



10 DOWNING STREET

*Mr. [unclear]  
[unclear]  
[unclear] 9/11/79*

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 October 1979

PERSONAL

7

*Dear Mr. Worsthorne*

I am sorry that you felt slighted by the decision not to conduct the proposed interview for the Sunday Telegraph with you last week. You should certainly not assume that you are therefore "judged an enemy".

I took the straightforward view that it would be better not to have so strong a by-line on the piece; that it might indeed come between what I had to say and the lay reader.

I am grateful for your comments and I hope we shall be able to work together in a common cause.

*Yours sincerely  
Margaret Thatcher*

Peregrine Worsthorne Esq

PRIME MINISTER


The attached letter from Peregrine Worsthorne seems to me unfortunate and somewhat peevish.

You will recall that we negotiated with the Deputy Editor for an appropriate interviewer for last week's Sunday Telegraph. You - and Gordon Reece agreed - discarded Peregrine Worsthorne because in fact he is a columnist rather than an interviewer and you felt that the personality might come between you and the reader. We thought of Ivan Fallon (and John Thompson himself, who was away) and settled on Ivan Rowan. Ivan Rowan was taken ill and the project was abandoned. You will recall also that it was suggested that Peregrine Worsthorne might use the slot left in your diary for some guidance for his own column last Sunday. But by that time the spare space in your diary had been taken up.

For Peregrine Worsthorne to respond to this reasonably objective assessment of the situation in this way is disappointing. To leap to the conclusion that you regard him as an enemy indicates some instability or personal insecurity.

It is a pity that the Deputy Editor told him, but speaking to John Thompson today it is apparent that this could not have been avoided.

I attach a draft reply for you to send to him, but I am quite confident you will meet him at Blackpool and it occurred to me that rather than send this you might like to pour oil on troubled waters in conversation.

  
Henry L James  
9 October 1979

PRIME MINISTER

You had planned to give an interview to the Sunday Telegraph at noon tomorrow. Unhappily Ivan Rowan has been taken seriously ill and whisked off to hospital. We have been unable to find another suitable interviewer.

The Deputy Editor is contrite, and very disappointed. He suggested as an alternative - knowing that there was a slot in your diary, that perhaps you could see Peregrine Worsthorne, not on the record, but unattributably, to give him your basic thinking in anticipation of a major piece he is writing next Sunday as a curtain-raiser to your Party Conference.

I have spoken to Gordon Reece about this. He is, on the whole, against the idea. It must be a matter for political judgment: it seems to me that it would be a useful opportunity to get some of your political thinking through, but you may feel that editorially the Sunday Telegraph will be reasonably sound anyway from your point of view. In which case we should welcome a gap in your diary for what is in any event a busy day. I have told the Deputy Editor that we are unlikely to accept his suggestion; but he will stand by for a decision tomorrow morning.



Henry L James  
2 October 1979

RAM  
9/2/10

PRIME MINISTER

We agreed that we might do an interview for the "Sunday Telegraph" for publication on Sunday 7 October - this would be in practice our only national newspaper coverage pre-Conference. So there would be echoes from "NOW!". The difficulty was in getting the right interviewer. I specifically excluded Ian Waller, and you specifically excluded Peregrine Worsthorne. Gordon Reece agrees to the exclusion of both.

John Thompson is on holiday out of the country, and would not be available, though he would be the ideal. Ivan Fallon is not an interviewer. He is unpractised in the technique, though a good sound columnist. The Deputy Editor suggests Ivor Rowan. Ivor Rowan is a founder member of the newspaper and an old Telegraph hand. He has been a general writer on home affairs as well as a specialist defence correspondent in his day. Of recent years, he has become better known as a profile writer, but is in fact a senior member of the editorial team; he would therefore be briefed across the board. We would know the range of questions beforehand.

I think this is our best bet; and I hope you will agree to see him. We should leave it as late as possible and that would mean Wednesday of next week - a full day of course, but nevertheless 45 minutes could be found. May I go ahead on this, please? We could perhaps discuss a little further when I see you on Sunday afternoon at Chequers.



Henry L James

29 September 1979

Yes sir.