

Margaret Roberts THATCHER**UNITED KINGDOM***Prime Minister*
(since May 1979).*Addressed as:*
Prime Minister

Leader of the Conservative Party since 1975, Margaret Thatcher is the first woman ever to serve as Prime Minister of Britain or of any European country. A self-proclaimed crusader for free enterprise and British economic revival, she stresses the need to fight inflation, cut government spending, and control the money supply while increasing industrial productivity and bringing private business into key sectors of the economy.

Although she has not yet achieved her goal of restoring Britain's commercial competitiveness, she is determined to succeed. Thatcher often takes bold, decisive stands. Her handling of the Falkland Islands conflict and the image of resolute leadership which she projected during that crisis boosted her standing in the opinion polls and within her own party. With elections to be held by June 1984—they will probably take place in October 1983—her position as party leader is secure. Thatcher respects toughness. The press has dubbed her the Iron Lady; her critics contend that she is cold, rigidly doctrinaire, and autocratic. [redacted]

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During 1981 moderate Tories openly criticized Thatcher for her unwillingness to change her economic strategy and increase government spending to reduce Britain's double-digit unemployment rate. She responded by removing three of her leading critics from the Cabinet and by reiterating her belief that the stern economic measures she had instituted were necessary and that she would not change "just to court popularity." She also said (and still does) that by reducing inflation the government is, in fact, fighting unemployment. The 1982-83 budget, while not a change in her basic economic strategy, did mollify many critics because of its skillfully drawn provisions dealing with joblessness. [redacted]

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Foreign and Defense Policy

Thatcher is strongly anti-Soviet and a firm ally of the United States. She says that Britain cannot defend itself without a "close, effective, and warmhearted alliance" with this country. She welcomed the election of President Ronald Reagan, apparently because she believes he shares her views on the importance of private enterprise and the need to meet the Soviet challenge. In November 1982 she gave full backing to his decision to concentrate MX nuclear missiles in one location, noting that the US strategic nuclear force is the "final guarantor of Europe's liberty." Despite her general support for this country, Thatcher can be outspoken about those US policies with which she disagrees. In July 1982 she denounced the then existing US trade sanctions against those British firms having contracts for the Soviet gas pipeline, arguing that it was wrong for this country to prevent extant contracts from being fulfilled. [redacted]

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Long an advocate of a strong NATO, Thatcher has agreed to permit the stationing of US cruise missiles in Britain, beginning in 1983. She has also decided to modernize Britain's nuclear deterrent through the acquisition of the US Trident ballistic missile system. A

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proponent of multilateral disarmament, Thatcher says verification is not an optional extra in the disarmament process but is instead the "heart of the matter." In November 1981 she warmly endorsed President Reagan's "zero option" proposal for intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe. Thatcher has been one of Europe's strongest critics of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the curtailing of civil liberties in Poland. In October 1982 she visited Berlin and denounced the wall dividing that city as a "grim monument to a desolate creed." Thatcher supports British membership in the European Communities but is sharply critical of how the current EC budget is structured. [Redacted]

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Style

Thatcher is forceful and self-confident and often relies on just a few advisers when making policy decisions. In public appearances she is almost always poised and in command. A woman of formidable intellect, she expresses her ideas clearly and logically and defends them with skill and conviction. Compromise comes hard for her, especially in domestic issues. Few recent British leaders have had her capacity for hard work and mastery of detail. A self-made woman in a party known for its male chauvinism, Thatcher is serious and achievement oriented. She leaves little room in her life for the frivolous and has no tolerance for bureaucracy and bureaucratic delay. [Redacted]

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Career and Personal Data

The daughter of a grocer and a seamstress, Thatcher won a scholarship to Oxford, where she studied chemistry in the 1940s. She later studied law, specializing in tax law and patents. She has served in Parliament since 1959 and has held various government positions, including that of Secretary of State for Education and Science (1970-74). [Redacted]

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Thatcher, 57, enjoys listening to classical music and reading detective stories, historical novels, and biographies. Her husband, Denis, is a retired oil company executive. The Thatchers have 29-year-old twins, Mark and Carol. [Redacted]

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30 November 1982

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