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9 FEB 1992

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Margaret Roberts THATCHER

UNITED KINGDOM

Prime Minister
(since May 1979)

Addressed as:
Prime Minister



Margaret Thatcher, leader of the Conservative Party since 1975, is the first woman ever to serve as Prime Minister of Britain or of any European country. She achieved that distinction in the 1979 elections, which gave her party a comfortable 43-seat majority in Parliament. As Prime Minister, Thatcher, a self-proclaimed crusader for the economic revival of Great Britain, has taken a tough stand on the economy, been decisive in both domestic and international actions, and paid close attention to the work of the government. Although she has not yet achieved her goal of making Britain a commercially competitive nation, she has shown few signs of wavering from her commitment to that goal. During 1981 Thatcher has reorganized her Cabinet twice in attempts to unify the members of her government behind her economic program. [REDACTED]

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Described by some observers as boldly ideological because of her decisiveness and her rather harsh economic policies, Thatcher has nonetheless demonstrated that she is also shrewdly practical. To offset her inexperience in foreign affairs when she assumed office, she quickly surrounded herself with veteran foreign policy specialists. For her Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, she selected Peter Lord Carrington, probably the one person in the Cabinet whose judgment she trusts more than her own. Thatcher also relies heavily on and is generally supported by several other experienced members of her government: William Whitelaw, Secretary of State for the Home Office and Deputy Prime Minister; Sir Geoffrey Howe, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Education and Science; and John Nott, Secretary of State for Defense. [REDACTED]

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(b)(3)Attitude Toward the
United States and Defense

The Prime Minister has been somewhat skeptical of US leadership since the mid-1970s. She did, however, welcome the election of President Ronald Reagan, apparently because she thinks he will be an effective leader and will meet the challenge of the Soviet Union. She has called on West European nations to modernize their defense forces in order to be a match for Soviet military strength. In addition, she has insisted that her government take a more active role in decisions affecting the Western Alliance. Long an advocate of a strong NATO, Thatcher has endorsed the commitment of the US administration to the Alliance. [redacted]

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Career and Personal Data

The daughter of a grocer, Margaret Roberts won a scholarship to Somerville College, Oxford, where she studied chemistry in the 1940s. After working for four years as a research chemist in an industrial firm, she studied law, specializing in tax law and patents. A member of Parliament since 1959, she has held several government positions, including that of Secretary of State for Education and Science (1970-74). During 1974-75 she was shadow deputy chancellor of the exchequer. [redacted]

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The well-organized Thatcher works hard to master details of complex data. She expresses ideas clearly and logically. No recent British leader has had her powers of concentration, capacity for hard work, self-confidence, pluck and sharpness of focus. She defends her positions with skill and conviction; compromise comes hard for her, but it does come. She is a self-made woman in a party known for its male chauvinism. Thatcher is serious, dispassionate, determined and achievement oriented. There is little room in her life for the capricious or frivolous. [redacted]

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Thatcher, 56, enjoys reading and listening to music. She likes Cointreau and Scotch and soda; broiled Dover sole is a favorite main dish. Thatcher's husband, Denis, is a retired oil company executive. The Thatchers have 27-year-old twins, Mark and Carol. [redacted]

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13 October 1981

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