

# Margaret Thatcher as freedom-fighter: "Statecraft"<sup>1</sup>, a political testament

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Spring was just dawning when the news fell : Baroness Thatcher's doctors had just ordered her to bow out of public life<sup>2</sup>, considering her precarious health to be a problem. She had suffered a series of small strokes since late last year, the latest incident having allegedly occurred on Tuesday, 23 March 2002.

The same week, her new book, *Statecraft*, was out in the shops. Some, no doubt, saw in the concomitance of those two events just another proof of the evil powers of that maleficent woman : wasn't that crafty politician devilish enough to be able to conjure up her dark power

so as to hit the headlines twice the same week?

The truth is, her decision to withdraw from the political scene, which she had trodden for more than fifty years, came at the very same time as the release of the book, which may have given its sales a boost, but, most of all, turned it into a *de facto* political testament.

*Statecraft* happens to be the third book penned by Lady Thatcher in less than ten years, which is quite commendable<sup>3</sup> for a woman who has been busy with her lecture and conference tours since she quit 10, Downing Street, in 1990, and who is not a professional writer at that.

The first book, *The Downing Street Years*, was released in 1993 and covered her years as first female Prime Minister of Britain from May 3, 1979, to November 28, 1990, hence its title. It abounds in sharp insights<sup>4</sup> into the routine of a political leader, and, as such, provides invaluable reading to any political science student.

Two years later, in 1995, *The Path to Power* was an obvious sequel<sup>5</sup> to *The Downing Street Years*, even though it focused mainly on Margaret Thatcher's education from her childhood and adolescence in provincial Grantham to her days as a chemistry student at Oxford, and her political apprenticeship from Oxford days to that momentous one when she first stepped into the Prime Minister's Official Residence at 10, Downing Street.

Actually, *The Path to Power* also contained a second -much shorter- part, which was more prospective and touched on subjects like European policy, Britain's social, defence and foreign policies, with a final chapter devoted to the promotion of free enterprise as a key to solving today's world problems.

- (1) **Statesmanship, i.e. the skill and activities of a statesman; the art of governing; in a footnote on the first page of the introduction, Mrs Thatcher explains why she has chosen the former rather the latter : Statecraft and statesmanship are, according to the dictionary definition, interchangeable. But the former has a more practical ring to it, emphasising activity rather than rhetoric, strategy not just diplomacy. All too often, statesmanship turns out simply to be political action of which we politicians approve - frequently our own. (page XVII)**
- (2) **to bow of public life : to withdraw from it; to retire; cf. to take a bow = tirer sa révérence.**
- (3) **commendable : admirable; praiseworthy.**
- (4) **sharp insights (into sth) : clear pictures of sth (= des aperçus édifiants, éclairants de)**
- (5) **a sequel : a follow-up (e.g. *Rambo* and *Alien* and their many sequels)**

*Statecraft*, I would say, is in line with that second part of *The Path to Power*; insofar as it stands out, clearly and unmistakably, as a political essay through and through<sup>6</sup>, ranging as it does from the Cold War to the current debates about globalisation, climate change, et cetera.

As usual, it provides hours of enjoyable reading, the more so as it seems to be suffused<sup>7</sup> with a sense of urgency which the previous two volumes lacked. As if, at 76, Mrs Thatcher had felt the need to say as much as she could on subjects of crucial concern to her, as though it were her last occasion to bowl<sup>8</sup>, to leave us something to remember her by.

If this was her – unconscious, unwitting – aim, she has not missed it. *Statecraft* reads as a strong book written by a strong-willed woman. Sorry : I mean ‘statesman’. On quite a few occasions she bowls us over<sup>9</sup>, especially when she launches into one of those verbal attacks on ideological sacred cows and the columns of political correctness at which she excels.

Most of you, readers, are too young to remember, but that woman has always been a true fighter. She is not a quitter<sup>10</sup>. She has always been resilient, able to stand her ground, capable of standing up for what she deemed was right, even though that meant becoming unpopular.

And unpopular she has been. As Prime Minister, to many in Britain she was a hate-figure<sup>11</sup>, the devil incarnate. Why? Because she had decided the country should be run according to her liberal gospel, her free enterprise agenda, and that ‘there was no alternative’, as she often said, which earned her the nickname of Tina (short for ‘there is no alternative’). Britain could only be born

again, she thought, if the shackles of trade-union tyranny, combined with politicians’ meakness, were shed. The New Jerusalem<sup>12</sup> that she wanted to establish was based upon the recognition of individual talent and skills, freed from the yoke of collectivist thought and ideology. Such a master plan was bound to make her a highly controversial character that would count both rabid followers, for whom Thatcherism was something approaching a cult, and acrid foes, many of whom had a lot to lose were the post-war social-democratic settlement to be questioned, or even put on the scrap heap by that lady with a one-track mind<sup>13</sup>.

- (6) **through and through** : completely; absolutely.
- (7) **to be suffused with** : to be bathed in; to be pervaded with.
- (8) **to bowl** : at cricket, to throw the ball; here, to express her views.
- (9) **she bowls us over** : she overwhelms us; she leaves us amazed, in awe.
- (10) **she is not a quitter** : she never surrenders, gives up; she is not easily deterred.
- (11) **a hate-figure** : someone who is generally hated, who is the butt of criticism.
- (12) **the New Jerusalem** : the land of her dreams; the Britain that would best reflect her values, principles, etc.
- (13) **a one-track mind** : someone who has such a mind has an obsession, thinks about and is interested in only one thing.

# Référence

LA REVUE DES PRÉPAS

Référence

## From Reykjavik to Nizhny Novgorod via Washington, D.C. ■

**S**tatecraft is a 486-page, 11-chapter political treatise, whose first three chapters have an internal coherence. Mrs Thatcher's considerations on the Cold War (Chapter One) lead her to investigate the reasons for America's current world dominance (Chapter Two), while Chapter Three focuses on the main loser in the Cold War confrontation, i.e. the former Soviet Union, or, more aptly, the Russian Federation.

In Mrs Thatcher's view, the main architect of the West's Cold War victory was Ronald Reagan and 1983 was a crucial year in that war on two different grounds. Firstly, because President Reagan dared to announce his plans for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI - also known as Star Wars) that year. And furthermore, he had the guts to deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe in the autumn of 1983, despite Soviet threats and hostile reception in Western Europe. 1983, according to Mrs Thatcher, paved the way for the October 1986 Reykjavik summit, which she sees as 'the turning point in the Cold War'.

Due to the pressures put on them at Reykjavik, the Soviets dropped, a year later, their demands that SDI should be scrapped and agreed to the American proposals for arms reduction. As Mrs Thatcher notes

*The Soviets had been forced to accept that the strategy they had pursued since the 1960s - of using weaponry, subversion, and propaganda to make up for their internal*

*weaknesses and so retain super-power status - had finally and definitely failed. (p 11)*

More than a struggle between two countries, she sees the Cold War as *a struggle between two sharply opposing systems, encapsulating<sup>14</sup> two wholly contradictory philosophies, involving two totally different sets of objectives. (p 15)*

And most of all, if the Cold War was won by the West, it is because of 'the Western model of strictly limited government and maximum freedom for individuals within a just rule of law' (p 16).

The major question in Chapter Two, 'The American Achievement', seems to be : Why can America be regarded as a beacon<sup>15</sup> of freedom? The answer is, Mrs Thatcher argues, that Americans have been able to lay the foundations of freedom, i.e. *a sense of personal responsibility and of the quintessential value of the individual human being [which] are the twin foundations of orderly freedom. (p 21)*

Another reason why America may be seen as the standard-bearer<sup>16</sup> of freedom can be ascribed to the moral superiority of the American Revolution to the French one which *sacrificed Liberty to Equality - Fraternity never really mattered at all - and then Equality quickly gave way to centralised dictatorship. (p 23)*

America alone has the moral as well as material capacity for world leadership in our 'unipolar' post-communist world, but that supremacy fuels hostility from friends (the French doctrine of 'multi-polarity') and foes (Bin Laden) alike.

Mrs Thatcher then warns us that military preparedness, which had

been put on the backburner in the early 1990s in the West in the wake of the demise of communism, should remain a frontburner preoccupation at any time, the more so these days as we have entered into what Colin S. Gray has called 'the Second Nuclear Age', whose problematics may be summed up as follows

*The less strategically attractive nuclear weapons appear to the U.S., the greater the attraction of those weapons and other WMD [weapons of mass destruction] to possible foes and other "rogues".*

Colin S. Gray, *The Second Nuclear Age*, 1999 (as quoted at p 51)

Mrs Thatcher has no qualms about<sup>17</sup> America's moral rectitude for

*America's faith, including its faith in itself and its mission, is the bedrock<sup>18</sup> of its sense of duty. (p 62)*

And therefore America should eventually prevail.

The highlight in 'The Russian Enigma' (Chapter Three) may be her visit, in July 1993, to Nizhny Novgorod, the main town in the province by the very same name, whose then Governor, Boris Nemtsov, 'was committed to a radical programme of what some call Thatcherism, but what I had always regarded as commonsense'. (p 65)

There, on Bolshaya Pokrovskaya Street, whose shops were all privately-owned, she experienced a sort of revelation, an Epiphany in the language of James Joyce, in a cheese shop that was, to her, living proof that free trade could work, even in the heart of Russia

*the serious lesson for me ... was, of course, that in this one privately owned shop in this distant Russian city, a combination of excellent local products, talented entrepreneurs and laws favourable to enterprise applied by honest and capable political leadership could generate prosperity and progress. There was no need of a 'middle way' or special adjustment to Russian conditions. In that cheese shop was proof that capitalism worked. (p 68-69)*

(14) **encapsulating** : containing all the main elements of, in a concentrated form.

(15) **a beacon** : figuratively, a source of light or inspiration.

(16) **the standard-bearer** : the one / country that carries the banner (of).

(17) **she has no qualms about** : she does not entertain any doubt about.

(18) **the bedrock** : the foundation stone.

## Of tigers, tycoons and tyrants ■

The next three chapters have their own coherence too. All three of them focus on Asia, from the Near East to its Far Eastern shores.

In Chapter Four, 'Asian Values', Mrs Thatcher tells us why Asia matters economically, politically and strategically. She points to the demographic importance of Asia and the economic consequences thereof, i.e. 'large workforces and growing markets' (p 112). She also turns her attention to the characteristics of Asian societies, namely 'the strength of family ties, a sense of responsibility, and the disposition to save and to act with prudence' (p 114). She finally claims Asia contains four countries, China, Japan, India and Indonesia, which, in terms of global strategy, may some day count as as many 'emerging powers' and 'on whose fortunes and intentions much depends'. (p 112)

But it is on tiny Singapore that she heaps the most praise<sup>19</sup>

*In a certain sense, this little city-state now has everything precisely because it began with next to nothing. Only the skills, creativity and enterprise of men could make it what it has become. It is when talented people ... find themselves having to rely on their brains rather than their muscles, that societies progress. (p 117)*

The final part in Chapter Four is dedicated to Japan, whose major specificity may be

*a unique ability to seek out<sup>20</sup> and apply other people's discoveries for their own purposes. (p 129)*

Unless it is

*a consuming desire to learn all that they can from and about foreigners, while retaining an unshakeable consciousness of being 'different' and being determined to remain so. This may not make them universally*

*popular. But it does make them extraordinarily effective. (p 130)*

The last quotation, on second thoughts, made me wonder whether she had only the Japanese people in mind when writing, or whether she was not depicting the British, or even herself, at the same time.

Most of Chapter Five, 'Asian Giants', is devoted to an in-depth study<sup>21</sup> of China and the Chinese mental set-up, characterised by 'a sense of innate superiority' combined with 'a sense of vulnerability' (p 162).

She draws a parallel between China and Russia, observing that

*The Chinese are one of the world's most enterprising peoples. But their systems of government in both imperial and communist times have conspired to frustrate those entrepreneurial instincts. (p 164)*

Substitute 'tsarist' for 'imperial' and the remark would fit Russia to a T.

She can't help being sarcastic when she notes, talking about the current Chinese political system

*When political leaders fall into disgrace, they nowadays go into private obscurity rather than a torture chamber. (p 169)*

But, obviously, she feels little for the former 'Middle Kingdom'<sup>22</sup>, except mistrust and distrust.

As for India, which comes under the spotlight and Mrs Thatcher's hard-eyed gaze in the last dozen pages of Chapter Five, she would like it to 'emerge as a powerful counterweight to China' (p 201). However, she contends India has wasted quite a few opportunities since it became independent in 1947 for two main reasons

*Its governments adopted social theories, applied interventionist and protectionist policies, and mouthed militant Third World rhetoric. (p 197)*

*Just below the surface, most of India's politicians were eaten up with post-colonial resentments. (p 197)*

Chapter Six, 'Rogues, Religions and Terrorism' opens with a dissertation on the concept of 'rogue states', defined as 'relatively small powers which have the motives and means to cause disproportionate trouble' (p 208).

What is common to 'rogues'?

*None is democratic. None is governed by what we would understand as a rule of law. All persecute dissident individuals and opposition groups. All are in the grip of<sup>23</sup> ideologies which make them fundamentally hostile to the West and its allies. All are at various stages of acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD). (p 209)*

This said, Mrs Thatcher moves on to the case of North Korea, 'a classic rogue state', which she describes as a serious threat to global peace in general, to Western interests, European and American as well, in particular.

Which leads her to generalisations about Islam, seen as a potent threat<sup>24</sup> to the West as well

*Apart from North Korea, all of the states classed as 'rogues' - Iraq, Syria, Lybia, Iran and Sudan - are mainly, and in some cases militantly, Muslim. (p 220)*

Moreover, she contends

*There is a different and broader problem... : the inability, so far at least, of predominantly Muslim*

(19) she heaps the most praise on Singapore : It is Singapore which she compliments, praises most.

(20) to seek out : to look for (sth) until you find it.

(21) an in-depth study : a comprehensive one (= étude approfondie).

(22) the Middle Kingdom : l'Empire du Milieu (= la Chine).

(23) to be in the grip of : to be under the influence of.

(24) a potent threat : a serious menace.

states to evolve liberal political institutions. (p 222)

This unpleasant reality may be put down to, at least in part, to the *Weltanschauung* (vision of the world) prevailing in the Muslim world

*Islam does not distinguish as clearly as does Christianity - at least its Western variants - between the 'things that belong to Caesar' and the 'things that belong to God'. To the contrary, Islam emphasises unity of life. It is not for nothing that 'Islam' means 'submission'. (p 217)*

The second half of Chapter Six, i.e. about twenty pages, explains why we should be wary of Iraq, Syria, Lybia and Iran; as for its very last pages, they are devoted to a brief history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and future prospects for the Holy Land.

## **Food for thought about human rights**

If the first six chapters fell into two separate and logical units - as I hope as I have shown -, the next two make up another such unit. Chapter Seven, 'Human Rights and Wrongs', allows Mrs Thatcher to demonstrate the theoretical limits of human rights activism and those of the legal documents drafted, and institutions dreamt up or initiated since WW II to enforce such rights. In Chapter Eight, 'Balkan Wars', Mrs Thatcher depicts the Balkans, during the wars raging there throughout the 1990s, as a showcase<sup>25</sup> for human rights ineffectiveness.

In Chapter Seven, not afraid of striking a jarring, discordant note, she contends that the political Right has always been the Party of human rights, as it has always made a point of 'upholding the rights of individuals in the face of the state Leviathan'<sup>26</sup>. (p 248)

Contrary to a widespread delusion, she claims, the Right has done more for the promotion and protection of liberty than the Left ever has.

*Listening to the New Left preen<sup>27</sup> itself on its pluralism and inclusiveness, you might be forgiven for thinking that it was they (in former political incarnations) who expended their energies in pressing conservative governments to respect human rights. But that, of course, is nonsense. It was, rather, the capitalist West which compelled the socialist East to treat its subjects as human beings, rather than pawns or chattels<sup>28</sup>. (p 249)*

This said, why should she feel uneasy with the current obsession with human rights?

*The answer is that rights no longer seem to mean what they used to do, and are being used to diminish not expand liberty. (p 249)*

The trouble with the contemporary vision of human rights, Mrs Thatcher argues, is that it owes more to the French philosophical tradition and its penchant for 'lofty declarations' than it does to the English and British tradition, with its emphasis on pragmatism and its 'tendency to the concrete'.

Mrs Thatcher thus finds fault with the Universal Declaration of Hu-

man Rights (1948) because it lacks that concrete touch that would, as she sees it, make it effective and a positive, fruitful source of rights.

*This [the Declaration] lists a series of admirable goals, some general and some specific, but as the text continues it quickly becomes clear that liberty is becoming confused with other things - good, bad and indifferent - which may actually be opposed to it. (...) The document thus displays a kind of catch-all approach in which numerous -usually- worthy aims are declared 'rights', without recognition that their fulfilment depends upon circumstances and, above all, upon the willingness of one group of people to accept burdens on behalf of<sup>29</sup> another. (p 255)*

To her, any international criminal court, like the one which should see the light of day in a near future, is bound to suffer from the legacy of previous such courts, starting with the Nuremberg Tribunal of 1945-46. This court is wrongly deemed to have been an international one, when it was established by the victors' camp only and 'not as was originally suggested [by] the peoples of the United Nations' (p 257) and furthermore

*The prosecuting authorities ... were more interested in securing convictions of the Nazi leaders on the charge of planning and initiating a 'war of aggression' than for 'crimes against humanity'. (p 257)*

Finally, the justice it rendered was 'victor's justice' and not international justice, whatever that may be. As such, Nuremberg set an ambiguous precedent.

Mrs Thatcher seems no more convinced of the efficacy of the two criminal courts established by United Nations resolutions in the 1990s, i.e. the tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in 1993, and, a year later, that for Rwanda.

*If one of the intentions of setting up a tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was that it would deter atrocities, that was certainly not the effect. The notorious massacre of Muslims at*

(25) **a showcase : a setting in which something is displayed or presented to its best advantage.**

(26) **Leviathan : the machinery of state power, especially in a strong state. The term originally depicted a Biblical sea monster. It was then first used in its modern sense by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the English social and political philosopher, as the title to his greatest work, published in 1651.**

(27) **to preen oneself on : to congratulate oneself for an achievement**

(28) **pawns and chattels : des pions ou des meubles.**

(29) **on behalf of : in the interest of.**

## *Référence*

*Srebrenica in Bosnia in July 1995 took place some two years after the tribunal had begun to sit. (p 261)*

Turning to the situation in Europe, her contention is that both the Council of Europe and the European Union share the same agenda, which is 'the advance of supra-nationalism at the expense of national sovereignty'. (p 274)

She criticises the Blair government for incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into British law through the Human Rights Act of 1998

*It was precisely because the written constitutions of Europe had proved so much less capable of guaranteeing individual liberties than the unwritten constitution of the United Kingdom that some new fundamental statement of rights was felt necessary. It is, therefore, deeply ironic, and suggestive of a degree of muddled thinking<sup>30</sup>, that Britain has now incorporated the ECHR into our domestic law, thus giving us for the first time what amounts to a written constitution. (p 275)*

The attending evils of ECHR are the politicisation of justice -due to the fact that 'constitutions contain the potential to have judges take decisions which should properly be made by democratically elected politicians' (p 275) and 'wayward judicial activism<sup>31</sup>' (p 276) of the kind exercised by the European Court of Human Rights, like the lifting of the ban on homosexuals serving in the British armed forces in 1999.

That activism, she claims, stems from a radically different approach to rights on either side of the Channel. Whereas the British 'can do whatever is not explicitly forbidden by law (p 276), European legal systems usually grant 'so-called "positive" rights guaranteed by the State' (p 276). Moreover

*European judges are also much more likely to take a very broad view of statutes and thus to come up with conclusions that frustrate the intentions of legislators<sup>32</sup> and those who elect them. (p 276)*

Mrs Thatcher's conclusion to that chapter dedicated to the notion of human rights is that, behind the smoke screen of the general expressions of noble principles voiced by human rights activists 'lie an agenda and a philosophy'.

*The agenda consists of the subordination of sovereign states, democratic decision-making and national law to international institutions and pressure groups. And the philosophy, sheltering beneath the umbrella of 'human rights', is that of the Old Left operating in new conditions. (p 279)*

What Mrs Thatcher then says about the Balkan Wars in Chapter Eight comes as an anti-climax to the previous one. Being a woman of (strong) principles, she is at her best defending core beliefs and rights. The Balkans, she believes, were used by the international - predominantly European - left-wing brigades as a lab where they could experiment their social engineering and diplomatic theories. To them, the Balkans are 'a litmus test<sup>33</sup>' and 'events there offer lessons which apply far beyond the region' (p 282). Whereupon she inveighs against<sup>34</sup> those people and their 'utopian internationalism'

*These people are convinced that the only way to stop nationalism creating wars and atrocities is - to put it bluntly<sup>35</sup> - to banish nationhood itself. They think it is only international bodies ... that can be relied upon to maintain acceptable standards of conduct. (p 283)*

It is the duty of well-informed and long-sighted politicians to resist this rampant way of thinking

*The task of statesmen is to work with human nature, warts and all, and to draw on instincts and even prejudices that can be turned to good purpose. It is never to try to recreate Mankind in a new image. (p 283)*

## **Should Britain kiss Europe goodbye? ■**

**T**he pressure that had been building since Chapter Seven, only to let up somehow in Chapter Eight, rises again to climactic intensity in Chapters Nine and Ten, devoted to European 'Dreams and Nightmares' for the former, and, for the latter, to one of the hottest political potatoes you can think of in Britain, i.e. the question of whether the country should remain within the European Union.

If you were in doubt about Mrs Thatcher's feelings concerning Europe, the very first lines in Chapter Nine would open up your eyes

*During my lifetime most of the problems the world has faced have come, in one fashion or another, from mainland Europe, and the solutions from outside it. (p 320)*

The case is straightforward to Mrs Thatcher. Since the post-war period, the agenda for continental Europe has been clear : the formation of a supranational bureaucracy by hook or by crook<sup>36</sup>. The trouble is that there seems to be no way of stopping that runaway train heading for disaster.

A few quotations will show you the extent of the damage

**(30) muddled thinking : intellectual confusion.**

**(31) wayward judicial activism : a way of administering justice that is unpredictable and sets little store by legislation.**

**(32) conclusions that frustrate the intentions of legislators : conclusions that disregard the original intent of the law-makers, or even go against it!**

**(33) a litmus test : a simple and effective test; a decisive one.**

**(34) she inveighs against : she protests or complains bitterly against.**

**(35) to put it bluntly : to say it in a direct, though maybe undiplomatic, way.**

**(36) by hook or by crook : by any means.**

## *Référence*

Pope John XXIII was once asked by a visitor to the Vatican how many people worked there. He answered : 'About half'. This reflection may be applied to Europe too. (p 324)

The Nazis spoke in terms that may strike us as eerily reminiscent of today's Euro-federalists. Thus Hitler could refer contemptuously in 1943 to 'the clutter of small nations' which must be eliminated in favour of a united Europe. It is not, of course, my suggestion that today's proponents of European unity are totalitarians, though they are not well-known for their tolerance either. (p 327)

The European myth is no less powerful for being that - a myth. (p 328)

If Europe charms us ... it is precisely because of its contrasts and contradictions, not its coherence and continuity. (p 328)

What is at stake<sup>37</sup>, Mrs Thatcher argues, is a certain idea of Europe, that of a union of nation-states, which is jeopardised by the prevailing European style of governance. That style, however, is no novelty, since it is just the old post-war social-democratic settlement<sup>38</sup> in new attire<sup>39</sup>, which Friedrich von Hayek had already lampooned<sup>40</sup> as early as 1944 in his major essay, *The Road to Serfdom*

The policies which are now followed everywhere [in Europe], which hand out the privilege of security, now to this group and now to that, are nevertheless rapidly creating conditions in which the striving for security tends to become stronger than the love of freedom. The reason for this is that with every grant of complete security to one group the insecurity of the rest nec-

essarily increases. (F. von Hayek as quoted at p 332)

To which Mrs Thatcher adds

The European model epitomises<sup>41</sup> precisely this : it places security above everything else, and its persistence in eliminating risk it inevitably discourages enterprise. (p 332)

Everything that smacks of Europe<sup>42</sup>, she says, spells doom. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is said to be 'wasteful, environmentally damaging and extremely costly' absorbing as it does almost half of the E.U.'s budget. Europe-wide, nothing seems to be done to cope with the pension problem, 'a time-bomb', which is looming larger and larger. As for the prevailing style of politics in the E.U. it is an unusual mix of the authoritarian, the bureaucratic and the interventionist on the one hand, with the compromising, the uninspiring and the ineffective on the other. (p 341)

Or, to put it differently

there are deep-seated reasons why Europe cannot be democratic [and there is] ample evidence provided by European politicians' and officials' demonstration of their contempt for ordinary democratic procedures. (p 345)

She provides a list of telling examples : the fact that the German political class pressed on with the change-over to the Euro despite poll after poll showing the vast majority of Germans did not want to let go of the Deutschmark; the total disregard for the first Danish referendum, saying 'No' to Maastricht, on June 6, 1992, and the staging of a second one, on May 5, 1993, to

make sure that the Danes would, this time, vote in the 'right' way (there was a repeat of that highly democratic procedure in Ireland recently); the hysterical fuss in the wake of the Austrian elections of October 1999; the media pressure put on Italians to avoid their voting for Berlusconi, et cetera, et cetera. To cut a long story short, there seems to be no way the advance of the European Leviathan can be stopped; the octopus's tentacles seem to be far-reaching and all-encompassing.

Obviously, the crowning glory of all that<sup>43</sup> is the single currency, 'the most substantial manifestation of the design to create a fully-fledged superstate'. (p 351)

Chapter Ten, 'Britain in Europe - Time to Renegotiate', does not come as a surprise, considering the views expressed by Mrs Thatcher in the previous chapter. To make us understand why it is in Britain's best interest to rediscuss the terms of her contract with Europe, and eventually to secede if the rediscussion proved unsatisfactory, she goes back as early as 1930 and an interview of Winston Churchill in the Saturday Evening Post of New York

We [the British] have our own dream and our own task. We are in Europe but not of it. We are linked, but not comprised. We are interested and associated, but not absorbed. (W. Churchill as quoted at p 362)

As for the prospect of leaving the E.U., it is legally feasible since

Great Britain does indeed possess the effective legal power to leave the EU - or change the terms of its relationship with the EU - because Parliament can when it wishes terminate the enforceability of Community Law in British courts. (p 409)

(37) What is at stake : what is at issue (= ce qui est en cause, en jeu).

(38) the post-war social-democratic settlement : the political consensus reached after WW II, and on which the Welfare State was built.

(39) in new attire : in new clothes.

(40) lampooned : harshly criticised.

(41) epitomises : is a perfect or typical example of.

(42) Everything that smacks of Europe : Everything that reminds us of it.

(43) the crowning glory of all that : la cerise sur le gâteau.

## The final curtain

After that ten-chapter overview of our current world, with its overtones of

gloom<sup>44</sup> and doom<sup>45</sup>, Mrs Thatcher must have felt the need to leave her readers on a more optimistic note, to open a window of hope in that rather sinister picture.

The onus is on Chapter Eleven<sup>46</sup>, 'Capitalism and its Critics' to supply us with that glimmer of hope, to make us understand what free-trade capitalism (capitalism for short), 'almost everywhere triumphant yet remarkably little understood' (p 412), is all about.

According to Mrs Thatcher, there is no arguing the necessity of capitalism, and the prime focus in this chapter is on the five conditions which she identifies as necessary for capitalism to work effectively :

1. there must be private property, which brings stability and confidence;
2. there must also be a rule of law, for 'arbitrariness and unpredictability are profoundly inimical to wealth creation' (p 417);
3. capitalism also depend on a culture ( role of free will, of fate, respect for the value of work, a sense of linear time, etc) favourable to it;
4. the fourth important condition is 'diversity and competition between states' (p 420);
5. last but not least, what is needed is 'an encouraging framework of tax and regulation' (p 421).

The second point of interest in that chapter is the criticism of Mr Blair's 'Third Way<sup>47</sup>', especially its economic performance. Despite all the window-dressing by New Labour in the run-up to the 1997 general election, this government may be socially caring, but it is no more economically and fiscally competent than its 'former incarnations' all too willing to 'tax and spend'. She claims that 'the tax take has risen by over fifty per cent since the Labour Party took power' (p 429).

The last major point that is raised by Mrs Thatcher is that of the impact of globalisation and its responsibility for the dire poverty and predicament some states find them-

selves in. A 'point which should be remembered by those alarmed at the impact of globalisation is that its effects are by no means universal' (p 460). By which she means

*The majority of economic activity and jobs in most rich economies are not directly affected by trends in global markets. In Great Britain, for example, fifty-five per cent of our GDP consists of 'non-tradeables', i.e. goods and services that cannot be traded over long distances. (p 461)*

As regards the widespread criticism that global capitalism is liable<sup>48</sup> for global instability, she says

*Are the problems of the global economy the result of how it works or the fact that it is prevented from working? Examination of what actually happened in Russia and the Far East shows that in all the most important cases there were good reasons for investors to take fright, ones which relate to a multitude of shortcomings in the policies of those countries. Lack of transparency, cronyism<sup>49</sup> and corruption ... these and other home-grown factors contributed to the collapse. (...) They were classically problems of government failure. They were not essentially problems of market failure. (p 463)*

The final conclusion is that we should rejoice at the triumph of capitalism while making sure that 'its benefits are made available through open trade to all the nations of the earth' (p 466).

## General Conclusion

I am convinced the proponents of PC (political correctness) have not liked Mrs Thatcher's latest book, if they ever cared to read it. It is definitely too much. Too much sectarian Conservative ranting, too much pro-market raving, too much anti-socialist and communist bias. Some, I daresay, would even go so far as to claim that, for a Defender of Freedom<sup>50</sup>, she is too enslaved to her own prejudices.

Can you be free when you have strong convictions? When is a conviction too strong? Where is the limit? Is it your own conscience? Faith in a few deep-rooted principles? The never-ending quest for truth and equity and justice? The careful reader will notice the impressive number of occurrences of expressions whose root-word is 'truth' : 'in truth', 'the truth is', 'the blunt truth is'; they will also notice the multiple repetitions of 'I believe'.

The last -stylistic- remark may give us a clue to the answer : is Mrs Thatcher not annoying simply because she is a believer, in a God-forsaken world, or, more aptly, a world which has predominantly turned its back on God?

My advice : why not read *Statecraft* and form a personal opinion about it?

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Reference : Thatcher, Margaret, *Statecraft* (486 p. 25), London, HarperCollins, 2002.

- (44) **gloom : obscurity, darkness, sadness, or desolation.**
- (45) **doom : terrible, disastrous fate or future; hence, prophets of doom = des oiseaux de malheur.**
- (46) **The onus is on Chapter Eleven to ... : Il incombe au chapitre 11 de ...**
- (47) **the Third Way : the social-democratic approach which Mr Blair has implemented since he came to power in 1997, a mix trying to combine the advantages of the free market with the benefits of social concern and conscience. The Third Way ideology, in its British form, was originally developed by Anthony Giddens, director of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and prolific author.**
- (48) **to be liable for : to be responsible for.**
- (49) **cronyism : the practice of appointing political friends to office without regard to their qualifications.**
- (50) **Defender of Freedom : a take-off of one of the British monarch's official titles, who has been the Head of the Church of England since Henry VIII and the Act of Supremacy (1534), which rejected papal authority and made the king head of the church.**

## Référence