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year murdered Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games): "You bastard, we'll get you, you went against your country." I put Mascarenhas on a retainer. He amply justified that and seven years later became a permanent member of the foreign staff with consequences I will relate in chapter 19.

The *Sunday Times* I inherited could fairly be described as a Conservative newspaper. Its editorials no longer slavishly echoed the party line as they had done in Lord Kemsley's time, but my conviction was that it should not have any party line at all.

I was well aware that even an independent, unpredictable editorial might have fewer readers than the TV guide, but the editorial page was where we could speak to the opinion formers and firmly establish the tone of the paper. The aspiration I brought to the page was that we should try to judge every issue on its merits, questioning the use of power by government, the courts, and corporations, but fairly, and always balancing respect for individual human dignity and freedom with the imperatives of order. That was easier said than done.

Editorials under Denis Hamilton had been written by William Rees-Mogg and Hugo Young, with some contributions by me. I straightaway replaced this troika with an editorial board of eight that I chaired for up to two hours every Friday morning. It included the foreign editor, the business editor, the religious affairs editor (who was also an expert on Northern Ireland), the labor editor, the political editor, a political columnist, and a former editor of the paper who had retired to academic life.

The group brought special knowledge to the arguments, which at times were strenuous. The most contentious issues, apart from the selectors' choice of fast bowlers for the cricket tests, were Britain's role in the European Union (go in and

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stay in); Pershing missiles from President Ronald Reagan (yes, please); what to do about overweening trade unions; the propriety of our disclosing cabinet discussions in extracts from the diaries of the late Richard Crossman; Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech on immigration; internment and ill treatment of IRA suspects in Northern Ireland; and skirmishes between the editorial board's interventionists and the laissez-faire insurgents, all trying to find the way to the British economic miracle in the dark mazes of economic policy.

The inner strength of the editorials was that they were not spun off the top of the head. They drew on solid reporting, investigations we commissioned, seminars we organized on the economy and Northern Ireland, and reconstructions of major political events. Instead of the staple editorial bemoaning Britain's low levels of productivity, for instance, we asked the feature writer Stephen Fay to go into the factories and solve a mystery: why does a British welder in Ford's Dagenham plant produce 110 Cortina doors an hour when a worker in Germany, Belgium, or Spain, using the same machinery to the same management plan, produces 240 an hour? (Answer: labor-management trench wars.)

The tricky part of not having a party line came during general elections, when all newspapers conventionally endorse a party and the "red top" tabloids ramp up the propaganda war. Denis Hamilton had told me on appointment as editor, "You'll have total freedom from Roy [Thomson]—so long as you don't attack the Queen." That idea had never impinged on the fringe of my consciousness, but I tested the freedom of opinion in the October 1974 election.

Tory prime minister Edward Heath had called and narrowly lost an election in March based on the theme "Who governs Britain?" The coal miners, going slow in a wage dispute, had forced him into allowing commercial enterprises to use electricity only

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three days a week. We were certainly on his side in principle but were persuaded that Labour's "social contract" might end the warfare (it did only for a time) and that the Labour ministers—Roy Jenkins, James Callaghan, Anthony Crosland, Denis Healey, and Harold Lever—were a more impressive bunch.

Hamilton, reading my mind, had gently suggested that Lord Thomson would be displeased if the *Sunday Times* endorsed Labour. Thomson usually called me on a Saturday night to ask whether we'd yet overtaken the combined circulations of both opposition qualities (we were close). This Saturday I took the chance to mention that I was inclined to endorse Harold Wilson and Labour against Edward Heath and the Tories. Thomson made some shrewd comments on the two leaders and concluded, "Well, it's up to you, Harold. How's the run going?"

By 1979 the Labour Party was a shadow of its purposive self in the great days of Clement Attlee. It was frustrated by its ties to the trade unions and the public-sector unions in particular, which demanded more and more for less and less—their attitude toward the nobler ideals of socialism climaxing in the 1979 "winter of discontent" strikes, when they stopped cancer patients from going into hospitals for treatment.

Michael Jones, who'd become political editor, realized sooner than most that the Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, waiting in the wings, could not be dismissed as a right-wing harridan whose middle-class accent and suburban outlook would doom the Tories to the wilderness. I agreed. When she was a backbencher, I happened to be at some stuffy City of London dinner, seated at the same table with a group of financiers. These were regarded as pillars of the Tory Party. She was not in the least in awe of their millions. I relished the way she assailed them for being more greedily interested in money manipulations than in investing in the business of manufacturing and managing the unions more effectively.

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The decay of the Labour Party in the late 1970s was painful to report. It was infiltrated by Trotskyites creating cells in around one hundred moribund constituency parties, working by stealth to undermine any Labour man lacking a taste for a Soviet state. Jones tape-recorded one of the Trots in full flow promising "a civil war and the terrible death and destruction and bloodshed that would mean." It didn't seem much of a vote catcher to me. More serious were the strenuous efforts by left-wingers in the National Union of Journalists to impose a closed shop, meaning nobody could write for the paper unless he had a union card. Since a closed shop would hamper us in so many ways, I resisted the move, with support from Margaret Thatcher, while the Labour ministers I most respected sat on their hands. But as editors rallied, some moderates in the Labour Party dared put their heads over the parapet, and the legislation died.

All of us on the editorial board remained dismayed by two aspects of British life in the 1970s: the grip some recalcitrant unions had on the Labour Party and the stultifying secrecy in government. The great showdown was the diaries of Richard Crossman, a former Oxford don who was a member of the Labour cabinet from 1964 to 1970. The rule was that ministers had to wait thirty years to publish a documented account of their experiences, and if they or anyone else wanted to publish sooner, they had to accept official censorship on pain of a criminal prosecution under the Official Secrets Act.

Crossman's ambition was to illuminate how Britain was governed: he wanted to show that civil servants called the shots more often than the public realized, that cabinet meetings were not the decisive forum of popular imagination and MPs had little real power. He'd learned in September 1973,

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when I first invited him to lunch at the paper, that he had only six months to live. The priorities in his mind were such that his first action, even before he finalized his will, was to finish his two years of editing and give clear instructions to his executors completely to reject any censorship. He predicted there'd be pressure for suppression and truncation of his work, from both Whitehall (the civil service) and Westminster (the politicians), and he was right. After his death, his executors promised they'd not publish without official approval, and the government asked us to give the same promise.

Denis Hamilton was in favor of giving in, but when I assured him that we'd studied the law and prepared our case, he went along with the stratagem I devised. With only two or three on the staff in the know, I prepared an uncensored first serial and sent it to press on the night of Saturday, January 25, 1975. Roy Thomson and his son Kenneth happened to be paying a rare visit to my office that night. I told them that as soon as the prime minister's office got its hands on a copy, we expected a court order to stop the presses. Kenneth was worried; his father simply said, "You happy in your own mind, Harold?" I told him I was. There was no breach of national security. People should know how they were governed. "A good read, eh?" said the owner as he went happily off with his paper.

No court order reached us that night, but the noises from Whitehall were menacing. Every day we expected an injunction and had a bevy of lawyers on standby; I was advised we'd surely lose. Then Cabinet Secretary Sir John Hunt proposed to discuss what we might and might not publish in future extracts. I declined to meet with him. I sent two deputies because I couldn't trust myself to behave with the appropriate courtesy.

I wasn't aware of it at the time, but in 2005 Bernard Donoghue, who assisted the prime minister, published his *Downing*

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Street Diary: With Harold Wilson in No. 10, which includes this entry on January 14, 1974, concerning a conversation he had with Attorney General Sam Silkin: "[Sam] had met Harold Evans for the first time the other evening at the American Ambassador's residence and thought he was a 'fanatic' for open government. . . . Sam said, 'He's very tough. He said to me "It's granite against granite." He may be granite. I certainly am not.'" It didn't sound like me, but if I didn't recognize myself in this scene, I also didn't recognize the sheep the attorney general affected to be.

For nine weeks I played cat and mouse with the Cabinet Office, accepting some requests for deletions, but in the end we published 100,000 words and broke every restriction. The attorney general then shed his wool and bared his teeth. He sought a court order to force the publisher of Crossman's book to accept the censorship we'd defeated. I couldn't tolerate seeing the executors and publisher singled out in this way. Within days of the writ being served on them, we ran unpublished Crossman material and were duly joined in the legal action.

We lost in the High Court but won in the Court of Appeal. Soon afterward a committee of inquiry, to which I gave evidence, recommended that ministerial memoirs no longer be regulated by statute. The logjam had been broken, but an even fiercer contest with government was pending.