

TARZAN: MY

FEUDS

WITH

MAGGIE



Mr Heseltine leaving No 10 after quitting yesterday



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FURIOUS Michael Heseltine quit as Defence Secretary yesterday — and unleashed an amazing attack on Premier Margaret Thatcher.

He spoke of their bitter feuds over the ailing Westland helicopter firm — and said there was no longer “a basis of trust” between them.

Hours earlier, Mr Heseltine — nicknamed Tarzan — had stalked out of a Cabinet meeting

Heseltine quits

By **TREVOR KAVANAGH**,
Political Editor

and announced his resignation on the steps of 10 Downing Street.

Mr Heseltine had arrived there at 10am in his official blue Jaguar. During the following 70 minutes, Mrs Thatcher

effectively ordered his “gagging” over his opposition to the American rescue bid for Westland.

At 11.10, Mr Heseltine—refusing to be silenced—swept up his papers and stalked out of the meeting.

He told Mrs Thatcher, who was sitting directly opposite him: “I am very

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sorry. That means I will have to leave this Cabinet.

Outside No. 10, Mr Heseltine simply told newsmen: "I have resigned from the Cabinet." Then he strode off to his Defence Ministry office.

Meanwhile the Cabinet meeting was adjourned and, just 15 minutes after Mr Heseltine quit, Mrs Thatcher had appointed Scottish Secretary George Younger to replace him.

Mr Heseltine, taken aback by the speed of the switch, was later asked at

a Pres conference if he had been "set up"

"That was a good question and that was a good answer," he replied—indicating he agreed with the interpretation.

His direct attack on Mrs Thatcher came in an unprecedented account of top-secret Cabinet committee meetings.

Mr Heseltine accused her of deliberately attempting to avoid "profound issues" on the defence of Britain.

He added: "This is not a proper way to conduct government and ulti-

mately not an approach for which I can share responsibility."

His resignation came as Westland shareholders prepare to meet next Tuesday to decide on the U.S. Sikorsky rescue.

Mr Heseltine said he could not comply with Mrs Thatcher's ruling that all statements on Westland must now first be rubber-stamped by the Cabinet office. He added:

● I could not accept that constraint in the critical few days before the Westland shareholders decide.

I had no choice but to accept or resign. I left the Cabinet.

To be Secretary of State for Defence in a Tory government is one of the highest distinctions one can achieve.

But if the basis of trust between the Prime Minister and her Defence Secretary no longer exists, there is no place for me with honour in such a Cabinet.

● *Mr Heseltine accused colleagues of making "ill-tempered" attempts to block the Euro consor-*

tium's rescue bid

And he claimed Mrs Thatcher had sided with his chief Cabinet rival, Industry Secretary Leon Brittan, to push Westland into Sikorsky's arms.

He said:

● The Government in its official position has sought to suggest it has adopted an even-handed approach between the viable offers.

In practice, throughout, the attempt has been made to remove any obstacles to the offer by Sikorsky/Fiat, even to the extent of changing existing Government policy.

● *Mr Heseltine then turned his anger on arch-rival Mr Brittan.*

He accused him of breaching Cabinet agreements to leave Westland's fate to its shareholders.

"Mr Heseltine said Mr Brittan had told British Aerospace on Wednesday night that its role in the European consortium was against the national interest" — and it should withdraw.

"So much for the wish of the sponsoring department to leave the matter to the shareholders," added Mr Heseltine acidly.

Last night Mrs Thatcher denied suggestions that she had allowed Mr Heseltine to be "set up."