

Memoirs show Thatcher is bitter, say targets

LONDON (Reuters) — Former British ministers criticized in the memoirs of Margaret Thatcher dismissed her this week as an embittered woman seeking scapegoats for her own mistakes.

"The Margaret Thatcher picture has to be seen in context of her downfall," said her former chancellor of the exchequer, Nigel Lawson. "This is something, understandably perhaps, even three years later she finds it very difficult to come to terms with."

Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Iron Lady's onetime deputy prime minister, told BBC radio: "It's a very, very sad thing. I'm sad now that she is not sustaining the reputation of her great achievements by looking in others all the time for the causes of what went wrong."

Thatcher was ousted as prime minister in November 1990 by a revolt within her own party leadership after 11 years of power and three general election victories in a row.

Both Howe and Lawson are the target of attacks in Thatcher's memoirs, serialized in the Sunday Times a few days after the Conservatives rallied round Prime Minister John Major at their annual conference in Blackpool, north England.

Extracts published Sunday indicate Thatcher, now a member of the non-elected House of Lords, did not regard Major as her natural successor. She questioned his grasp of "large ideas and strategies" and his tendency to accept the conventional wisdom.

Conservative politicians said her remarks are not worthy of a major political figure.

"I think that causes her to disparage her successors and also to find scapegoats among some of her close colleagues," Lawson said. "I do think she hasn't got the insight into the reasons why the party decided she must go. She is casting around, blaming others."

In her memoirs, Thatcher did not mince her words for Howe, whom she accused of "bale and treachery" for causing her downfall with a damning resignation speech to Parliament.

Howe, a former foreign secretary under Thatcher, said he was not in the least surprised by her attack. His one sin had been to disagree with Thatcher now and then, and he denied his resignation speech was malicious.

"It is inevitable I think that she is going to say that kind of thing — but bale and treachery, no," said Howe. "I did it with the utmost reluctance when I felt there was no alternative."

Palace' plot' freezes out Princess Di

LONDON (Reuters) — Buckingham Palace officials have hatched a "sinister" plot "of epic proportions" to freeze out Diana, Princess of Wales, from the royal stage, the Today newspaper reported this week.

The tabloid carried a two-page investigative article by its royal correspondents saying that "something sinister is happening, a plot of epic proportions whose purpose is to rewrite history and expunge forever the role of Diana."

Diana separated from Prince Charles last December after 11 years of marriage, plunging the monarchy into its worst crisis since the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936 and putting Charles's future accession to the throne in doubt.

"For 13 years she was the most photographed person in the world," said Today. "Now the world is seeing less and less of her, because grey men in the back-rooms of Buckingham Palace are succeeding in their attempts to draw her into the shadows."

"A recent official list of engagements made it appear that Diana, since her separation from Prince Charles, had opted for the easy life."

Today said those closest to the 32-year-old princess knew this was nonsense. The plot involves Diana's path being blocked wherever she turns, it said.

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