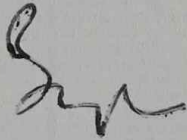


MR WICKS

Because of all the gossiping by DTI, the Prime Minister may be asked this afternoon whether I, as is suggested in today's FT (attached), had been active in getting the letter leaked.

The answer is that, as I have repeatedly said, I spoke to Colette Bowe (having been asked to do so by Lord Whitelaw) to reinforce his message to Leon Brittan to be more vigorous in arguing the Government's case. I did not advocate the leaking of the Solicitor General's letter, though I was concerned that Mr Heseltine's "freelance" letter to Mr Horne had cast doubt on the viability of the Sikorsky offer.



BERNARD INGHAM
27 January 1986

Heseltine, was not aware of the full facts on the attitude of the other European governments.

Mr Heseltine then wrote back to Sir Patrick, later on the Monday, to tell

It has now emerged that Sir Patrick replied, broadly accepting that the matter had been cleared up. Accordingly, Mr Heseltine complains that every word of his original Friday

suggested—staff at 10 Downing Street?

There were apparently parallel, but separate, conversations on January 6 between Mr John Mogg, Mr Brittan's private secretary, and Mr Charles Powell, one of Mrs Thatcher's private secretaries, and between Miss Colette Bowe Mr Brittan's head of information, and Mr

is believed to have considered resignation.

Why was it necessary to hold such an inquiry when Mr Brittan and two of the Prime Minister's closest advisers knew exactly what had happened? Did she ask them after the row had erupted over the leak following January 6.

Mrs Thatcher told MPs last Thursday that the inquiry was needed to find the full facts, because they were not known to her. She said an enormous number of the facts was not known to her until January 22, when the Cabinet Secretary reported. Which of these facts were new to her? Does this mean that the Prime Minister did not know at all that her own office and Mr Brittan had been involved in the leak, which had been authorised in her name, until more than a fortnight later?

Even the official version raises questions about the relationship, not only between colleagues within a Government but also about the political discretion given to civil servants. Mr Brittan's camp has complained about the behaviour of Mr Ingham, one of Mrs Thatcher's longest-serving advisers, because, it is said, he took an active role in the decision on how the letter should be leaked and had been active earlier in the affair.

It was clear from television interviews by ministers yesterday that Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet colleagues recognise that she gave an incomplete version last Thursday—partly because of a heated argument with Mr Brittan during the previous 24 hours. Moreover, they believe that she must tell the full story this afternoon—as she appeared to concede yesterday—if she is to end the controversy and begin to restore her political authority.

Cabinet minister. Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, and a millionaire—he is a member of the Guinness family—he gained entry to the Commons at the age of 23 by succeeding Sir Henry "Chips" Channon, his father, as MP for Southend West.

With such an impeccable Tory background and a wealth of experience in junior and middle ranking posts, Mr Channon's entry into the Cabinet at the start of his



Channon: served in the Trade and Industry Department as Minister of State, mainly responsible for trade policy, since 1983

28th year as an MP appears to owe more to the Prime Minister's desire to keep the changes in the top rank of the Government to a minimum in the wake of the resignations of Mr Michael Heseltine and Mr Leon Brittan.

While he enjoys the reputation of being a quiet, low-profile minister with a capacity to get on well with people, many of those who have observed his performance behind a ministerial desk rated him

She must tell the full story this afternoon if she is to end the controversy and begin to restore her political authority

letter to the European consortium stands uncorrected.

Mr Heseltine, therefore, wants to publish his response to the Solicitor-General, and might raise it when he gives evidence next week to the Commons Defence Committee.

There is, then, the central question of who authorised the disclosure of the first of Sir Patrick's letters. According to Mrs Thatcher, the letter was brought to Mr Brittan's attention at 1.30pm on January 6. He decided it 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 clear that, subject to the agreement of my office, he was giving authority for the disclosure to be made from the DTI, if it was not made from 10 Downing Street."

Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's chief press secretary.

Who took the initiative in these talks? Why did the Prime Minister's staff feel able to authorise the disclosure, or did they know she would approve? In short, who gave the order to Miss Bowe to make the disclosure?

Moreover, there is the manner of the disclosure. Mrs Thatcher said last Thursday that Mr Brittan had expressed no view on its form. She added that if she had been consulted, "I should have said that a different way must be found of making the relevant facts known."

The partial disclosure of only one aspect of the letter was presented by the Press Association as damaging to Mr Heseltine. Why was it impossible to release the whole letter? Why was the Solicitor General not asked for his approval?

The other main questions concern the nature of the inquiry

in balance of the Cabinet

Channon as Secretary

up the truth over the Westland leak and said it was "extremely doubtful" that