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the uncrowded British resorts, with their half-empty, windswept Victorian piers, timeless boardinghouses advertising VACANCY in the front window, and once intimidating grand hotels now too imposing for their own good.

On Sundays I'd collect Tina on the pillion of my bike, and we'd scout the coast for romantic hideaways. We'd hole up in some boardinghouse with a pile of books and magazines, eat at the baked-beans-on-toast cafés, scramble among the rocks for shells, and walk the downs atop the cliffs at Beachy Head. In Hastings one morning a downpour forced us to retreat to a smoke-filled pub, where we sat with the locals watching the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebration on television as the rain fell. On an excursion to the Irish coast at Connemara, we impractically considered buying a boathouse where we could disappear from the world. One magical Sunday exploring the coast of West Sussex, we found a little house with a For Sale sign at Angmering-on-Sea, where the ocean lapped right up to the back garden. We dreamt of buying it one day when we could afford it.

Meanwhile, at the *Sunday Times* we were not alone in our industrial misery. Waves of strikes crashed into and over the remaining seawalls, culminating in the 1979 chaos of the "winter of discontent." In two months thirty million working days were lost. I saw pickets blocking cancer victims arriving for treatment at St. Thomas' Hospital across the river from where I lived. Going to a restaurant through the entertainment center of Leicester Square, I walked past high piles of uncollected rotting garbage that earned it the name "Fester Square." The National Union of Journalists, pursuing a wage claim, made a mockery of years of press protests against secretive local authorities by actually asking council officers to deprive

people of news about gas leaks, fires, building plans, rents, and rates. It was like asking Sweeney Todd for a close shave.

The Thomson Organization sanctioned a dramatic bid to start anew. It offered to invest millions of pounds to buy out obstructive practices and overmanning, but the chapels and their unions didn't want a brave new world. Every proposal was rejected. As a result the paper was shut down in November 1978—a temporary break, we all thought, until negotiations resumed.

I drank the cup of bitterness many times over as I walked through the silence of the dead composing room, with its shrouded Linotypes and darkened offices. Gathering dust in my "pending" tray was a scoop of world importance. Anthony Mascarenhas, the man who'd exposed the genocide in East Pakistan, detected that Pakistan was well on the road to possessing a nuclear bomb. He pointed the finger at the then unknown Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, whose thefts of blueprints from a European facility would enable Pakistan to become the first nuclear power in the Muslim world. Khan, wrote Mascarenhas, hadn't stopped there. He'd supplied both Iran and Libya with centrifuge components and information. As the weeks of suspension turned into months, I gave approval for Mascarenhas to send his report to the Australian magazine *Eight Days*, started in Sydney by former *Sunday Times* executive Colin Chapman. Trading a world scoop of historical importance killed any lingering feelings I had of conciliating the unions.

We were suspended for a full year, but even when an agreement was reached to restart, the recidivists in the pressroom worked their mischief again, and the comps' national leaders reneged on the computer deal we'd worked out together.

I've never forgiven the print unions for what they did. Kenneth Thomson, Roy's son and then head of the company, was deeply wounded. Ken was a kindly, somewhat absentminded

man with a gentle sense of humor who thought the best of everyone he met. In Canada, where he lived, he was not "Lord Thomson"—"call me Ken"—and he never took his father's seat in the House of Lords. He delegated the management of Times Newspapers to a London board, but he took pride in the papers, as his father had. Even though the *Times* journalists had been paid normal salaries for a year of not working, soon after returning to work they called a strike for more money. That was the last straw, a betrayal of the Thomson family, which had spent millions to save the *Times*. Thomson sadly concluded that he could do no more. "I promised Dad I'd keep the *Times* going, Harold, but this is too much," he said. He put both papers up for sale. I led a management buyout bid for the *Sunday Times*, but Thomson's London management, and Denis Hamilton, thought that Rupert Murdoch and his News Corporation had a better chance of dealing with the unions.

I'd encountered Murdoch often enough to appreciate the delusiveness of his charm. He was a chameleon who could switch from good humor to menace. I'd heard every jolly swagman's yarn that placed him somewhere between Ned Kelly and Citizen Kane. I'd been at seminars on newspaper ethics where he'd acted like a caged lion, glowering his contempt for the do-gooders and sappy academics. I often agreed with him. Once, expressing admiration of the *Sunday Times'* investigations, he'd joked that I should take over the *Village Voice* and teach the journalists there the meaning of responsibility. My friend Australian editor Graham Perkins had declined to work for Murdoch but thought that within the hard exterior of the riverboat gambler, there might still be found the lost idealist of the "Red Rupert" of his Oxford days. I didn't think that, but after the years of hand-wringing at our board meetings, I did find his buccaneering can-do style refreshing. "Sure," he said with a laugh, "we'll sort out the unions. We're going to print

the *Sunday Times* in two sections, Friday and Saturday, and go up in size." Music to my ears.

The journalists felt badly let down by the Thomson management; they didn't trust Murdoch. The Australians associated with the paper were especially vehement, saying that he had fired every editor who'd stood up to him and that he would have no respect for the paper's cherished independence or any promises he made. But when the *Sunday Times* journalists' chapel came to a vote at the end of a passionate debate (which as management I could not attend), it voted against a court action to force a reference back to the Monopolies Commission. Many of them feared that a breakdown would mean the end of our sister paper, the *Times*. Fourteen of them favoring legal action, members of the so-called Gravediggers Club, printed T-shirts bearing the cry DON'T BLAME US. WE VOTED AGAINST.

The Thomson Organization and Parliament had asked Murdoch for guarantees that the tradition of editorial independence of both papers would continue to be protected in two ways: by the appointment of independent national directors to the board and by five guarantees of editorial freedom. Murdoch readily promised that editors would control the political policies of their papers; they would have freedom within agreed annual budgets; they would not be subject to instruction from either the proprietor or management on the selection and balance of news and opinion; instructions to journalists would be given only by their editors; and any future sale of the titles would require the agreement of a majority of the independent national directors.

It was on the basis of these guarantees, and only because of them, that in February 1981 I accepted Murdoch's invitation to edit the *Times*, giving up the job that had given me such fulfillment and pride at the *Sunday Times* and my power base as a defender of press freedom. My ambition got the better of my

judgment. I guess the bitter experience with the unions had made me eager for a new start. I hadn't been enchanted either by the furtiveness of Thomson's London management during the sale. Still, it was wrenching to leave my friends at the *Sunday Times*. It had been a partnership sustained by a conviction everyone shared: we were doing something worthwhile in bringing the public early intelligence they'd not get anywhere else and associating it with the highest levels of cultural commentary we could achieve. It was a community of shared values—not political values, but the values of purposeful, honest journalism. Selecting and promoting people of excellence who had the same ideals, and whom I could trust to live by them in a collaborative enterprise, had been one of my principal tasks as editor.

Despite the difficulties we'd had with the national leaders of the print unions, I also retained an affection for the printers who worked with us. On my last Saturday evening putting the front page to bed, I was touched that the comps' farewell was an honor rarely accorded to anyone outside their union: they "banged me out," which meant that everyone on the floor seized whatever piece of metal was to hand and hammered away, creating a tremendous noise as I waved goodbye holding my last page proof. The photographers later ended a more sedate dinner given by the company by hoisting me on their shoulders. A week later at the *Times*, on my first night as editor, the comps accorded me the privilege of pushing the front page into the foundry, a pleasant welcome that was not a harbinger of things to come elsewhere in the building.

In my first six months at the *Times*, Murdoch was an electric presence, vivid and amusing, direct and fast in his decisions, and a good ally against the old guard, as I worked to sharpen the paper's news values while retaining every element of its traditional coverage of Parliament, the law, obituaries, and the

arts. I had his enthusiasm for a thorough overhaul—"Go to it, Harry"—making headlines more readable and letting photographs breathe. He overruled the squeaks from his advertising director when I swept classified advertising off the back page for an irreverent parliamentary sketch and an information service. I brought in new political writers and started a new tabloid-size arts section.

Twenty-one days into my editorship I was at dinner with Tina at Langan's Brasserie just off Piccadilly on the night President Ronald Reagan was shot. I left the dinner table in a tearing hurry to oversee our coverage, calling for the most detailed narrative, a separate report on the gunman, another on the violent history attendant upon American presidents, and a third on the character of the next in line, Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush. There was argument around the picture desk about which of three near-simultaneous photographs we should use—one of the president looking toward the shooter, one of him being hit, or one of him being bundled into a car. This was an unusual true sequence, and to choose just one or to use three small images would be to miss an opportunity. I schemed all three running six columns wide down the page. Finally I ruled that the whole front page would be given to all the Reagan elements, and I created a second "front page" in the normal *Times* style for other news. We developed the same approach for other late-breaking news: the *Challenger* shuttle explosion; Israel's bombing raid on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor; the assassination of Anwar Sadat; riots in London and Liverpool.

The Reagan front page was a departure from the traditional *Times* style, as dramatic as the event, and I'm still proud of it today. There were mutterings, of course, from some of the old guard I'd dislodged from positions they had come to see as tenured. But readers responded in the thousands. Circulation stopped falling. News Corporation's 1981 annual report said

that the "exciting" editorial changes had the "extremely gratifying" result of increasing the paper's circulation from 276,000 to more than 300,000.

My difficulties with Rupert really began in the autumn of 1981, as the economy showed little sign of recovery from a recession. Mrs. Thatcher's government was facing a catastrophic fall in popularity. We supported her editorially on any number of issues, including her determination to curb excessive pay demands by the civil service, but we were critical of her reliance on monetary policy in a recession and disappointed that she seemed unwilling to tackle the abuses of the trade unions as she'd promised. (She made up for that later.) At the same time, we were unsparing in documenting the disintegration and spiritual collapse of the opposing Labour Party. We identified the virtually unknown left-wing activists who were conspiring to win control of the party leadership by changes in the party's constitution and with that gave fair weather to the rise of the Social Democratic Party. However, it soon became obvious that nothing less than unquestioning backing of Thatcher on every issue would satisfy Rupert.

His mouthpiece, Gerald Long, wrote me a stream of memos asking me to downplay or suppress news that was bad for the government. In the spring of 1981 the chancellor of the exchequer had said the recession was over and recovery would begin in the early summer. It didn't. Six months later the Central Statistical Office released figures showing that output had fallen for the sixth successive quarter. Long stood amazed at our temerity in printing a summary of this official report. Did I not understand that if the government said the recession was over, it was over? As far as I was concerned, his rebuke was red rag to a bull. I was not going to let anyone in management tell me to fix the news. (Output fell by 2.3 percent in 1981.)

The warfare with Long escalated through the winter of

1981–1982, with Murdoch himself giving instructions to editorial writers and continually ducking the pledge to give me a budget. (Of course this came in handy later for the bogus charge that I had exceeded nonexistent limits.) In fact, by this time he'd blithely broken all his editorial pledges. Stories mysteriously appeared that I was thinking of resigning or being asked to resign. Murdoch denied them all. On February 10, 1982, hours after I'd been named Editor of the Year in the Granada press awards, he issued a statement saying there were absolutely no plans to replace Harold Evans, whose outstanding qualities etc. The reality was that two weeks later, he went to the national directors to ask them to dismiss me and install a new editor. They refused twice. They told him that if he himself dismissed me, I had a right of appeal to them and no pressure should be brought on me.

It was a dark time, and then came the news that I'd long dreaded. Since receiving his gold watch (and his miserable pension) for fifty years on the railway, Dad had lived very happily with Mum in a bungalow by the sea in Prestatyn, North Wales. Into his eighties, he rode his bike to the post office and bowling green and played football with his visiting grandchildren, cajoling my first son, Mike, to shoot with both feet and eat his crusts. In the summer he put on his glossy peaked cap for a return to railway work, giving rides to children on a miniature steam train on the promenade at Rhyl; he took it as seriously as he had driving mainline expresses. Mum and Dad lived close to an unpretentious golf club, and Dad liked to walk to it through the sand hills for a game of darts and for the oxygen of his days—conversation about the world.

He'd been a staunch trade unionist all his life and on the Labour left, but he had a dim view of the irresponsibility that

had come to pass for trade unionism. I have his diaries—an entry of his activities every day, written in a hand far more legible than mine—and notebooks of the family budget ("Good news railway pension increased by 40 pence a month from 7.23 to 7.63"). Every Sunday, I am touched to see, he had recorded the length of the suspension at the *Sunday Times*. The big highlight of their retirement was to cross the Atlantic twice to stay with my brother Peter and his wife, Dorothy, in Ontario. They took the dome-car train—naturally—to make the 2,400-mile journey to the Rockies and beyond to Vancouver, giving Dad a good excuse to wear a cowboy hat and ride in the canyons of his imagination.

Then the inescapable day arrived. Dad had recovered from the heart attack he'd had while visiting us in Kent and resumed his normal life in Prestatyn. Now, a year later, as I was sending the *Times* to press, word came that he had suffered a stroke and was in a coma in the hospital in Prestatyn. He was in his eighty-second year.

All the sons had kept in close touch with Mum and Dad, Fred especially since John was in distant parts on Foreign Office work and Peter had emigrated to work for an insurance company in Canada. We were all told that Dad would be in a coma indefinitely, and we were discouraged from visiting: he would not be able to see or hear anyone or speak to us. In about the third week, though, Enid went to the hospital to visit; my parents were fond of her and she of them. She was surprised to find him sitting upright in a chair by the bed. She asked him to nod if he could hear her; she thought he did. All four sons hastened to Prestatyn—Peter from Canada, John from Hong Kong, Fred from Gloucester, and me from London. Mum was too ill to be with us. We stood by his bed and one by one spoke to him, telling him that we were all together again for the first time in many years. We thought we detected a responsive flutter of an eyelid.

Dad died forty-eight hours later. His friends said, "He was waiting for his four sons," and I think he was. We buried him on the hill in Bluebell Wood cemetery at Coed Bell, overlooking the sea. Two months later Mum, brokenhearted, joined him there. For many years I couldn't bear to open the diaries of their good last years together.

On Tuesday, March 9, 1982, upon my return from my father's funeral, while I was supervising the newspaper's budget edition (a special edition presenting the chancellor's annual budget) Murdoch summoned me to his office. He leaned forward in his chair, took off his glasses, and stared at me. "I want your resignation today," he said. I was astonished at how calm I was: it was rather like the out-of-body sensation I'd had the time I was mugged in New York and seemed to be watching myself from above. I noticed how red the rim of his left eye was, the thickness of the black hair on the back of his hands. "You cannot have my resignation," I heard myself saying. "I refuse." I asked what criticisms he had of the paper. "Oh, you've done a good job with the paper, sure. We haven't signed your contract, you know [I didn't], but we'll honor it." And then he veered. "You've said I put pressure on you. I haven't put any pressure on you. I've always made it clear political policy is yours to decide." In the midst of these exchanges, his voice wavered. He began to say how much harder it was for him than for me. No need for me to worry. I'd get lots of jobs. He'd wondered whether I'd take a job with his News International but guessed I would refuse. He'd guessed right.

After some twenty minutes I said I had to get back to the budget edition. As I left, saying he did not have my resignation, I asked whom he had in mind for my exit. It was then I learned that he'd suborned my deputy, Charles Douglas-Home. "Can't

bring in another outsider at this stage," Murdoch said. "He'll be all right for the time being."

Back in my office, I confronted Douglas-Home. Eton and the Royal Scots Greys, the second son of the second son of the thirteenth Earl of Home, "Charlie" was a member of the *Times* old guard par excellence. I'd only appointed him as a gesture to that faction. He'd been most ardent in expressing his determination to stand with me in preserving the paper from managerial interference, so I asked him how he could have conspired for my job. He replied, "I would do anything to edit the *Times*. Wouldn't you?" Saying "No, I wouldn't do anything to edit the *Times*" seemed wan in the glare of his ambition. Accustomed to having a loyal and supportive deputy at the *Sunday Times*, I'd underestimated how much Douglas-Home longed for the validation of being anointed leader of the "top people's paper."

I was glad that I had kept in touch with the four key original national directors out of the six (the two others were Murdoch appointees). They assured me of their votes if I wanted to stay on, but I now had to envisage what that would mean. Nothing in my experience compared to the atmosphere of intrigue, fear, and spite inflicted on the paper by Murdoch's lieutenants. I was confident I could stand up to the bullyboys, but why should I give any more of my time and energies to an enterprise where every man feared another's hand? I was certainly not going to dilute, still forsake, a lifetime commitment to journalism free of political manipulation. I got madder and madder. I spent a morning discussing tactics in a meeting with my chief ally among the national directors, the burly Lord (Alf) Robens, another Manchester man (and formerly in charge of Britain's nationalized coal mines). He expressed contempt for Murdoch and his "methods," a reference to a ploy by which Murdoch had attempted to move ownership of the papers' titles out of Times Newspapers and into News International

without consulting the national directors as required. Robens affirmed my feeling: "You'll be in a lunatic asylum at the end of six months the way they go on in that place." On his advice I went back to the paper and continued editing and writing.

Murdoch had gone to New York, but his henchmen told the press I'd resigned, when I had not. They proffered statements praising my record. I was not about to comply with this pretense, so I took my time and continued with my news and opinion conferences with senior staff. After a week, besieged outside my house by TV cameramen and reporters, and only when my lawyers were satisfied with the terms, I resigned on ITN's *News at Ten*, citing "the differences between me and Mr. Murdoch."

It was March 15. Only later did I recognize the significance of the date. One of the Shakespeare passages my father knew well and liked to declaim was "Beware the ides of March."

Two decades later, when Murdoch's appetite for newspapers led him to acquire the *Wall Street Journal*, I could not restrain a mirthless laugh on reading that the controversial sale in 2007 was hedged about with guarantees enforceable by a well-remunerated troika of the good and wise. This illustrious tribunal very shortly afterward had the pleasure of reading that the editor had resigned without their knowing, not to mention their approving. Still, I have to say that Murdoch's spirited capacity for risk and innovation is proving better for this fine newspaper than the lackluster Dow Jones management and those Bancroft family members who sold it to him.

Frankly, I agree with Murdoch now that editorial guarantees are not worth the paper they are written on. At Times Newspapers, their invention enabled an air of respectability to be given to an unnecessary and hazardous extension of monopoly power, and they suggested that the *Times* tradition had been maintained when behind the fake ivy it could so

easily be plundered. Much as I appreciated the stalwart support of the independent national directors, in reality outsiders are incapable of monitoring the daily turmoil of a newspaper. This has nothing to do with their theoretical powers, and increasing or entrenching them would make no difference. Arbitration is impossible on the innumerable issues that may arise at warp speed every day between editor and management. Moreover, any intervention on editorial matters inevitably hazards the future relationship between complaining editor and resentful proprietor.

That relationship has to be based on trust and mutual respect. I recognize that the proprietor who imposes a political policy and fires a recalcitrant editor can invoke his right to do what he will with his property. He is the one risking his capital. In the case of Times Newspapers, however, the situation was different—Murdoch unequivocally forswore that right when he signed the guarantees to Parliament.

Today I have no residual emotional hostility toward him. On the contrary, I have found many things to admire: his managerial effectiveness, his long love affair with newspapers, his courage in challenging the big three television networks in the United States with a fourth, and altogether in his pitting his nerve and vision against timid conventional wisdom. And there was even one issue where he proved positively heroic.

In my efforts at a staff buyout of the *Sunday Times* in 1981, the print unions at Times Newspapers had let it be known that they preferred Rupert Murdoch to the other bidders for the titles. "We can work with Rupert," a general secretary had told me. ("You mean *not* work," I'd rejoined.) The unions took Murdoch's shilling—and five years later he put them to the sword. It was an equitable sequel. Under the guise of starting a new evening paper at Wapping, he set up a new plant capable of producing all his papers and secretly gave bargaining

rights to the sensible electricians union, which in turn reached an agreement for journalists and clerks to access computerized typesetting. He installed color presses capable of printing both the *Sunday Times* and the *Times*, as well as his other major titles, the *News of the World* and the *Sun*. Then on January 24, 1986, in an astonishing commando operation no less remarkable because it was planned in total secrecy, he overnight switched production of Times Newspapers from the battlefield of Grays Inn Road to a new plant at Wapping wrapped in looped barbed wire.

Six thousand members of all the unions went on strike and plunged the journalists on the papers into a crisis of conscience. A few refused to cross the picket lines. Two foreign correspondents who did, David Blundy and Jon Swain, said it was like being back in Beirut or Belfast, escorted by an armored car on the day they went through the barricades. People in all departments who wished to go on working assembled at secret pickup points that changed daily; they were collected in coaches with metal grids on the windows. On Saturdays they were greeted by thousands of "flying pickets," demonstrators bused in from far and wide. The pickets rocked the coaches going in, the politer ones shouting "Judas" or "Effing scab," and tried to stop the trucks going out with the papers. Only the presence of mounted police prevented the violence from getting out of hand. As it was, hundreds were injured and a thousand people were arrested.

At the height of the siege of Wapping, as it came to be known, a British television company called me in Washington, where I was now working, to ask if I'd appear on a program about it. On the morning of the show, the producers explained the lineup: "We have so-and-so defending Murdoch, and you and someone else attacking him."

"Wait a minute," I said. "You've got this all wrong. Murdoch is right. What he's doing is long overdue."

There was a pause. "We'll get back to you." An hour later they did. "Sorry, we have to drop you. Hope you understand. You don't fit the scenario."

But Murdoch did. The old script of endless warfare on Fleet Street that had always ended with a management whimper was being rewritten. The siege of Wapping lasted a full year, but not an issue of any of the papers printed there failed to come out. I didn't have any doubt where I stood. Murdoch and his managers had struck a redemptive blow for the freedom of the press. We in the old management that cared so much for responsible journalism had failed, and he'd succeeded. Wapping was brave in concept and brilliant in execution. What was achieved there made it possible for other newspapers to follow. Not only that, but it opened the way for new publications to begin. The *Independent* newspaper was nourished at birth by this victory (staffed in part by a diaspora from the *Sunday Times*). For that every British newspaperman is in his debt. The carnivore, as Murdoch aptly put it, liberated the herbivores.