



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

6 April 1989

Dear Sir Leon,

I believe you might find it helpful on your return to England to have some material on the current state of play on Westland. I understand that in a Channel 4 programme about the 10 years of Mrs Thatcher's Premiership, one of a series the first of which is to be broadcast on Friday, according to the newspapers (although I have not seen a full transcript) you comment on the disclosure of the Solicitor General's letter of Westland thus:

"The release of the Solicitor General's letter was something which was approved by Charles Powell, the Private Secretary at No 10, and it was approved by Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary. As I made clear at the time, there was no question of the release of that document without that expressed approval from No 10."

Commentators have claimed that this amplifies what you said in 1986, although you yourself confirmed that your latest remarks do not add to the statements you made at the time.

The key statements which are relevant to your latest remarks are those by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on 23 January 1986 (Flag A), and on 27 January (Flag B) and by you on 27 January (Flag C). You will see that you said in the House at Flag C that you authorised the disclosure of the letter "subject to the agreement of No 10". The Prime Minister's statement of 23 January adds that the Prime Minister's Office accepted (though she was not consulted) that the Department of Trade and Industry should make public the Solicitor General's advice about the Defence Secretary's letter and the method of doing so. The Prime Minister says of Sir Robert Armstrong's report: "The report finds in the light of the evidence that the Department of Trade and Industry acted in good faith in the knowledge that it had the authority of the Secretary of State and cover from my office for proceeding". There was a difference of understanding between No 10 officials and Department of Trade and Industry officials: No 10 thought that they were accepting what you were authorising, Department of Trade and Industry officials thought No 10 were approving it.

Another point which commentators have drawn attention to is your naming of Mr Powell and Mr Ingham personally. They were not named by you at the time either in the House or, I think, in your evidence to the Defence Committee. The Defence Committee Report on Westland (Fourth Report, Session 1985-86) discussed extensively and in detail the roles of both Mr Ingham and Mr Powell in this context (eg Flag D), so there is nothing new here either.

In the light of this the Government in responding to attempts to have this matter reopened is taking the following line:

- that there is nothing to add to the Prime Minister's statement to the House on 23 January 1986 and in other speeches and answers in the House on these matters;
- that you yourself have confirmed (copy of PA report at Flag E) that the remarks you make on the Channel 4 television programme - which incidentally were recorded several months ago - add nothing to the statements you made at the time; and

- that these matters, including the actions of Mr Ingham and Mr Powell and of officials in the Department of Trade and Industry, were extensively examined by the Select Committee on Defence in 1986

I hope you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely

Steve Catling

STEVE CATLING
Private Secretary

Sir Leon Brittan QC
Vice President of the European Commission

Westland plc

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the outcome of the inquiry into the disclosure of certain information in my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January.

As the House knows, the chairman of Westland plc, Sir John Cuckney, wrote to me on 30 December 1985 asking whether 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 was of fundamental importance to the company in making its decision as to what course it was best to follow in the interests of the company and its employees. It was therefore essential to be sure that my reply should be in no way misleading to anyone who might rely upon it in making commercial judgments and decisions.

The reply was accordingly considered among the Departments concerned, and the text of my letter of 1 January 1986 was agreed in detail by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my right hon. Friends the then Secretary of State for Defence and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and finally by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. My letter was made public.

Two days later, on 3 January, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence replied to a letter of the same date from Mr. Horne of Lloyds Merchant Bank asking him a number of questions, covering some of the same ground as my own reply to Sir John Cuckney. The texts of the letters became public that same day.

My right hon. Friend's reply was not cleared or even discussed with the relevant Cabinet colleagues. Moreover, although the reply was also material to the commercial judgments and decisions that would have to be made, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General was not invited to scrutinise the letter before it was issued.

On the morning of 6 January, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General wrote to my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence. He said—and I quote:

"It is foreseeable that your letter will be relied upon by the Westland Board and its shareholders.

Consistently with the advice I gave to the Prime Minister on 31 December, the Government in such circumstances is under a duty not to give information which is incomplete or inaccurate in any material particular."

The letter continued:

"On the basis of the information contained in the documents to which I have referred, which I emphasise are all that I have seen, the sentence in your letter to Mr. Horne does in my opinion contain material inaccuracies in the respects I have mentioned, and I therefore must advise that you should write again to Mr. Horne correcting the inaccuracies."

That is the end of the quotation.

I have quoted extensively from the letter which, as hon. Members will know, was published a week ago. As I have already indicated, it was especially important in this situation for statements made on behalf of the Government, on which commercial judgments might be based, to be accurate and in no way misleading.

That being so, it was a matter of duty that it should be made known publicly that there were thought to be

material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected in the letter of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) of 3 January, which, as the House will recall, had already been made public. Moreover, it was urgent that it should become public knowledge before 4 pm that afternoon, 6 January, when Sir John Cuckney was due to hold a press conference to announce the Westland board's recommendation to shareholders of a revised proposal from the United Technologies Corporation-Fiat consortium.

These considerations were very much in the mind of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the copy of the Solicitor-General's letter was brought to his attention at about 1.30 pm that afternoon of 6 January. He took the view that the fact that the Solicitor-General had written to the then Secretary of State for Defence, and the opinion he had expressed, should be brought into the public domain as soon as possible. He asked his officials to discuss with my office whether the disclosure should be made, and if so, whether it should be made from 10 Downing Street, as he said he would prefer.

He made it clear that, subject to the agreement of my office, he was giving authority for the disclosure to be made from the Department of Trade and Industry, if it was made from 10 Downing Street. He expressed no view as to the form in which the disclosure should be made, though it was clear to all concerned that in the circumstances it was not possible to proceed by way of an agreed statement.

My office were accordingly approached. They did not ask my agreement: they considered—and they were right—that I should agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was brought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected should become public knowledge as soon as possible, and before Sir John Cuckney's press conference. It was accepted that the Department of Trade and Industry should disclose that fact and that, in view of the urgency of the matter, the disclosure should be made by means of a telephone communication to the Press Association. *[Interruption.]* Had I been consulted, I should have said that a different way must be found of making the relevant facts known.

The report finds, in the light of the evidence that the Department of Trade and Industry acted in good faith in the knowledge that it had the authority of its Secretary of State and cover from my office for proceeding. An official of the Department accordingly told a representative of the Press Association of the letter by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and material elements of what it said. The company was also informed. The information was on the Press Association tapes at 3.30 pm.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was, in my judgment, right in thinking that it was important that the possible existence of material inaccuracies in the letter of 3 January by the then Secretary of State for Defence should become a matter of public knowledge, if possible before Sir John Cuckney's press conference at 4 pm that day. Insofar as what my office said to the Department of Trade and Industry was based on the belief that I should have taken that view, had I been consulted, it was right.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has authorised me to inform the House that, having

officials that, subject to the agreement of my office, he is giving authority for the disclosure to be made by his Department, if it was not made, as he said he would prefer, from 10 Downing street. That I indicated in my statement last week.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: This is a very tightly drafted argument and I should prefer to go on. I will give way later. Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry—

Mr. Dalyell rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Prime Minister said that she would give way later.

The Prime Minister: Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry—

Mr. Dalyell rose—

The Prime Minister: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later. I wish to continue this section.

Officials in the Department of Trade and Industry approached officials in my office, who made it clear that it was not intended to disclose the Solicitor-General's letter from 10 Downing street; ~~but they said that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had authorised the disclosure, they accepted that the Department of Trade and Industry should make it and they accepted the means by which it was proposed that the disclosure should be made.~~

My officials made it clear to the inquiry that they did not seek my agreement. They told the inquiry that they did not believe that they were being asked to give my authority, and they did not do so.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham) rose—

Hon. Members: Who?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: If they had believed—

Mr. Dalyell rose—

The Prime Minister: If they had believed my authority was being sought, they would certainly have consulted me.

Mr. Dalyell rose—

The Prime Minister: No, not at the moment. This is very important. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

~~Officials of the Department of Trade and Industry told the inquiry that they regarded the purpose of their approach to my officials as being to seek agreement to the disclosure as well as to the method. They believed that they had the agreement of my office, and acted in good faith, in the knowledge that they had authority from their Secretary of State and cover from my office.~~

Mr. Dalyell: —will the Prime Minister allow me?

Mr. Kinnoch rose—

The Prime Minister: No, I must go on at this moment. This is vitally important. ~~Although clearly neither side raised it at the time, there was a genuine difference in understanding between officials as to exactly what was being sought and what was being given. [Interruption.]~~

Mr. Dalyell rose—

The Prime Minister: I have given the House the view of what officials on each side told the inquiry. That is one reason why it was vital to set up the inquiry.

Mr. Dalyell rose—

The Prime Minister: As I indicated, officials too had the right to put their view of their part of what had occurred. I deeply resent any attacks upon them.

Mr. Dalyell rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister—

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Member knows that the Prime Minister said that she would give way later. He must not keep on rising.

The Prime Minister: But it is common ground, as I told the House on 23 January—it was accepted—that the Department of Trade and Industry should disclose the fact that the then Defence Secretary's letter of 3 January was thought by the Solicitor-General to contain material inaccuracies which needed to be corrected, and that, in view of the urgency of the matter, the disclosure should be made in the way that it was. I have given the House this account—

Mr. Dalyell rose—

The Prime Minister —of the accounts which were given to the inquiry.

Mr. Dalyell rose—

Mr. Kinnoch rose—

The Prime Minister: I give way to the hon. Gentleman who has been rising, and to whom I promised to give way.

Mr. Dalyell: What are we to derive from the right hon. Lady's answer to the friendly intervention of her hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), the chairman of the 1922 Committee, in relation to putting it in the public domain when she said:

"I gave my consent." — [Official Report, 23 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 455.]
What interpretation is to be put on that?

The Prime Minister: I gave my consent to an inquiry, I co-operated with it and I set out the facts as fully as possible, in that statement. I noticed that I had said that at that particular time. I did not give my consent to the disclosure. It was not sought and I have indicated that I deeply regret the manner in which it was made.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) rose—

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) rose—

Mr. Kinnoch: I am grateful to the Prime Minister. Will she tell us what conceivable misunderstanding between the Department of Trade and Industry and her office could permit them to breach the Official Secrets Act and, in the words of the Solicitor-General, "immediately and flagrantly" to violate an important rule without any form of consultation with her as head of Government. Will she now tell us when she knew?

The Prime Minister: I have just set out—[HON. MEMBERS: "No!"] I have just in fact set out what my officials believed and what the Department of Trade and Industry's officials believed. The right hon. Gentleman

Parliament? I suggest that their loyalty to the two sides exceeds any loyalty they have left to the other.

28 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): The House will now why I came to the conclusion that I should no longer remain a member of the Cabinet. I want to place on record my appreciation of what a privilege it has been to serve in the Government of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The unhappy circumstances of the last few weeks will not detract from their achievements. I shall support the Government's policies as strongly outside the Cabinet as I have within it.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has set out the facts relating to what has been called the "Westland saga", and particularly the circumstances relating to the disclosure of information contained in a letter of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. She has done so in great detail. Some of the facts only she can know about whereas in other events I myself was closely involved. I can and do confirm that with regard to the facts within my knowledge, the account of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is correct.

My right hon. Friend said in her statement to the House last Thursday, I made it clear to my officials at the Department of Trade and Industry that—subject to the decision of No. 10—I was giving authority for the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter to be made. I therefore accept full responsibility for the fact and the form of that disclosure.

The House knows of the extraordinary, perhaps unprecedented, circumstances in which we were working—the circumstances of the persistent campaigning of my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Defence and the urgency of the need to ensure that the contents of the Solicitor-General's letter should become known. But for all that, and in retrospect, I must make it clear to the House that I accept that the disclosure of that information—urgent and important as it was—should not have taken place in that way, and I profoundly regret that it happened.

I must also make it clear that at all times the Department of Trade and Industry officials acted in accordance with my wishes and instructions. What they did was with my full authority. They are not to be blamed. Indeed, they have given me good and loyal service throughout my time as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

There is one further point—and one further point only—that I would make. I remain firmly of the view that the Government's agreed policy of letting the board and shareholders of Westland make up their minds about the company's future without political pressure was and is right. Let us hope that now—

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Brittan: Let us hope that the future of the company can now be decided in that way.

29 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, resigned because of his responsibility for the

disclosure to the Press Association of legal advice in a letter supplied by the Solicitor-General. He was right to do so. His resignation is honourable, but he should have resigned earlier. However, it was not only the Secretary of State who was involved in that disclosure, which is the major reason for the anxiety about the happenings of the past four weeks. The Prime Minister was also involved.

For four weeks we have been trying to get information from the Government in a variety of ways, including today's Standing Order No. 10. We have received some information from the Government, but it has taken a long time. We have not yet got it all, and, unless we get more this evening, the matter will continue.

I wish to raise two issues. The first relates to the role of the Law Officers, and the second to the private office. I disagree with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) that civil servants in the private office should resign, and I shall argue that case shortly.

I first realised the peculiar nature of Law Officers during the Franks inquiry of 1972, so by the time I became a Minister I was not surprised by the way that they operated. It should not have surprised the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who has one great advantage over me—he is a lawyer. Indeed, it is said, properly, that he has aspirations in the political sphere, and so he should. It is an honourable task and peculiar to this country.

The Franks report states:

"The Attorney-General administers the criminal law in the interests of the community as a whole, and he must disregard the interests of his party, and those of the Government as such." The Solicitor-General and Attorney-General have done that consistently throughout the Westland affair. I do not seek to get at them. I am mentioning their role for other purposes.

Not only is the role of Law Officers different from other Government activities. Last week, it was drawn to my notice that if the Government were to fall next week, all the information in the documents, papers and Cabinet sub-committees would not be made available to the succeeding Government, but the Law Officers' information would. It is unto itself, and above politics. I do not understand how the Prime Minister and the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, knowing that, could use the advice given by the Solicitor-General on that Saturday and then on Monday as they did. That is one of the most important issues to emerge during the past month.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if there were material inaccuracies in correspondence, they should emerge?

Mr. Rees: Of course they should, but there should be a public statement. The inaccuracies should not have emerged in that way. That is the whole point of our argument.

I shall remind the House of what happened. The Government made a decision within one and a half hours. They moved more quickly than my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and his Cabinet did on such issues. The Government knew what to do within one and a half hours. I bet that the matter had been discussed before, and that the civil servants knew what was in the minds of their lords and masters; otherwise, they would not have acted as they did. One does not leak a little bit of a letter to an honourable member of the press. I am coming to the conclusion that the Government were

consider is whether the fact that the Solicitor-General has written and the opinion he has expressed should come into the public domain and if so whether that should be in general or specific terms.¹

"My inquiry suggests that there was no advice, he [the Secretary of State] was presented with the issue and asked for a decision . . . Those who heard this call and who took part in it have said it was put to him—and I think the phrase was 'deadpan'.²

"The Secretary of State responded that he thought it should go into the public domain and that it should be done in specific terms but that No.10, the Prime Minister's office, should be consulted".³

The Prime Minister has told the House that this conversation took place at about 1.30 p.m.⁴ Sir Robert Armstrong told us that the conversation took place at "quarter past, twenty past one, something around about that time; it is impossible to say exact times but near enough".⁵

147. The Prime Minister told the House that Mr Brittan

"asked his officials to discuss with my office whether the disclosure should be made, and, if so, whether it should be made from No.10 Downing Street, as he said he would prefer. He made it clear that, subject to the agreement of my office, he was giving authority for the disclosure to be made from the Department of Trade and Industry, if it was not made from 10 Downing Street".⁶

Mr Brittan told us "I would particularly stress, it all had to be subject to the agreement of No.10."⁷ Although Sir Robert Armstrong's inquiry found that Mr Brittan probably did not use the words "subject to the agreement of" he nevertheless used words which were taken to mean that.⁸

148. Although Mr Brittan took the view that the fact that the Solicitor-General had written as well as the opinion he expressed should be brought into the public domain⁹, he did not express a view about the method of disclosure. Sir Robert Armstrong doubted whether he was consulted about the precise method.¹⁰

149. Mr Brittan has made clear his view that the officials in the DTI acted with his full authority. "They are not to be blamed", he told the House.¹¹ He said in evidence to us:

"I accept fully responsibility for what was done and would not suggest for a single moment that my instructions were anything other than followed".¹² " . . . I accept full responsibility for what my officials did, not just in some formal constitutional sense but

also in the sense that I am not suggesting that they went in any way beyond what I authorised them to do."¹

Nothing could be clearer. From the point of view of his inquiry, Sir Robert Armstrong considered that authority for the disclosure was given by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.²

150. Mr Brittan then went back to his luncheon and Mr Mogg telephoned [redacted] at Downing Street. This conversation was shortly followed by a conversation between [redacted] and [redacted] at No.10 Downing Street, and Miss Bowe at the DTI. Mr Mogg's first concern, as it had been Mr Brittan's, must have been to convey to the Prime Minister's office Mr Brittan's view that he would prefer the disclosure of the letter to come from No.10.⁴ This was understandable, given that what was proposed was to publish a classified document originated by another Minister. It should be noted that if Mr Brittan's preference had been observed by the officials at No.10, Mr Brittan's authority would not have been needed. It would have been a matter entirely for the Prime Minister's office. If they had had to make the disclosure, they might have consulted the Prime Minister, who was in No.10 at the time.⁵

151. The officials at No. 10 refused to make the disclosure.⁶ Sir Robert Armstrong told us, a trifle euphemistically, that [redacted] and Mr Powell "accepted" that the DTI should make the disclosure. It is evident to us that the DTI officials were told that a disclosure from Downing Street was out of the question. They knew that the letter contained advice from a Law Officer; they knew that it was classified. Its disclosure without the knowledge of the Minister concerned—particularly by the means that were then agreed between the two offices—would be a wholly improper course of action: indeed, an action of which Mr Brittan said to the House:

"I accept that the disclosure of that information—urgent and important as it was—should not have taken place in that way, and I profoundly regret that it happened".⁸

152. Mr Brittan was emphatic about the need for the Prime Minister's office to approve the disclosure: "I would particularly stress, it all had to be subject to the agreement of No. 10".⁹ When it is the agreement of the Prime Minister that is required in this unequivocal way—whether directly or through officials who Mr Brittan might reasonably have expected to have acted only with her explicit or implied authority—the authority of a Secretary of State is subordinate. The fact is that Mr Brittan could not actually give authority "subject to the agreement of No. 10", but he could make a recommendation that the information should be disclosed subject to the approval of No. 10. If that approval were to be forthcoming, his direct authority would be required for the disclosure to be handled by his Department if that was what the Prime Minister wanted. This direct authority his officials had already received. They also believed that they had received from No. 10 approval for the disclosure.

¹Q.1190.

²Q.1222.

³Q.1190.

⁴Official Report, 23 January 1986, col. 450.

⁵Q.1190.

¹Q.976.

²Qs 1191, 1236, 1239, 1259.

CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION 60 CHARLOTTE STREET, LONDON W1P 2AX.
TELEPHONE: 01-631 4444.
TELEX: 892355. FAX: 01-637 4872.



Re Graham
I have highlighted
the particular
passages

Chris Moncrieff
Chief Political Correspondent
Press Association
Parliamentary Press Gallery
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

John 6/4

6 April 1989

Dear Chris

I enclose a copy of the script of the first
programme of The Thatcher Factor, which is being
broadcast tomorrow evening at 8pm.

As I explained on the phone, the commentary
and original interview sections are fully accurate,
but the archive material has not been fully
checked.

I hope you find this is of interest.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Stott

MARTIN STOTT
Press Officer

CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION COMPANY LIMITED
REGISTERED IN CARDIFF UNDER NO. 1533774. REGISTERED OFFICE: 70 BROMPTON ROAD, LONDON SW3 1EY
SIR RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH CBE (CHAIRMAN), GEORGE RUSSELL CBE (DEPUTY CHAIRMAN),
MICHAEL GRADE (CHIEF EXECUTIVE), JUSTIN DUKES (MANAGING DIRECTOR), SIR BRIAN BAILEY CBE,
CARMEN CALLIL, PAUL FOX CBE, JAMES GATWARD, JOHN GAU, ANTHONY PRAGNELL CBE DFC,
PETER ROGERS, DAVID VINES, ELERI WYNNE JONES

Pre-Title sequence

Archive

Falklands victory speech
in Guildhall

THATCHER SQF

We the British people are proud
of what has been done, proud of
these heroic pages in our
island story, proud to be here
today to salute the task force,
proud to be British.

DAVID OWEN

The readiness to spill blood is
I suppose a characteristic of
her leadership, and that's what
makes her very tough and very
determined, and it is the
hallmark of a leader actually,
to know when you've got to make
enemies.

LORD JENKINS

Mrs Thatcher thinks much more
how lucky the country is to
have her, I think than how
lucky she is to be there. It
wouldn't occur to her that she
oughtn't to have climbed to the
top of the greasy pole.

LORD WHITELOW

She always had the complete
determination, and the complete
courage to pursue the course
which she believed to be
right. She's always had that
and that is why she is a very
powerful person and I believe
that is a sign of very great
strength.

Archive

Thatcher elbows to the
front in group shot with
European leaders

COMM

Over the past ten years MT has
forced herself to the front of
British and world politics.
Behind her has been her utter
certainty that she was right.

TITLES

THE THATCHER FACTOR

SHE KNEW SHE WAS RIGHT

Thatcher arrives at YC
Ball - Tory Conference
1988. MT's speech

COMM

The Conservatives, young and
old, now have the assurance of
people born to rule
indefinitely.

YC CHAIRMAN SOF

.. our most distinguished
guest, ladies and gentlemen,
the prime minister.

Music

THATCHER SOF

Mr Chairman it seems to me
you're having a very good time
and thoroughly enjoying this
party conference - yes? Of
course it's quite the best
party conference there's been
this year - but then there
hasn't exactly been a lot of
competition.

COMM

Mrs Thatcher's decade has
transformed their fortunes, and
she is serenely proprietorial
about it.

THATCHER SOF

This is the party for all the
people from all sorts of
backgrounds - whatever
background you come from.

COMM

The appeal is intended, above
all, for achievers.

PARKINSON

She hasn't forgotten her own
background - she isn't in any
way patronising about people
who started life with very few
advantages and I think that is
just why she's so relevant to
this country at the moment.

Actuality

Grantham - A Robert's
shop - exterior and
interiors

COMM

Margaret Thatcher's own background was comfortable but thrifty. She was brought up in a grocer's shop on the Great North Road in Grantham -which is now preserved as a tourist shrine. The young Margaret Robert's father was not just a shopkeeper but a committed municipal politician who became mayor of Grantham and her political mentor. He taught her how to balance the books, a lesson in good housekeeping she has never forgotten.

Archive

Miriam Stoppard
interview with MT

THATCHER SOF

SUNC My father ... I have a lot of faults - we all have. I think I inherited so much that was good from him and the other thing is you, my goodness me, you never buy anything you can't afford to buy, never.

V/O But you live according to your means. Many is the time

SYNC I can remember my mother saying when I said my friends have got more. Well we're not situated like that.

STILL

Alderman Roberts

LORD GOWRIE

She's got a lot of skill and a lot of guile and I've seen her charm people use traditional feminine wiles on people which she can do very effectively. She can be a very - her public image is somebody quite strong and strident and uncompromising but she can be very seductive when she wants to be.

ANNA MCCURLEY SYNC

She is astonishingly attractive. She has a very very female quality. There's no question of that. In fact.. I think it's probably her raunchiness that's even more attractive because you've got this slightly bi-quality of having the strong masculinity combined with this fluffy hair, these beautiful big blue eyes.

Archive

Thatcher having hair
done

Archive

MT with Gordon Reece.

Archive

Thatcher cutting pound
note in half

Thatcher handing drinks
to Chinese

COMM

The novelty of having a woman
as party leader was exploited
to the full. Mrs Thatcher's
managers left nothing to
chance. Her hair was restyled
and her voice lowered, under
the hand of her professional
television consultant Gordon
Reece

SARA MORRISON

V/O For availing herself of
Gordon Reece's wizardry
SYNC is a very female thing to
work out that the softened
hair, the muted voice, the
perfect makeup and get up for
all seasons was a necessary
part of the apparatus
of being a dominant Prime
Minister. That required a
certain genius to spot his
talent though his genius I
think is apparent to anybody
who from time to time gives
themselves

V/O a pictorial trip down
memory lane looking at the 60s
and the 70s and the now perfect
apparatus which is Mrs
Thatcher.

COMM

Mrs Thatcher has also always
had a sensationally good
popular press

Music

Headlines

The Sun:

"Crisis what crisis"

"Chaos on all sides"

Daily Mail:

"Target for today - sick children"

The Sun:

"Helpless!"

Archive

Crisis speech

Headlines

"Winter if discontent

The race for No 10"

Archive

MT & Gordon Reece sweep downstairs

LARRY LAMB

SYNC We were delighted because we and when I say we I mean a very small number of people - my people in parliament, my political editor, Mr Rupert Murdoch - a merest handful of people. We regarded her as I suppose you would say the Tory most likely to succeed and we were desperate that the Tories should succeed. The Print Unions were ruining our business and in my view the Labour Party was ruining the country and
V/O it had to be stopped.

COMM

As the Labour government foundered she caught the populist note of fury with the unions in the tabloid headlines and echoed it perfectly in her speeches.

THATCHER SDF

Even the Prime Minister's concluded that our troubles are serious. You don't need telling there was a crisis, as you saw the sick and the elderly made the victims of heartless action.

LARRY LAMB

SYNC Toppling governments is a lot of fun obviously.

V/O And particularly if you can get it right and

SYNC at that time I was in close touch with the PM's or Mrs Thatcher's media advisor Gordon,

V/O now Sir Gordon Reece.

SYNC I did tell her that in my view there was no without being any cause for complacency there was a great bulk of working class voters ready and waiting to vote Tory for the first time in their lives of whom I was one.

Archive

MT outside No. 10

COMM

On the day of her election, Margaret Thatcher offered a prayer for harmony.

THATCHER SOF

And I would just like to remember some words of St Francis of Asissi which I think are really just particularly apt at the moment. "Where there is discord may we bring harmony, where there is error may we bring truth, where there is doubt may we bring faith and where there is despair may we bring hope.

GOWRIE

She has a fairly innate distrust or suspicion of her own generation - I'm talking about her own generation of people who have had power

V/O and authority as she has.

Archive

Gilmour

COMM

Her shadow cabinet of paternalistic Tory gentlemen had been inherited from Ted Heath but in government they never knew how to handle her.

GOWRIE

V/O Most of the people she worked with in her first cabinet had had very little experience of arguing with women.

SYNC I mean I don't know the I can't imagine that Frances Pym's ever had a serious intellectual angry clash of opinions with a woman in his life.

LORD PYM

Well she makes it clear 9 times out of 10 what are her preferences and what she thinks the conclusion ought to be - that does sometimes have the effect of limiting the discussion but by no means always and any minister sitting round that table now not only is at liberty has a duty to say what he thinks his opinion is and I'm sure they do that.

SARA MORRISON

It's much more difficult to bawl at a woman than it is to tell a man that he's lost his marbles and I think that all that sort of barricade she used absolutely brilliantly.

Archive

Howe, Biffen, Prior outside No. 10. Nott arrives.

COMM

Mrs Thatcher put her supporters into the key economic ministries. They were a minority in the cabinet but they took control.

Archive

Nott arriving No. 10

SIR JOHN NOTT

V/O In my view, there was a group of 5 or 6 ministers in the cabinet

SYNC who actually knew exactly where they were going, what they wanted to do, broadly speaking they were in agreement with Mrs Thatcher on the measures that needed to be taken. Some of them were very difficult because they were very controversial and rather dangerous.

Archive

Thatcher opening red lunch box

COMM

Thatcherism, as it was called, immediately produced high interest rates, an industrial slump and escalating unemployment.

NOTT

V/O I would think two thirds of the cabinet didn't philosophically really agree with the kind of SYNC tough economic policies which were being advanced by Geoffrey Howe as Chancellor in 79, 80 and 81.

Actuality

Industrial wasteland

COMM

A fifth of British manufacturing industry vanished in two years, leaving a wasteland nobody had foreseen.

The moderate Conservatives, or "wets" were led by Jim Prior. They could change nothing.

Archive

Prior

PRIOR SOF

Thatcher at conference

THATCHER SOF

To those waiting with baited breath for the favourite media catch phrase the U turn I have only one thing to say, you turn if you want to.

COMM

As unemployment mounted towards 3 million, the leader held stubbornly to her course.

THATCHER

The lady's not for turning.

COMM

The rank and file liked it - though some colleagues were discomforted. The Ultras knew she was right.

SIR JOHN HOSKYNS

She made it absolutely clear then, she said she would really rather go down and be chucked out quite frankly rather than do a U-turn. She was in an absolutely sort of burning the boat frame of mind on that and that was very important because it meant then that people didn't have to waste time wondering whether with their backs to the wall so to speak, the wall would suddenly fall down behind them.

PRIOR

Of course we were nothing like as powerful as sometimes the Right Wing press liked to make us out or even for that matter the left wing press liked to make us out. I mean there were really never more than three wets who put their put their heads above the parapet at any one time.

COMM

The Treasury remained obedient. The climax of the argument with the "Wets" came over the 1981 budget when Chancellor Geoffrey Howe further tightened the squeeze.

Archive

Howe's dog - Howe in study

HOWE

V/O I was able to get in the end strong support from No. 10 SYNC and the Prime Minister the day after I produced that budget gave very strong support in the speech in the City of London because clearly people were

shocked by the scale of what we were trying to do.

PRIOR SYNC

I was very upset by the 1981 budget. I felt that it was hitting the economy and hitting people when they were already down on their knees and that this was a great mistake, that it would merely plunge us even deeper into higher unemployment and so on which of course it did. Unemployment went on rising long after 1981 budget and the signs of recovery were very very slim at that time and I did think at that time that I ought to resign.

Archive
Riots

COMM

Urban rioting, of a savagery unknown in Britain this century, burned through the summer of 1981.

To the Prime Minister this was due to nothing more complicated than human wickedness.

Archive
Thatcher - July 1981

THATCHER SOF

V/O 1000 policemen embattled in one of our great cities. 200 injured, riot shields and CS gas needed to defend the very men to whom we all turn for protection.

SYNC Nothing can justify, nothing can excuse and noone can condone the appalling violence we've all seen on television

WHITELAW

She was always very firm that unemployment was no part of it. I think she did I think very reasonably appreciate as time went on that obviously it played a part and said so. I always felt it did. I felt possibly that I was slightly out of tune on that front..

Archive

Whitelaw & Tebbit

COMM

But never out of line.
Whitelaw the natural leader of
the "Wets" was often in
alliance with colleagues
uncongenial to him.

TEBBIT

V/O Willie would always
deliver to the Prime Minister a
majority in the cabinet
SYNC even under the most
difficult times by the sheer
force of his personality. If
Willie had sided with the Wets
then I think it would have been
a very different story but he
didn't, he always sided with
the Prime Minister.

PRIOR SYNC

I think we certainly felt at
the time that Willie Whitelaw
could have been more helpful to
us, we felt basically he was on
our side but when it came to
the decisions he came down very
firmly in support of Margaret
for reasons that we all
understand but I think that yes
it would be wrong for me not to
say that at that time we were
disappointed that he didn't
give us more backing.

WHITELAW SYNC

It may not have been a popular
line. It may in their
judgement have been the wrong
line but once you have decided
that you are going on that line
they knew what I was doing.

Archive

Whitelaw and Thatcher

COMM

He was the faithful consort.

WHITELAW

V/O I am laughed at sometimes for being someone who is SYNC over loyal. I think I always found it easy to serve other people even though I didn't though I didn't necessarily agree with somebody. I've always found that something easy to do. It may be said, it may be a deficiency in my character that I enjoy serving other people more than I would actually be at the very top myself.

Archive

Gilmour

COMM

One after another, the wets were routed from power in the cabinet. Ian Gilmour, the first and most elegant internasi critic, was relieved to go. Jim Prior forlornly submitted to exile in Northern Ireland.

LORD PRIOR SOF

COMM

Harshness became the Government's dominant tone.

Archive

Tebbit applauded by Thatcher & Party at 81 conference

TEBBIT SOF

I grew up in the thirties with an unemployed father. He didn't riot, he got on his bike and looked for work and he kept looking until he found it. [applause] Yes, yes Liverpool is a blackspot. Let's never forget it and let's never forget the history of why it got that way. How many jobs went west as it was out brothers and they came out once again.

COMM

The attacks of the fully Thatcherised Tory party found Labour and the unions at their most uncertain.

HOWELLS

SYNC The Left was largely bankrupt of ideas about what to do about the problems of British industry. It seemed to believe that as I've said that job levels should be maintained simply because they existed. It did not, it seems to me, come to terms with things which Thatcher was obviously talking about which was the rationalisation of industrial production, modernising it. In a sense we became the reactionaries. We weren't the modernisers.

V/O We were singularly unsuccessful at explaining our case, I suspect because we didn't really have one.

Archive

Labour Conference 1980

COMM

Labour's chances of developing a case were destroyed from within. Every party conference became a battleground in the year when Mrs Thatcher was most vulnerable, the rival wings were absorbed in a bitter struggle for leadership.

Healey/Benn split screen

ARCHIVE SOF

[Results announced]

Archive

Roy Jenkins

COMM

The party's passion was entirely directed upon itself. The Labour right did Mrs Thatcher further service by splitting to form the SDP, led by Roy Jenkins.

JENKINS SYNC

I think she has had one enormous piece of luck which is that she has not over 9 years had an effective opposition. People have been near to being effective opposition but broadly speaking from the point of view of the opposition she has had the easiest run which any prime minister I can think of has had.

Headlines

"Most unpopular PM since records began."

COMM

The divided opposition abjectly failed to reflect opinion in the nation. Here, economic misery produced an unprecedented chorus of disapproval - and a telling satire.

Anyone for Denis

SOF

Of course the rate of inflation is still high and unemployment figures are still rising but you can't seriously expect me or the Conservative government to take responsibility for things like that. If they were to fall dramatically then of course we shall take full responsibility but you know if there's one thing I've tried to get across again and again, it is this: whatever happens it's your fault.

Archive

Crowds in Buenos Aires

COMM

But whose fault was General Galtieri's seizure of the Falkland Islands, which drove satirical plays out of business? Images of shame produced an early casualty.

Stills

Archive
Casualties

Archive
English soldier with
Union Jack

CARRINGTON SCF

V/O Well I think that what has happened in the Falkland Islands is a national humiliation

SYNC and I have been responsible for foreign affairs and I do not think it is right that when that happens the minister responsible should just go on as if nothing had happened and I think that the honourable thing to do is resign.

POWELL

SYNC If I'm asked whether any of Mrs Thatcher's recent predecessors would have done what she did in April 1982, I'm afraid that I'd have to say no. They were after all gentlemen and they were gentlemen who knew perfectly well that all the papers had been across their desk which spelt out clearly enough and she's not unintelligent, clearly enough

how the Falklands was going to be handled and they

V/O would simply not have had a woman's shamelessness in changing their minds to say well that was yesterday, this is today and out you go.

COMM

The Task Force went out, and triumphed - though at great human cost. Politically, the homecoming was what mattered. it tapped a productive well of patriotic emotion.

Archive

Homecoming - troops from
Falklands

HALL

V/O I think the Falklands was
in that sense an absolute
Godsend. I mean it mobilised
everything
SYNC fighting the war, the war
against the dictator -
Churchillism, back to the wars,
we can do it you can't treat
the British lads. These may
sound like just empty myths but
actually they are what
mobilised the nation.

ARCHIVE SOF

The very fact that we could
still go to the South Seas and
impose our will on some tinpot
dictator down there. We both
laugh at it and are caught up
in that revival of national
sentiment and it came at such a
strategic moment. It came at
the moment

SYNC when it really looked as
if Labour might make gains in
London, might make real success
in local government elections
and it really just transformed
it by intergrating the whole
Thatcherite project with a new
notion of the nation abroad.

COMM

There were political dividends
for Mrs Thatcher herself. She,
not a Queen or Prince, took the
salute at the victory parade.

Thatcher/Pym at Press
conference

HALSEY

V/O One has to wonder about
Mrs Thatcher as to whether
SYNC she was narrowly or
widely based. Whether she knew
what she was doing or not.
Whatever the answers are, it's
certainly true

Archive

Victory Parade

V/O that there are parts of
Mrs Thatcher's outlook which go
with the grain of ordinary
popular aspirations. In all
sorts of ways,

SYNC the animosity any real
animosity which is felt towards
her is also very qualified by a
sense of yes but she really
does have it right in some ways

Archive

Michael Foot - 1983
election campaign

Headlines

THE SUN:

Do you seriously want
this old man to reign in
Britain

Archive

Thatcher visiting
factory

Press conference

Cartoon

COMM

In the 1983 election she was
certainly found to have it more
right than Michael Foot. The
Labour leader, a face from the
past, proved a poor match for
the prime minister's smoothly
managed elan.

While he was lampooned and
smeared by the tabloid press,
Mrs Thatcher moved effortlessly
from one photo opportunity to
another.

She humiliated Francis Pym,
Foreign Secretary and surviving
wet. when he suggested
negotiations with Argentina.

LORD PYM SOF

THATCHER SOF

COMM

Pym sacked from the Foreign
Office, was the first victim of
a landslide victory.

But triumphalism wasn't the
only emotion it produced.

Party chairman, Cecil
Parkinson, was soon brought
down by a personal scandal
which even the Tory press
couldn't resist.

But Mrs Thatcher didn't desert
her loyalists when they were in
trouble.

PARKINSON SYNC

I think she is a very good
friend and she is a very
understanding person and I
think most colleagues know
that. I mean she's very tough
sometimes and I'm not
pretending that but she is a
good friend and she's very very
kind to a lot of colleagues -
if a colleague has a sick child
or something of that kind. I
mean she's just amazing.

Archive

Brighton bombing October
1984

COMM

In 1984 the Prime Minister faced an ultimate confrontation - with terrorism. At Brighton she came within a few feet of death from an IRA bomb. Her colleagues were distraught but she preserved a nerveless facade.

THATCHER SOF

You hear about these atrocities, these bombs, you don't expect them to happen to you. But life must go on as usual. The conference will go on as usual. Alright John the conference will go on as usual.

COMM

Some of Mrs Thatcher's colleagues were mutilated or killed as others already had been. Terrorism had touched Mrs Thatcher personally, and not for the first time.

GOWRIE

SYNC Terrorism has enormously touched her life. There's not only the experience at Brighton but the knowledge she has to live with that she will always be under very considerable personal threat

V/O and she is a brave and courageous and I don't think people quite realise what it's like living with that permanent threat.

Archive
Funeral

Archive
Bobby Sands poster

COMM

She dealt with the powerful IRA weapon of the hunger strike by pitting against it the same brand of inflexible determination.

THATCHER SOF

There can be no question of political status for someone who is serving a sentence for crime. Crime is crime is crime.

Headlines

'Bobby Sands Dies'
'Thatcher Blasted'

Archive

Violence - Ireland

Signing of Hillsborough Agreement

COMM

Eleven hunger strikers died, amid worldwide protests. The prime minister showed herself to be a politician of exceptional hardness, when she saw the issue as quite clearly cut.

But the tragedy intensified sectarian violence. To much astonishment, the conflict drove Mrs Thatcher to sign an agreement with the Irish prime minister, Garret Fitzgerald, for co-operation on Northern Ireland.

PATTEN

SYNC A lot of the prime minister's closest political supporters were hostile to the Hillsborough Agreement.

V/O But I think she also had sufficient imagination to see that we had to find

SYNC a better way of reflecting the fact that we share these islands and have made rather a mess of doing so over the last couple of hundred years.

Archive

THATCHER SOF

I want to offer hope to young people particularly that the cycle of violence and conflict can be broken. I believe in the union and that it will last as long as the majority so wish.

POWELL

SYNC I don't believe that the prime minister when she said in 1979 I'm a rock hard unionist was telling an untruth. I think she was correctly describing herself.

V/O She hated doing it. You only had to watch the prime minister in November 1985.

SYNC She was a picture of misery. She just hated it and it's I suppose, I suppose it's to her credit that having been convinced at that time that an overriding national interest was involved, she overrode her opinions her wishes and her instincts.

Archive
Ireland

COMM

This unionist prime minister was pilloried by Unionists as a betrayer. Uncomfortably, she's discovered that this is no simple conflict of right and wrong. Each assertion of one side's right exacts a terrible price, with the state also driven to a violent response.

POWELL

SYNC She does believe in right and wrong. She does believe that they are different and that you can pick them out. Now I'm afraid that I think there are circumstances in which it is very hard to know. And very hard to pick them out. And many circumstances in which they shade horribly, even tragically into one another but that kind of finesse

V/O is not for Margaret Thatcher.

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

COMM

In 1984, Arthur Scargill, leader of the miners union, provided for Margaret Thatcher her perfect opponent when he called a strike over pit closures.

SCARGILL SOF

This conference further agrees to call on all areas to join with the 80% who are already on strike.

[Cheers and applause]

I call on behalf of the NUM on every single working miner to stop work and join the strike

COMM

He was manoeuvred into beginning the strike when coal stocks were high, and the Government had spent months in preparation. Three years earlier, the Thatcher cabinet had backed away from a confrontation with the miners.

TEBBIT SYNC

We've used all sorts of words to cover our embarrassment at the time but the plain fact was we were not in a position at that stage to deal with a major coal strike. We couldn't have carried it through and so the Prime Minister showed her sense of tactics - she wasn't going to get into a battle she couldn't win. But there was I think fairly clearly a note on her pad that the next time things were going to be rather different.

Archive
Scargill

Notts miners

COMM

Now they were ready for Scargill. His Yorkshire flying pickets tried to close the Nottinghamshire pits, without the national ballot that had always been binding on miners. The Notts miners stayed at work, and demonstrated the union split for all to see.

HALL

V/O I think the failure to have a ballot

SYNC represents a deeply patronising view of what ordinary men and women in the mining communities are capable of.

V/O They must have some democratic voice in whether they are ready to go or not. I mean that's just so basic a principle the notion that some vanguard leadership

SYNC which of course was right about the attack which the coalboard was launching on the community but Arthur Scargill was absolutely right about that but nevertheless if you want to mobilise politics around that you have to win the consent of people.

HOWELLS SYNC

The one strength that the NUM had which so many unions didn't have was that it was the one organisation which bargained on behalf of miners, all miners in the industry and of course once that was broken, then in a sense we were finished.

Archive

Thatcher - Carlton Club
Nov 84

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

This year as before in our history we have seen men and women with brave hearts defying violence, scorning intimidation and defending their rights to uphold our laws.

Archive

Ian McGregor down mine

COMM

From the start the strategy was to drive the NUM towards surrender, not agreement. The Coal Board chairman Ian MacGregor, was kept firmly though covertly, under political control.

PETER WALKER

V/O I think Ian had never been involved in a political strike. He had been involved in industrial strikes and he had had the experience of the steel dispute.

SYNC What he didn't calculate here was we weren't talking about industrial strike we were talking about totally politically motivated organised strike by somebody who was using methods and their methods involving violence and picketing of the nature we all saw.

Archive

Police in riot gear

HOWELLS

V/O The police were very very well organised. Confronted with policemen suddenly who were armed with shields and batons visors and helmets was very very intimidating and scary experience. There would be a lot of noise there would even be these terrible occasions when the police would actually beat their shields when they seemed to be like lines of zulus coming towards you. It sickened me

SYNC to see young men who believed so passionately in the cause that they were fighting for in teeshirts and what we in South Wales call daps rubber shoes hurling themselves against lines of policemen wearing medieval battle gear.

Archive

Orgreave -
confrontations police &
miners.

COMM

At the Orgreave coking depot they made their decisive and bolldiest charge.

Rarely have so many been assembled in an English field or unleashed such public violence.

To Mrs Thatcher the miners were simply "The Enemy Within".

Archive

Peter Jay/Thatcher
interview

Headlines

"Scargill's real aim is
war"
"Scargill bid to cripple
Britain"
"Scargill's war on
democracy"

Archive

Miners wives attacking
working miner's wife in
car.

THATCHER SOF

The enemies within are those
who do not believe in the
democratic system but who use
violence or intimidation, some
other means than democracy to
attain their aims.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think that that kind of
language is the best for a
prime minister - I'm not
talking about some ravid junior
politician but for a prime
minister.

MARGARET THATCHER

Under the circumstances under
which I used it - yes. People
could see the violence they
knew of the intimidation - oh
they knew they knew they found
an echo they were watching it
on their screens.

DAVID HART

SYNC Propaganda is a vital
weapon and it was particularly
during the miners strike. A
very substantial amount of our
efforts were directed towards
trying to achieve a perception
on the part of the public of
our point of view in the miners
strike and trying to prevent
the public perceiving
V/O things the way Scargill
was trying to perceive them.

HOWELLS SYNC

The press, it seemed to us was
being manipulated and I think
that we did very little to
counter that. What we did
really was to tell lies to each
other.

COMM

As the war of attrition ground
the miners down, bitterness
between strikers and workers
turned into communal violence.

SOF

DAVID HART SYNC

The strike ended without a settlement. It is quite clear that a settlement wasn't required. Indeed it is clear that the only condition for victory the only possible definition of victory was for us an ending of the strike without settlement.

Archive

Miners march back to work

COMM

The miners marched back to work striving for dignity behind the banners. They had held out for a year, but the popular majority and the unshakeable force the Government had mobilised against them were bound in the end to prevail.

HOWELLS

V/D We were undoubtedly defeated. People argued that we weren't defeated SYNC that the victory was the fact that the strike went on for a year that we sustained it for a year. It was an enormous defeat. I think an irreversable defeat for the NUM and for mining trade unions in general. It was also a defeat for trade unionism as we knew it up until the 1980s.

Archive
Helicopter

Thatcher, Heseltine &
Howe

Heseltine

COMM

It was an obscure dispute over the future of Westland Helicopters which brought Mrs Thatcher down to earth. It grew into a titanic and almost fateful clash. The Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine wanted the near bankrupt Westland to find a European partner. The company backed by the Prime Minister wanted an American solution, and Government supporters massed behind it led by Industry Secretary Secretary Leon Brittan. Heseltine, prevented from putting his case to the full Cabinet, was isolated.

BIFFEN

V/D It was insensitive for the Prime Minister to have SYNC dismissed in quite the way that she did his particular option for Westland and I think that it was a dispute which cast quite an insight into the way in which government proceeded.

Headlines
"Great Cabinet Shambles"

COMM

The attack on Heseltine intensified when a warning letter to him from the Solicitor General was deliberately leaked to the press by Brittan's department.

LORD HAVERS

And I heard about this on the 5 o'clock news and was very cross because there's a very strong convention that Law Officers letters or communications are never leaked without their permission and this had been leaked without either my permission or even more important the writer of the letter, the Solicitor General. Y/O I couldn't bring myself to believe that a QC who was a Cabinet minister would authorise a leak of that sort when the of the rules forbade it and so I just thought it was some civil servant who was deciding to perhaps get his own back from the DTI against Michael Heseltine.

Drawing - Cabinet

COMM

The last straw for Heseltine came when the Prime Minister suddenly demanded in Cabinet that he clear all his future statements on Westland with her secretariat. To his colleagues' amazement he picked up his papers and walked out.

Archive

Heseltine outside No. 10

HESELTINE S.O.F

I have resigned from the Cabinet and I will make a full statement later today.

Drawing

COMM

The resignation left the Govt shaken and another bombshell set to explode. Mrs Thatcher had been forced to agree to an enquiry by Cabinet Sec Sir Robert Armstrong into the leak from Brittan's dept. The leak had come from Colette Bowe, press officer at the DTI - but on whose orders?

Archive

Colette Bowe

COLETTE BOWE SOF

You should direct any questions about leak enquiries to the No. 10 press office.

LORD HAVERS

V/O I had seen her before and she seemed to me to age over that period tremendously.

SYNC She had done her best - she'd tried to get hold of the Permanent Secretary of her department. She then gets firm instructions from the private office of the Secretary of State you are to do this and I assume that she would be advised by

Archive
Bernard Ingham

V/O Bernard Ingham to do what her department was telling her.

COMM

Bernard Ingham, chief press officer at No. 10 is the Prime Minister's longest serving official. What had he known? Had she set up Armstrong to enquire into a leak organised by her own underlings?

LORD HAVERS

V/O Sir Robert took I'm guessing now about 10 days to complete the enquiry.

SYNC He finally came in, I was there at the Prime Minister's request and said I'll give you a summary of my enquiry and unless the Prime Minister is the most marvellous actress that I've ever seen in my life, she was as shocked as anybody that in fact it was on Leon Brittan's instructions.

BRITTAN SYNC

Well the release of the Solicitor General's letter was something which was approved by Mr Charles Powell - the relevant private secretary in No. 10 and it was approved by Mr Bernard Ingham, the prime minister's press secretary and as I made clear at the time there would have been no question of the release of that document without that express approval from No. 10

COMM

Charles Powell seconded from the Foreign Office and Bernard and Ingham were and are the two civil servants closest to the Prime Minister. They see her every day.

Their express approval of the anti-Heseltine leak raised the question of Mrs Thatcher's own prior knowledge of the plot.

LORD HAVERS SYNC

I had a look at the statment he began to make and made some suggestions but I think her problem was that everybody was saying on the Labour side and quite a lot of newspapers that she must have known. And all she was able to do and you can't prove negatives was to get up in the house and say I didn't know, I wasn't told and its a difficult thing to do.

Archive - parliamentary
sof

Drawing - Thatcher in
the Commons

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

It was accepted that the Department of Trade & Industury should disclose that fact and that in view of the urgency of the matter the disclosure should be made by means of a telephone communication to the Press Association.

Page 30

ANNA MCCURLEY

V/O The worst moment I've ever seen her in was probably the Westland speech in the House of Commons.

SYNC The tension was enormous that day it was quite electric and the chamber was extremely crowded

V/O you got the feeling that she was desperately uncomfortable.

SYNC The gestures - her head was bent most of the time and normally it's straight up and eyeing the enemy and she was plucking away at Denis's pearls.

Archive - Parliamentary
50f

MARGARET THATCHER SOE

... just in fact sent out for my official brief and what the secretary ... and what the Department of Trade and Industry officials believe..

ANNA MCCURLEY

There were issues of principle at stake - there's no doubt about it. Whether she was telling the truth to the House for example, what had happened. You got several variations on a theme. You got the strong suspicion that there were people involved in Downing Street in this that shouldn't have been there.

Headlines

Daily Mail:

"the Blood Sacrifice"

COMM

Leon Brittan became the scapegoat for the Westland leak. His resignation saved the Prime Minister.

Archive

Press conference

She refused to allow Powell or Ingham to give evidence at a parliamentary enquiry into Westland. Both have been promoted.

INGHAM SOF

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. The Prime Minister will say a few words and then we'll take questions ...

HEALEY

I think one of the worrying things is the way in which No. 10 has come to replace the Cabinet and the people who work for her at No. 10 in her press office in her private office are now taking the sort of decisions which should be taken by cabinet as a whole or at least by ministers - you know the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and so on and the extent to which she has a personal court is worrying. What is very bad for the constitution is the extent to which she's used officials to undermine the position of colleagues.

COMM

John Biffen was one such victim. A frank television interview by John Biffen, the last independent-minded minister, led to a briefing by Bernard Ingham that he was 'semi-detached' and due for dismissal. Biffen was a lame duck from then on.

JOHN BIFFEN SYNC

To have one's departure widely canvassed in the press in circumstances where you know that the author must be Bernard Ingham and he only would be doing it with the acquiescence of the prime minister, I found distasteful, but not altogether surprising because exactly the self same technique had been used in respect of other ministers like Peter Rees and Patrick Jenkyn.

LORD GOWRIE SYNC

If you let her down or if you are disloyal at a time when she feels vulnerable which is what she thought happened I think she exaggerated a bit what she thought happened in the case of John Biffen. She doesn't become vindictive, she doesn't bitch to use a rather unattractive word but she does withdraw affection and in that way she can be quite glacial and quite monarchical.

JOHN BIFFEN SYNC

I never regarded my job as Leader of the House of Commons to be just a hired executive to deliver the behaviour of the House of Commons as though they had about as much animation as a line of groceries in Sainsburys.

Archive

Cabinet posing for photo

COMM

By 1986 the cabinet was her cabinet. Eighteen ministers had resigned or been sacked Personal domination carried her through the crisis.

NORMAN TEBBIT SYNC

Well those difficult times of 85 and 86 lead to a lot of problems for the government. Its a characteristic of the prime minister's image that when the public can see where she's going when they know what she's after whether they agree with her or not they regard her as a very considerable leader. If they can't see what she's trying to do, if they think she's muddled, if they think the government is confused then those very positive attitudes turn right round to extremely negative attitudes. Instead of being a great leader, she's a bossy woman.

Archive
Margaret & Denis
Thatcher in garden

ENOCH POWELL

SYNC Nobody should underestimate in observing a prime minister the sheer strength which the Queen's chief minister has simply by dint of being the Queen's chief minister. And I suppose the longer you remain in that position

V/O the more people make the error of supposing that having been there long you're likely to remain there.

COMM

The Thatcher's have made Downing Street a family residence.

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

Do you want packed lunch?

DENIS THATCHER SOF

Well a little bit, not too much.

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

Yes alright, with a beer cheese and

DENIS THATCHER SOF

Better keep my fingers crossed for that as well.

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

Hello Emma, hello dear, hello ...

LORD BRUCE-GARDYNE

V/O One of her strenghts I think is that she has an instinctive feel I believe for what the ordinary

SYNC Tory voter out in the Shires is liable to be thinking and worried about at any given time and I think that there Denis her husband has quite an important influence too.

Because sometimes it is said you know that Denis represents the opinion on the 19th hole of every golf course in middle England

V/O There's some truth in that.

Archive

Photo-call - Margaret &
Denis Thatcher

Archive

Russia

Labour PPB

Archive

Thatcher arriving in
Moscow.

Archive

Labour Party Political
Broadcast

COMM

This carefully arranged photo-call was the preamble to a campaign for the third term that had seemed out of reach at the height of the Westland affair.

MARGARET THATCHER

If we have an election early, we go on holiday in August. If we have an election late

DENIS THATCHER SOF

We won't go at all.

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

No holiday, that's right.

DENIS THATCHER SOF

I'll believe it when I see it.

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

I thought we'd go to Cornwall again because we love it.

COMM

But before Cornwall, Moscow - under Ingham's ever watchful eye the leader who came to power as the iron lady ranged against the all evil empire began her third election campaign in the Soviet Union with dividends back home.

But there was a new opponent.

NEIL KINNOCK SOF

Whether they agree with me or disagree with me they know they're gonna get a straight answer and makes it easy for me to be in touch, to keep in touch.

COMM

Briefly Labour threatened with a fully modernised campaign revolving around Neil Kinnock. For the first time the famous Thatcher public relations campaign seemed to meet its match. The leader herself sometimes lost her perfect self control

Public alarm about Labour on defence and taxation, coupled with increased prosperity, gave Margaret Thatcher an unprecedented third term.

This was the election that made the difference, consolidating Thatcher revolution and its leader in power. Old favourites could be brought back or pensioned off.

It was time to make up for the faltering second term.

Archive

9 O'clock News - June 87

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

Now we have manufacturing industries, service industries that are fit which are competing the world over and that has been achieved alongside a reform in trade union law which was sorely needed and a higher standard of living for everyone. But please if people just drool and drivel they care I turn round and say right, I also look to see what you do.

DIMBLEBY SOF

why do you use the words drool and drivel that they they care - is that what you think saying you care about people's rights amounts to?

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

No, I don't I'm sorry I used those words.

HOSKYNS

V/O The Government seemed to think its real task had been completed whereas in fact the really difficult bit which is the reform of things like the reform of the education system, the health service, the whole social security system, all of which were really in a state of total disarray were not addressed.

SYNC They did then get back a second wind. They started generating the ideas and of course the moment the ideas come, the energy and commitment V/O and the adrenalin level of the government as a whole begins to rise.

Archive

Thatcher picking up
litter

COMM

The Prime Minister 's new pace, has been directed to some unexpected causes witht he image makers never far behind crafting the public's impression. Her anti-litter campaign made some headlines, but the men who spread the rubbish for her to pick up somehow didn't make it to the 10 o'clock news.

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

Nearly 10 years yet its still we Conservatives who set the pace, generate the ideas'and have the vision. (aplause)

COMM

Her political dominance has scarcely been challenged.

Tory Conference

MARGARET THATCHER SOF

A man may climb Everest for himself but at the summit he plants his country's flag.

COMM

Her style and appearance have become positively imperial.

BRENDA FOLAN

V/O She has discovered for herself a sort of power dressing. Margaret Thatcher when one first became aware of her was middle class mumsy. She looked like a middle class mum would do on speech days, like a lady magistrate, like the vicar's wife. It was very unthreatening. When Margaret Thatcher arrived in Poland recently, you couldn't ignore the fact that rather like a Holbein painting of Henry VII, here was a figure which was saying, I am powerful. Mrs Thatcher is accused of looking more royal than the Queen but in fact she's expressing what the Queen doesn't have which is power.

HEALEY

V/O She has done for the Tory party which no one has yet done for the Labour party. She's adjusted it the new social realities. She's taken it away from the landowners

SYNC and given it to the estate agents and there are some advantages in that even for the country. But she is also very like Mao Tse Tung in style. She believes in the permanent revolution. She believes if you don't keep sharpening the blade, it will rust.

TEBBIT SYNC

I think that in the past 14 years British politics has been about Mrs Thatcher. I think that that's because she held some ideas which were clear. They weren't complex but she understood them well. She managed to strike a cord with the electorate and she has not been diverted from carrying those policies through and I think she's had a far better and fuller understanding of all the implications and ramifications of her policies sometimes to an extent which is quite distressing to her ministers.

JOHN BIFFEN

And you can be very determined in your objectives and you can be very certain that is what the situation requires - its just possible you could be wrong and therefore if you are going to have these strengths you have to avoid the downside consequences of self righteousness and intolerance.

PATTEN

SYNC Maybe it was always going to be the case that it would take sharp elbows and chariot wheels to begin to turn the economy round and to deal with all the paraphernalia of Scargillism

V/O I don't think that it would have been possible to move things in Britain without having somebody who was prepared to run a couple of hundred yards down the road and shout alot.

Archive

Thatcher elbowing her way to the front with European leaders.

Archive

Margaret & Denis Thatcher

END TITLES



COMMITTEE OFFICE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA
01-219 (Direct Line)
01-219 3000 (Switchboard)

DC 30 88/89

DEFENCE COMMITTEE

DC 30
of Session 1988-89

NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee will meet on Wednesday 12 April at 10.30 in Committee Room 16.

Mr Douglas and Mr McFall have indicated that they wish to raise the subject of Sir Leon Brittan's remarks reported in the Press yesterday and this morning relating to the disclosure of the Solicitor General's letter about Westland.

Mr McFall has indicated an intention to move that should the time for discussion of this matter on Wednesday morning be inadequate, discussion should continue at a convenient time later in the day.

I have been asked to prepare a background note on the significance of Sir Leon's remarks in the context of the Committee's previous inquiry. This is attached, together with a selection of extracts from this morning's press.

The principal scheduled item for the morning of 20th April is evidence on the decommissioning of nuclear submarines. The brief will be circulated for this on Monday morning 10th April, together with a list of witnesses. UK NIREX will be heard at 10.50, with Ministry of Defence witnesses following.

ROBERT ROGERS
Clerk of the Committee

6 April 1989

A

SIR LEON BRITTAN'S REMARKS ABOUT THE DISCLOSURE OF THE SOLICITOR-GENERAL'S LETTER

It was reported yesterday and in the Press this morning (copies attached) that Sir Leon Brittan, now an EC Commissioner, had said in a television interview:

"The release of the Solicitor-General's letter was something which was approved by Mr Charles Powell - the relevant Private Secretary in No 10 - and it was approved by Mr Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary. As I made clear at the time, there would have been no question of the release of that document without the express approval from No 10."

Sir Leon is reported in today's Press as saying of the interview:

"I gave the interview before I left for Brussels at the end of 1988. There is absolutely nothing new in anything I said in the interview."

The words used by Sir Leon in the interview in fact go further than the evidence of any witness before the Committee in the 1986 inquiry.

Sir Leon told the House on 27 January 1986 (col.671) "I made it clear to my officials at the Department of Trade and Industry that, subject to the agreement of No 10, I was giving authority for the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter to be made." Examined on this point by the Committee on 30 January 1986, he said "I accept fully responsibility for what was done and would not suggest for a single moment that my instructions were anything other than followed. I would particularly stress that it all had to be subject to the agreement of No 10" (Q.933).

This point was dealt with by the Defence Committee in paragraph 154 of their Report. The key question was, if Mr Brittan had given such clear instructions, and later said that his instructions were followed, how was it that No 10 did not give their agreement to the disclosure?

Sir Robert Armstrong tried to give an answer in his evidence. He said that it was "a difference of understanding" about exactly what was being sought and what was being given (Q.1288). He said that he was

"absolutely clear that the officials in No 10 did not believe, from the conversations, that they were being asked to convey an agreement on which the Secretary of State's authority was conditional" (Q.1318).

The Defence Committee found some difficulty in believing that "four extremely able officials in key positions would have been capable of identical misunderstandings of this

sort in two separate telephone conversations". But on the evidence before them, they decided on balance that the No 10 officials (specifically Mr Ingham) realised that they were being asked not for agreement but for authority, and this they sought to avoid giving.

Sir Leon's words mean that the real situation was very different; that far from trying to distance No 10 from the disclosure, Mr Powell and Mr Ingham gave their express approval for that disclosure.

If Sir Leon is correct, his words also now indicate that Sir Robert Armstrong's evidence to the Committee was incorrect, because the disclosure was expressly approved by Mr Powell and Mr Ingham¹. His evidence could, it seems, be incorrect either because the officials concerned did not tell him the truth during his inquiry, or because they did, and he did not tell the truth to the Defence Committee. It is also possible that the officials did tell the truth to him during his inquiry, but that he did not tell the Prime Minister in his inquiry report.

A further point arises. The Committee criticised Mr Ingham and Mr Powell because they were in a position to tell the Prime Minister on 7 January what turned out to be the principal findings of Sir Robert Armstrong's inquiry report more than a fortnight later. The Prime Minister told the House that

"I discussed the matter with my office the following day, [7 January]...I was told that the Solicitor General's advice had not been disclosed by my office... I was also told, in general terms, that there had been contacts between my office and the Department of Trade and Industry" (Official Report, 27 January 1986, col.657)

If the disclosure was made the express approval of Mr Ingham and Mr Powell, then not only did the "difference of understanding" mentioned by Sir Robert never take place, but Mr Ingham and Mr Powell chose to tell no-one, not even the Prime Minister, that they had themselves authorised the disclosure.

6 April 1989

¹ And Sir Robert Armstrong said explicitly to the Defence Committee (Q.1191) "I am clear that the authority for the disclosure was given by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry."