



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Office of the
Leader of The Opposition

29 October 1987

Dear Prime Minister,

I listened with interest to the answer you gave to Tam Dalyell's supplementary question on Westland this afternoon.

Your answer, you will recall, referred to what you called your "answers in detail".

In view of the gravity of the assertions made by Mr Dalyell in respect of the timing and substance of the information said to have been given to you by Mr Powell in his capacity as a Civil Servant, I would have thought that you would have welcomed the opportunity to clearly rebut the claims made. That did not occur. I wonder, therefore, if you would like to take the opportunity of a reply to this letter to make it plain that neither Mr Powell nor Mr Ingham nor anyone else told you about Leon Brittan's role in the matter of disclosure until the enquiry had reported?

As you will know, Tam Dalyell made a speech about these matters in the House on 28 October. Whilst I know that it would be unusual for you to make a detailed response to a speech in a letter, I wonder if, in view of the nature of the salient points made, you would also wish to respond to those points.

Yours sincerely,
Neil Kinnock

NEIL KINNOCK

Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP



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pa -
FROM
TAM DAMELL

My outrage at the Prime Minister's behaviour
over the selective leaking of a Law Officer's letter,
in relation to Westlands,
does not originate mainly in the fact that I am
a Labour, Opposition Member of Parliament.

In fact, it may be hard to believe, but it is none the less true,
that my outrage stems from the fact
that for over a quarter of a century, I have been privileged
to become a " House of Commons Person ",
am proud to be such,

and care very deeply how the House of Commons is treated,
by Ministers, however exalted and powerful, of whatever Party label.

Over East of Suez,

the Borneo War,

the proposal for Anglo French Variable Geometry Aircraft,

the proposal to establish a base at Aldabra Atoll,

Chemical and Biological Weapons,

and Scottish Devolution,

have, rightly or wrongly, created untold trouble for Labour Prime Ministers.

You can be assured that if a Labour Prime Minister had lied to the House of Commons,
as Mrs Thatcher has lied over Westlands,

he would be in the pack, day and night, trying to hound that Prime Minister,
out of Office, and out of the leadership of the Party.



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Equally, I suppose I ought to be making a distinction,
since I am speaking at a College whose Master is one of the leading European Phil
of the day,

between lies in relation to promisory fulfillment,
and lies in relation to actions past, perpetrated by the liar -

it is one thing to make speeches promising economic recovery,
or other future desiderata -

which then turn out to be unjustified, or over-optimistic,
as politicians would retrospectively put it

- it is quite another to lie on a factual event,
in which a politician has been involved,
where the object of the lie is to save one's own political skin -

Mrs Thatcher's lie about her state of knowledge of the Law Officer's letter,
and the selective leak,
was necessary to one objective above all others -
namely, the protection of Mrs Thatcher's position as Prime Minister.

I really do wonder whether a PM should remain P
when had she not knowingly deceived the House,
she would no longer be in Downing Street.



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Conservative MP, Julian Critchley.

Page 132 of his unauthorised biography of Michael Heseltine.

" A list of the dramatis personae of this strange three act drama would include the following

The Prime Minister: imperious, indecisive, and belligerent.

'Who shall rid me of this turbulent priest? '

Over the leak of selected parts of the Mayhew letter, she willed the ends ;
the responsibility for the means employed is hers. "

Now, this is a duly elected Conservative Member of Parliament giving a considered judgement
in print.

Conservatives can smile and say, " Ch, Critchley" -

but the same Critchley, for all his vices - and virtues as a damned good writer -
is also well informed.

If a Tory MP says the responsibility for the means employed is hers,
now can we believe that she did not monitor what was happening at every stage ?

Critchley clearly believes in the Prime Minister's guilt, since he writes of Leon Brittan,
in the same list of dramatis personae -

"Greater Love hath no man than to lay down his life for his Leader.

The fall guy. "

The Fall Guy for whom ?

The Fall Guy only for the Prime Minister.



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Before leaving,

Critchley, one other quote ought to be put on the record from his Chapter,

"Over the top" -

Page 155 : " The leak to the Press Association was an obvious plant. It was also clear that full text of the letter was less than sensational, or it would have been leaked verbatim. "

Critchley has perceived and knows about the depth of the Prime Minister's skullduggery.

Not only does she leak sacrosanct ^{ly confidential} Law Officer's advice -
she leaks it so selectively that it is taken out of context,
and used for her own purposes.

I say that this is wicked public behaviour,
and ought not to be tolerated in the British Prime Minister.

Before the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, makes another speech,
like that he delivered on Sunday September 13th, to New Forest Conservatives,
on the topic of " Falling Standards ",
he might reflect on the Falling Standards in Number 10 Downing Street.

In parenthesis, it was precisely this kind
of Prime Minister's behaviour,
leaving distortions to the Press,
that so infuriated our Commonwealth, Canadian hosts,
at the recent Vancouver Conference.



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People only become fall guys if they are protecting those who have done something wrong.

If the Prime Minister had acted honourably, and truthfully,
why should an ambitious Cabinet Minister
snatch his career, as a fall guy.

As Rodney Tyler put it, Page 4, Campaign,

It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to,
he could have brought her to the brink of downfall,
by naming the real culprits inside Number 10.

Instead he chose to remain silent. "

Like Cardinal Wolsey, Brittan might be entitled to reflect

Had I but served God as diligently as I have
served my king, he would not have given me
over in my grey hairs. But this is the just re-
ward that I must receive for my indulgent
sins and study, not regarding my service to
God, but only to my prince.

CARDINAL WOLSEY, to Sir William Kingston,
Constable of the Tower, at Leicester Abbey,
5 Nov., 1530. Wolsey, accused of high trea-
son, was being conducted to London, but was
overtaken by illness on the road, stopped at
Leicester, and died there. (HUME, *History of
England*. Ch. 30.)

Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in mine age
have left me naked to mine enemies.
SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VIII*. Act III, sc. 2, l. 455.
(1612)

Had I served God as well in every part
As I did serve my king and master still,
My scope had not this season been so short,
Nor would have had the power to do me ill.
THOMAS CHURCHYARD, *Death of Morton*.
(1593)



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Let us turn from Critchley, to the book published by Grafton Books,
a subsidiary of Collins,

called Campaign - the Selling of the Prime Minister
- from behind the doors of Downing Street and Conservative Central Office -

a unique inside account of the Battle for Power -

a book which Greek Scholars in Balliol might properly describe as a Hagiography -
defined by the Concise Dictionary of your University,
as a writing of saints' lives -

yes, Tyler's is that kind of praise of Margaret Thatcher.

- and, given his relationship with Tim Bell, truly an insider's
account -

Yet, what do we find -

and authors indientally are particularly careful about the opening sentences of their book

Page 1, Chapter 1, Paragraph 1, Sentence 1,

~~The Prime Minister the Right Honourable Mrs Margaret Thatcher~~

"It was an extraordinary turn around in fortunes from the moment on 27th January 1986,
when Mrs Margaret Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate,
that she might have to resign, to the occasion,
almost a year later,
when she found herself, also in great secrecy, chairing a meeting,
at which she was told how she might win the next General Election."

Authors tend to take infinite trouble in honing the opening sentence of their books,
and for this insider, the 27th January obviously had enormous significance.



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The reason she said this was that she could not know of Leon would spill the beans.

And the particular beans

are the depths of the Prime Minister's deceit of Parliament.

PLEASE NOTE: TV-am MUST BE CREDITED IF ANY PART OF THIS INTERVIEW IS QUOTED

system was changed just before I took office. I think it gives me strength. But I'm only here by a double ballot box really. And I'm very much aware of it, but you know, the on and on, I can tell you what usually happens and I knew the line of questioning, as one sometimes does the line of questioning of interviewers. Because the trap is that if you don't say, 'Yes, you're prepared to go on' they'll say, 'Ah, then she's going to give up during this election' and they'll then go and say, 'Ah, you don't who will be next'. Of course, in a way you'll never know what will happen, but this time we take this election and then we see what happens. Yes, I would like to carry on, it is not wholly in my judgment. Just as I was given an opportunity, so other people will expect an opportunity, but I have the double judgment now at the election and the annual judgment of my Party.

DF

But why on that date, though, January the 27th, were you so down that you said, 'I may not be Prime Minister by six o'clock tonight' after the Westland debate?

MT

Oh you suddenly come out of these things. You suddenly come out with these things. I would not necessarily take them as if they had any very great, deep significance.

DF

Do you think in terms of, you've talked a lot about the proud parts of your record. Do you think that the selective leaking of the Law Officer's letter was the major black mark against the last four years?

MT

No, I, no the whole of the Westland affair was so small, I was amazed that it was blown up. The Westland affair was about a private company's right to determine its own future. Look at the things that were going on at the same time in defence; the whole of the AWACS matter, not involved with 35 million, but involved with something between 600 million to a billion. No, it was, it was something which happened, it was very small, and I was amazed it was blown up. But it was, and you have to take life as it comes. And as it happened things went as we decided they should, and it was a matter for that company to decide it's own future, and when it



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I address myself now to the cynical, who may think they are worldly wise.

All right, they say, the Prime Minister did lie over the Law Officer's letter -

So what? All politicians lie.

So this, I say. All politicians do not lie -

you find me an identifiable lie, in relation to personal public behaviour, by any Labour Party Prime Minister - MacDonald, Attlee, Wilson or Callaghan.

I confess that the late Chancellor of Oxford University almost certainly did lie over Ramboillet and the origins of the Suez Crisis, for which he ought to have been replaced by Rab Butler.

I re-iterate that I am not suggesting the resignation of the present Government - simply that they get a new leader, untainted by untruth.



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Students of politics at Balliol may themselves - yourselves -

aspire to be Civil Service mandarins of the 21st Century -

so I'd better regurgitate the reconstruction of the role of the Civil Service -

But I say, at once, that I believe
Civil Servants were placed in an impossible
position.

Equally, I shall go on and on
about the Prime Minister's behaviour,
until such time as the following
Civil Servants and Ex-Civil Servants
are examined under oath:

Mr	TD	Abraham
Sir	Robert	Armstrong
Mrs	Collette	Bowe
Sir	Brian	Hayes
Mr	Bernard	Ingham
Mr	John	Moag
Mr	Richard	Mottam
Mr	Charles	Power
Sir	Clive	Whitmore
Mr	Nigel	Wicks



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Discarded Ministers talk.

Now, I can well understand that a man who has had his Ministerial career terminated prematurely in his opinion, by a Prime Minister, could harbour bitter resentments. Those resentments could boil over into a sense of vengeance, and lead to fabricated stories about a Prime Minister's conduct. I realised that sacked politicians are always the most reliable informants.

But, on the other hand MPs spend our lives judging one another. Over the years in the House of Commons together, one comes to assess character. I simply say that if I am any judge of character, the information that I am given by some of Mrs Thatcher's ex-Ministers emanates from angry men, certainly, but not untruthful men.



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I believe those who assure me that from the very moment that the idea of a Law Officer's Letter to discredit Michael Heseltine was first mooted, Mrs Thatcher told all there was to know of significance.

In particular, I believe those who confirm to me that Mr Charles Powell, one of her Private Secretaries, did indeed fulfil his duty as a Civil Servant, and that the Prime Minister fully informed about the role of Leon Brittan and the Department of Trade and Industry in the selective leaking of Sir Patrick Mayhew's Letter.



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I say that when she states in the House that she did not know about the role of her then

Trade Secretary in the selective leaking of the Law Officers Letter,

most explicitly put on 27 Jan Col 657 in answer to my Hon Friend, Nicholas F. Blyth
"I did not know about the then Secretary of State for Trade and
Industry's own role in the matter of the disclosure until the morning
the British Prime Minister was, knowingly, telling a lie - had reported"

an identifiable, brazen, sustained lie.

I have the simple view that the House of Commons should not allow itself to be lied to,
by Ministers however exalted, and however famous.

Truthfulness to the House of Commons is one of the bedrocks of British Democracy.



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So, to my new information.

Discarded Ministers, after a time, talk -

and they talk more freely, if there is no General Election in the offing.

I am told by a discarded Minister, and have had it confirmed by another discarded Minister

that it is manifestly untrue that Mrs Thatcher did not know what had happened over the

I am ~~now~~ told that on the contrary,

and this is confirmed,

that she knew everything, morning, noon and night,

if not hour by hour -

that Mr Charles Powell, her more than competent Private Secretary,
with automatic access to her,
fulfilled his proper Civil Service Role,
in keeping the Prime Minister fully informed.

Questions naturally arise :

Are these Ministers acting out of bitterness at their own loss of office :

I judge, that though they may well be resentful and angry,

they are not being untruthful,

and that they were in a position to know.

Ofcourse , I shall be asked for names -

but were I to divulge names,

I know that they would be slaughtered by their own Constituency Associations.

So like Mr John Mogg, and Miss Colette Bowe,

I have followed their example, and put into a bank fault -

Red Herring what I see



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The role of Charles Powell.

On Monday 30th December, Cuckney sent a pre-arranged letter to Mrs Thatcher

" Dear Prime Minister,

It would greatly help my board to know if Westland would no longer be considered a European company by the Government, if a minority shareholding in the company were held by a major international group from a NATO country outside Europe.

This question is of fundamental importance in view of the statement.. from the Ministry of Defence ... that only by joining the so-called European Consortium would Westland be in a position to take responsibility for the British share of European helicopter collaborative ~~xxxxxx~~ projects. "

On the same Monday, 30th December, Charles Powell, the Private Secretary concerned at Downing Street, sent round to Leon Brittan, at the DTI a ready drafted reply from Mrs Thatcher.

An accompanying Memo said the draft was to be checked with appropriate ministries, and the Law Officers, and returned to Number 10 for signature by 4 pm, on Tuesday 31st De



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Furthermore, when this letter arrived at Downing Street,

Charles Powell sent it round to the DTI to handle.

Surprising ? Yes !

Letters to the Prime Minister about defence procurement questions are normally referred first of all to the Ministry of Defence.

Mr Powell would only have done that on the explicit instructions of the Prime Minister.

Besides, the reply to Cuckney was not drafted within the DTI,

but had come in a Memorandum from Mrs Thatcher herself.



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Friday 3rd January, 1986, there was a small meeting at "Number Ten, in the evening, consisting of Mrs Thatcher, Mr Powell, and other close aides.

They met to study, line by line,

letter which Michael Heseltine had sent to David Horne of Lloyd's Bank, answering questions

about procuring the Sikorsky Black Hawk,

about whether Westland had ever exported a helicopter that had not first been purchased by the British Military,

and about what projects in Europe, " further to the Prime Minister's letter " might be lost to Westland if it undertook the Sikorsky deal "

It was at this meeting, that an outraged Prime Minister and Mr Powell first conceived using the phrase " material inaccuracies " against Michael Heseltine - a phrase Heseltine himself had used in a previous context.

Mrs Thatcher was understandably furious that Heseltine's letter, though referring explicitly to a letter of her own, had never been discussed with her Office.



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Later, as Sir Robert Armstrong admitted,
Charles Powell outlined on the phone to senior Civil Servants at the DTI,
the next moves in the scheme to discredit Heseltine.

Sir Patrick Mayhew should be persuaded to put his views in writing.

Mr Powell contacted Sir Patrick Mayhew's Office, with the formal request from the Prime Minister
that Mayhew should write a critical letter to Heseltine.



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From Friday January 3rd onwards,

Mr Powell during the course of many, many phone calls in Whitehall, conducted the entire operation of the Solicitor General's letter, and related matters.

If he were doing so, along with Mr Ingham,

off his own bat, without authority,

he should have been sacked from his pivotal post by the Prime Minister, and indeed probably asked to resign from the Civil Service.

But I now know that Mr Powell was careful not to act off his own bat, and was carrying out the Prime Minister's explicit instructions.

Furthermore, throughout January 1986, at every stage, Mr Charles Powell, kept the Prime Minister informed.

It is just not true that the Prime Minister did not know for a fortnight what her Trade Secretary had done.

Besides, not one of the key Civil Servants in Downing Street, Powell and Ingham, has been eased out, let alone sacked.

On the contrary, they seem to soar in power, even to the point of one of them, informing, John Biffen, Leader of the House of Commons, that he has been sacked.



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I have only in the Summer of 1987, after writing Misrule,
come to learn of the colossal role in the Westlands Affair of Gordon Reece -
Sir Gordon Reece now.

Reece made his name as Mrs Thatcher's personal adviser on public relations,
especially during General Elections.

Reece's pivotal and privileged role is well chronicled in Rodney Tyler's Book " Campaign "

Reece indeed is so close to this Prime Minister,
that he is regularly invited to Christmas Day Dinner at Chequers.

During the crucial period, the same Gordon Reece was hired by Westland -

most people did not know this, very few in Westland itself knew, and Michael Heseltine

apparently had no idea



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The Prime Minister claims that Westlands was such a small matter.

If it had been really as small as Mrs Thatcher claims

why was it that on 5th December 1985 and 6th December 1985,

she herself chaired an ad hoc discussions between Ministers -

apart from Heseltine and Brittan,

Whitelaw as Deputy Prime Minister,

Howe the Foreign Secretary,

Tebbit, Chairman of the Conservative party,

Lawson as Chancellor, MacGregor as Chief Secretary,

to say nothing of Biffen as leader of the House were all present.

If it were so trivial, why do such a galaxy spend time on successive days ?

On Monday 9th December, at 4.30 pm,

every one of these busy Ministers were present,

plus Kenneths Baker and Clarke, and John Wakeham as Chief Whip.

I am told that one of those present in such a tizzy of a row with her own Ministers.
The meeting lasted well over 2 hours.



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I go into this detail because the Prime Minister must not be allowed to get away with it

that Westlands was somehow on the periphery of her interest ,

and that her mind was on the great affairs of state,

and the international situation.

Nothing of the kind ! It was focussed, understandably,
on the direct challenge to her authority as Prime Minister,
and the real and perceived threat to her reputation,
as a leader in firm control of the affairs of Britain.

When a month later, she lied to Parliament,
it was not on an obscure matter,
of which she knew little,
but on a topic,
which had been of maximum concern to her for weeks.

What we are dealing with is not some minor misdemeanour on the spur of the moment,

but cold calculated manoeuvring to discredit her Defence Secretary,

and then when her actions became the subject of unanticipated Parliamentary scrutiny,

cold calculated lying to the House of Commons



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Westlands sullies the Prime Minister's Image as a Straight Dealer.

It reveals a Prime Minister who is for ever stressing the importance of being open with the British people, yet presiding over an Affair

where concealment rather than candour,

intrigue rather than openness
are the guiding forces.



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Do we simply shrug our shoulders and say that by-gones have to be by-gones.

Well, if we do that,

then we cannot be surprised if it happens again.

Indeed, I believe that since the Belgrano,

lying has become part of the Prime Minister's pattern of behaviour -
over the Libyan Bombing,

over the decision to send the Cabinet Secretary to Australia in the Wright Affair,
over her role in the Miners' Strike,

over her role in pressurising the BBC over Zircon,

this Prime Minister has been economical with the truth, to put it at the most charitable

Besides, this Prime Minister is the last one who herself believes in allowing by-gones
by-gones $\frac{7}{4}$

- 7 years older than Westland is the Winter of Discontent -
she forever goes on about the Labour Government and the Liverpool Grave Diggers.