

MR WHITMORE

MARK AND PRESS

We need to think ahead how we play the next 24 hours.

As of now, we are feeding out blow by blow and awaiting confirmation. This is not now an elegant posture but it is perfectly tenable. But for the 4.00 pm Lobby I need a line, over and above the detailed diary of events and colour material. I propose it should be as follows:

"The Prime Minister heard Mr Thatcher on the ITN news bulletin reporting that he was 90% certain Mark, his crew and car had been located. We now await confirmation and this may not be forthcoming for several hours. You must keep in touch. In the meantime the Prime Minister is carrying out her programme and intends to go to Manchester tomorrow."

After Confirmation

Once Mark's rescue has been confirmed, we should put out a statement from the Prime Minister and I attach a draft at Annex A.

The Prime Minister has agreed not to give press, radio or TV interviews. But they will seek every way telephonically into No.10 and, given that Carol has given interviews, will try to get at the Prime Minister through her.

It would be a help if Carol could keep us posted on approaches and let us know what she is saying so that we sing in tune.

So far as press, radio and tv is concerned today, I shall say there will be no Prime Ministerial interviews; they will have to be satisfied with the on-the-record statement from the Prime Minister. But I suspect that radio programmes, especially from abroad, may well try to break through the shield as they did in Melbourne. You may therefore consider concentrating press calls on to Press Office by giving instructions to switchboard.

Tomorrow

Mr Gaffin will be doing a separate note on arrangements. All I wish to say is that we need to introduce the maximum control, and we need to avoid the Prime Minister giving her reaction time after time. We need to find a location where this can be done most effectively: that is not in Downing Street. If she said anything in London she would still be dogged in Manchester, Consequently, Mr Gaffin is trying to find a way of coping in Manchester which minimises the amount of trouble for the PM.

In Africa

We need to consider what advice we should give to Mr Thatcher and Mark in Algeria. This is difficult since we do not know any details or circumstances. But what is clear is that there is only one way to deal with the issue - for Mark and Mr Thatcher to hold a press conference, filmed without separate BBC, ITN, IRN interviews, at which one story comes out.

Second, it is absolutely crucial in view of the expense run up in the search that Mark resists every blandishment on the part of any individual newspaper to buy up his story. He must show no partiality, but deal even handedly with all in open press conference, so that no one can level charges against him.

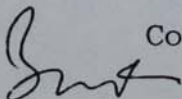
Third, it is essential that any telephone calls as between Mark and Prime Minister are conducted in absolute privacy.

Back in London

Whatever the access in Africa, the British media will give saturation coverage to the return home of Mark and Mr Thatcher. Again there is much to be said for killing that interest with a press conference at the airport on arrival, which we could organise.

We shall need to give thought to the Prime Minister's welcome. The press would give their right arms for a reunion picture. They should be denied it and the reunion should be behind closed doors either here or at Chequers?

Could we discuss?



B. INGHAM

DRAFT STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

I am very relieved and thankful to have received confirmation that Mark, his co-driver and crew are safe and well. It has been an ordeal for all of us and not least for Charlotte Verney's elderly mother in France.

I ~~sh~~^{Mali}ould like to thank the ~~Algerian~~ and French Governments ^{for all they have done to help} who ~~have clearly made tremendous efforts to~~ find Mark and his colleagues. My husband ~~was~~ is enormously impressed with the search and rescue operation they mounted. ^{They have been wonderful.}

We are also deeply grateful for and touched by the many expressions of support and good wishes and the large number of offers of help which have poured into 10 Downing Street these last few days. They have warmed ~~my~~^{our} hearts and been of great comfort.

Above all I should like to express my ~~deepest~~^{deepest} gratitude to the Government of Algeria for all they have done.