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Margaret Roberts THATCHER

UNITED KINGDOM

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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 in Britain or for that matter anywhere in Europe. She achieved the top post in the elections of 3 May 1979, when her party gained a comfortable 43-seat majority in Parliament. A self-proclaimed crusader for the economic revival of Great Britain, Thatcher has taken a tough stand on the economy, been decisive on domestic and international actions, and paid close attention to the work of the government during her first seven months as Prime Minister.

[Redacted]

Foreign Policy

[Redacted]

She was relatively inexperienced in foreign relations when she assumed office, but she quickly surrounded herself with experienced foreign affairs specialists. In mid-1979 her highly regarded Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, persuaded her to change her policy regarding black majority rule for Zimbabwe-Rhodesia from that of immediate recognition of the government of Abel Muzorewa to support for a constitutional conference. At that conference, which is currently under way in London, the African leaders and the British Government are seeking a joint resolution of the Rhodesian problem. Thatcher,

[Redacted] has insisted

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[redacted]

on her government taking a more active role in achieving decisions on issues that affect the Western alliance. A strong advocate of NATO, she has taken a personal interest in deciding upon the most effective nuclear weapon system for Britain's arsenal. She has called on West European nations to modernize their defense forces in order to be a match for Soviet military strength. [redacted]

Thatcher visited the United States in 1967 as a Foreign Leader Grantee. She met with then President Gerald Ford in Washington in 1975 and returned in 1977 to meet with President Jimmy Carter. Since becoming Prime Minister, she has traveled widely. [redacted]

Career and Personal Data

The daughter of a grocer, Margaret Roberts won a scholarship to Somerville College, Oxford, where she studied chemistry. After working four years as a research chemist for an industrial firm, she studied law, specializing in tax law and patents. A member of Parliament since 1959, she has served as joint parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance (1961-64), as Secretary of State for Education and Science (1970-74), and as shadow deputy chancellor of the exchequer (1974-75). [redacted]

[redacted]

Thatcher, 54, enjoys music and reading. [redacted]

[redacted] Thatcher's husband, Denis, retired as executive director of the Burmah Oil Company in May 1975. The Thatchers have 26-year-old twins, Mark and Carol. [redacted]

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