a Militant influx this week in the Mid-Staffs by-election and an attempt by the group to derail Sylvia Heal's campaign (Times).

PRESS DIGEST

Employers fear burden of having to "dock" pay of community charge debtors (Times).

Labour leadership accuses Tories of attempting to smear the party over Militant Tendency involvement in violent protests against the community charge (Times).

Gloom for Tories in Council by-elections as Labour achieves 9% swing from Conservatives and gains nine wards, six from the Tories, over the past six weeks. Of nearly 50,000 votes cast during that time, Labour has won 37.6%, Tories 32.3% and Lib Dem 19.5% (Independent).

Mirror quotes Lord Whitelaw as saying people are beginning to find they are being asked to pay too much community charge.

Sun columnist says while Kinnock helps taking Militant money and letting them into the party he can't pretend they have nothing to do with him.

Express says Labour MPs are calling on Kinnock to investigate charges that Labour Party resource centres are being used as basis for violent campaigns against community charge.

Scottish Labour Party inflicts reverse on Kinnock - it calls for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Lithuania votes for independence.

Independent says Gorbachev now faces perhaps his greatest challenge as he is confronted by unprecedented de facto secession by a union republic.

Independent editorial says Lithuania's declaration of independence creates a dilemma both for Gorbachev and the West, with the latter torn between a desire to reward the Lithuanians for their courage and fear of compounding the damage to Gorbachev. For the time being, until there is an approach to them from the Lithuanians, the West may be tempted to sit on the fence.

Times says declaration places Britain in an awkward position and Washington urges Soviet Union to respect the will of the citizens of Lithuania.

Soviet Parliament meets today for session that is likely to see Gorbachev given sweeping executive powers, and constitutional amendments removing Communist Party's monopoly on powers (Independent).

PRESS DIGEST

Times leader says the similarity between Presidents Gorbachev and de Klerk has become something of a political cliché. Nevertheless, these two reformers have more than courage in common. In both South Africa and the Soviet Union the promise of democracy has unleashed expectations and demands in peripheral satrapies which could yet derail the process of reform at the centre.

FT leader on 5 years of reform in Soviet Union says there is no alternative. The old system cannot give people what they want even if they do not yet understand this. President Gorbachev must take the risks he has done in foreign affairs and domestic politics.

Five years after Gorbachev came to power, FT survey provides a "provocative assessment" of the problems and prospects for a superpower in turmoil (FT).

EC intervenes to try to save Observer journalist from death sentence for spying on Iraq; King Hussein promises you his help.

Mirror calls on you to convene a meeting of Euro partners to put pressure on President Saddam Hussein.

Today is very critical of Donald Treford, Editor of the Observer, for sending an Iranian journalist of little experience to Iraq.

Times leader says the whole affair is a sobering reminder that liberal Western notions of "human rights" are still not shared by large sections of humanity.

Scargill admits he did buy his £250,000 house which he had always maintained had been financed by his daughter's boyfriend.

He is to address Soviet miners on March 28.

But Mail says Soviet miners are preparing to cut their links with the Paris based International Miners Organisation which Scargill uses as an international platform for his militant politics.

Mirror says Scargill has admitted 14 separate bank accounts were opened all over Europe during NUM strike.

Michael Mates MP being challenged by Labour because, as chairman of Defence Select Cttee, he is an adviser to defence contractors.

Mail suggests Queen's Commonwealth Day message holds out prospect that a reformed South Africa could rejoin Commonwealth.

PRESS DIGEST

Bank of England prepared to support pound if it comes under renewed pressure this week. John Major reluctant to raise base rates further (FT).

Mail forecasts heavy penalties for company car drivers in next week's Budget.

William Rees-Mogg, writing in the Independent, says that the City, the Press and the Govt all have reason to be ashamed of their performance in the House of Fraser case, which has been marked by gullibility and cowardice. He concludes that the integrity of the City and of our system of company regulation is at stake, and it is a concern that the city, the Press and Govt have done singularly little to protect it.

BAe set to sign a long-term aircraft production deal with Romania, estimated to be worth at least \$1billion over the next decade (Times).

Westland have won orders worth £160million to supply parts for leading commercial aircraft in a significant diversification into the civil market (FT).

British Coal will import coal if it is unable to meet generators' requirements from its own pits (FT).

John Brown Engineering has won £48million contract from China Light of Hong Kong to build gas turbines for new power station on Lantau Island (FT).

Britain became a net importer of chocolate for the first time in 1989 but because of hot weather consumption fell last summer and thousands of tonnes were wasted (FT).

General Motors secures joint venture deal which will allow assembly of more than 150,000 cars a year in East Germany.

Health authority, with responsibility for Maudsley and Bethlem Royal Hospital, to be forced to cut patient care to save money (Independent).

Douglas Pickett, of the London Chamber of Commerce Examination Board, says the Govt scheme to encourage more language teaching in schools to help businesses meet the challenge of 1992 are a waste of time and resources as industry already has sufficient linguists (Times).

PRESS DIGEST

Headteachers association issues guidelines to heads and deputies on how to handle strikes or other sanctions imposed by teachers' unions (Times).

Institute for Public Policy Research calls for 25% VAT on products which damage the environment.

Peers to put Chris Patten under pressure to prove his "green " credentials by making radical changes to his plans for breaking up the National Conservancy Council (Times).

Claims that BSE has killed antelopes in zoo fed on infected sheep.

A dump of several million tyres, half a mile long and two storeys high, has appeared in open countryside in Humberside (Independent).

Home Secy calls for more blacks to join police force to generate confidence in black community.

Crime Concern report says the number of vigilante groups patrolling towns and cities will inevitably grow unless the police get resources to increase their presence on the streets (Times).

National Assn of Probation Officers says "tagging" offenders could cost taxpayer £100million (Independent).

Warning to parents about dangers to children of old freezers etc with lids that can only be opened from the outside as 3 boys die from suffocation in Ludlow.

Guardian claims a UDF para military fraud ring has been uncovered operating inside Royal Derry army camp.

SAS soldier loses a kitbag full of security passes - major alert, according to Sun.

Govt is planning to merge MI5 and MI6 to end security bungles, according to Express.

BBC to cut out 600 jobs as part of a £75million cost saving.

MPs criticise ITV for screening extracts from a film depicting explicit homosexual acts.

Sun says your great, great, great grandfather, William Roberts, was convicted after a man died in an ancient scythe duel at harvest time.

PRESS DIGEST

Peace talks between EC Commission and European Parliament (EP) today over dispute after EP demands increased influence over EC decision making, greatly increasing its political leverage (Independent).

EC finance ministers will put strong pressure on France today to back down in its threat to hold up the establishment of four European agencies until Strasbourg is made the permanent site of the European Parliament's meetings (Times).

Michael Binyon in the Times looks at the MEP moves for greater Euro democracy saying that in a bold challenge this week it will demand a share of power that would transform the Brussels decision making structure and lay the basis for a federal Europe more accountable to its voters.

George Bush outrages Jewish opinion throughout world (Mirror says) by suggesting Jews are merely settlers in East Jerusalem.

Independent - US peace plan for the Middle East at a dead end after Israeli PM blocks Cabinet vote on the subject and heaps abuse on Washington, leading to walk-out by infuriated Labour Ministers.

Israeli Labour Ministers threaten to break up coalition over failure to start US sponsored talks with Palestinians.

Arab League to move HQ back to Cairo. It switched to Tunis in 1979 after Egypt signed peace treaty with Israel (FT).

President Alwyn sworn in as Chilean President as newspapers celebrate the inauguration as a "great day of democracy" (Independent).

Grenada voters go to the polls tomorrow amid fears of Gairy returning to power (Independent).

Nicaraguan Parliament approves controversial amnesty for all rebels, army personnel and govt officials who might have committed crimes in the past decade (Independent).

PRESS DIGESTTORY PARTY

Star p1 - "You are so lucky to have Maggie as PM" - Cecil Parkinson orders wets to dry up. Let's get on with it. Leader says typically the one in four Tories said to be baying for your blood are anonymous to a man (or mouse?). But it would be fatal for you to ignore warning signals.

Sun p2 - Parkinson in swing to Tarzan. He appears to back Heseltine as future leader. Leader - Tory MPs who mutter in dark corners that you should go need their heads examined. With party adrift 18 points you are doing well to hold the loyalty of the vast majority. If the whisperers find a serious candidate Tory chances of winning the next election will disappear.

Mirror feature has Heseltine "poised for the kill - standing by to rescue Tories in torment". But it says Lord Whitelaw has told the Mirror no-one in the Cabinet wants Heseltine as leader.

Today has a feature on what life would be like if Heseltine became Prime Minister - he would reverse 10 years of Thatcherite free market thinking. An old fashioned paternal Tory. Leader criticises Govt's presentation of community charge and for failing to use Party political broadcasts to explain it. You can still take the initiative, but time is slipping away.

Express p1 - Cecil praises "popular" Heseltine. Jittery Tories given a fresh jolt. Feature on "Maggie fights the enemy within - no surrender as Tory foes seek to undermine you". It sees the heavy Sunday newspapers' new role as purveying polls as the easy way to avoid having to find hard news. But you need to act quickly. Leader says your conviction will not be swayed by gossipy plotting at the flaky end of the Tory Backbench. Ten years of regeneration cannot be sacrificed to petty squabbles among Tory also-rans.

Independent - Parkinson leads senior Tories, inside and outside Cabinet, in calls for unity and calm in Tory ranks as evidence mounts of internal hostility to the poll tax and dissatisfaction with your leadership. Parkinson acknowledges - in terms almost of admiration - strength of Heseltine's position in building a challenge for the Tory leadership as polls in yesterday's papers indicate about a quarter of Tory MPs want you to stand down before the next election.

PRESS DIGEST

Independent editorial sees as an entertaining spectacle the two major parties offering advice they hope will be ignored, with the Conservatives needing the Militant Tendency, and those Labour MPs expressing a willingness to break the law over community charge, just as Labour needs you to stay, despite increasing unpopularity (against the possibility Heseltine could reverse the Party's fortunes).

Mail leads with "Stop the hysteria". Tory leaders act today over jittery fifth column. Difficulties being used by small number of dissidents. Leader says you will not quit before the next election and the Tory Party is not about to turn to Heseltine who knows he would not win. He is letting others intervene on his behalf. Suspicion Heseltine is being frozen out by party Establishment - not invited to speak in Mid-Staffs.

Times - You signalled last night your determination to remain leader of the Tory Party, brushing aside polls indicating that up to a quarter of Tory MPs want you to quit before next general election. Leader under the heading "The Nervous Minority" looks at the three Sunday newspaper polls saying that, as so often happens, the conclusions suggested by the statistics depend on the way these are presented. In this case, the figures could equally be regarded as showing that you still have the support or acceptance of some 75% of your backbenches. That is by no means a despairing position for you, given the Govt's difficulties with the community charge and high interest rates. It concludes that what the Tory malcontents are doing now is demonstrating a failure of nerve. That is the best way of ensuring the defeat which they say they are trying to avoid by demanding a change at the top.

FT - Ministers sought to calm Tory nerves yesterday and damp speculation about your leadership.

Telegraph p1 - Thatcher resolve "rock solid" . Inside it examines the prospects for Tory MPs threatened by the collapse of the centre.

Guardian p1 - Heseltine's base grows as Thatcher lags in polls. Leader says the clearest sign of new management would be to switch to Heseltine but MPs draw the line at his commitments to Europe and interventionism and question his temperament and judgment.

ANNEX

MINISTERS (UK VISITS, SPEECHES ETC)

- DOE: Mr Patten attends Ideal Home Exhibition, London; later attends Opinion Research and Communications lunch, London
- FCO: Mr Hurd attends Commonwealth Day Observance Service and reception, London
- DEM: Lord Strathclyde visits and dines at North West Training and Enterprise Council as part of regional visit to Wigan
- DES: Mr Jackson visits Bristol University and gives a talk to students; later visits Brunel College of Technology
- DH: Mrs Bottomley speaks at Care in the Community conference, "Making it Happen", QEII Conference Centre, London; later addresses the National Association of Pharmaceutical Distributors council dinner, Waldorf Hotel, London
- DH: Lady Hooper attends reception for High Commissioner of Mauritius, London; later meets Mrs Hayter and Sir John Garlick from Alcohol Concern
- DH: Mr Freeman attends opening of Grndon Clinical Waste Incinerator, Colnbrook; later chairs Maternity Alliance Seminar
- DOE: Mr Hunt attends dinner with Volume Housebuilders Group, Ritz Hotel, London
- DOE: Mr Spicer opens Institute of Housing exhibition, House of Commons; later attends Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors lunch, London
- DTp: Mr Atkins visits RAC Rescue Control Centre, Brent Cross
- FCO: Mr Waldegrave, Lord Brabazon and Mrs Chalker attend Commonwealth Day reception, Lancaster House, London
- MAFF: Mr Maclean addresses Western Area Agriculture, Fisheries and Countryside Advisory Committee, Exeter
- OAL: Mr Luce addresses opening of Contemporary British Travellers to Greece exhibition, Fine Art Gallery, London

MINISTERS (OVERSEAS VISITS)

- WO: Mr Roberts addresses "Welsh as a Second Language in Employment Training" seminar, Plas Menai, Anglesey; later with Mr Grist attends Welsh Water Authority dinner, London
- DTI: Mr Ridley visits USSR
- MOD: Mr King visits Saudi Arabia (to 14 March)
- HMT: Mr Ryder attends ECOFIN Council, Brussels
- MOD: Mr Hamilton visits Bonn (to 13 March)
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MINISTERS (PRESS INTERVIEWS)

DEM: Mr Eggar interviewed by Peter Hennessey, The Times

DH: Mrs Bottomley interviewed by Rodney Deitch, Healthcare Parliamentary Monitor Magazine

ODA: Mrs Chalker gives a press conference about her official visit to East Africa including Ethiopia

TV AND RADIO

"Panorama" BBC 1 (9.30pm) Looks at the prospects for and implications of German unification

"Horizon" BBC 2 (8.10pm) Report from the eye of the hurricane

"World in Action" ITN (8.30pm) Examines the human cost of losing your home due to the mortgage rate
