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Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949 (50
U.S.C., section 3507)

Margaret Roberts THATCHER

Member of Parliament (since 1959)

Addressed as: Mrs. Thatcher

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UNITED KINGDOM

*How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life.*
Thatcher quoting Tennyson, January 1991



A dynamic politician who thrived on the rough-and-tumble of international and domestic politics, Margaret Thatcher has kept an uncharacteristically low profile since stepping down as Prime Minister in November 1990. She has been a virtual stranger to the House of Commons: her appearance there on 28 February was only the third since she left office, and there has been rampant speculation that she will leave Parliament at the next election. Thatcher has refused to confirm or deny such rumors, but her pointed suggestion to her constituency members that the Conservative Party needed a matriarchal figure suggests that predictions of her departure from politics are off the mark. So, too, does her willingness to take on the honorary presidency of the No Turning Back Group, an association of rightwing Tory MPs, and the Bruges Group, which is made up of academics and MPs who are opposed to European federalism. [Redacted]

Despite her relatively low profile, Thatcher has clearly signaled her intention of playing a role in international affairs. She has met in the United Kingdom with the Bulgarian President and the Polish Foreign Minister and has made several trips abroad, including a well-publicized visit with former President Reagan in California. According to the British press, she received twice weekly Persian Gulf war briefings from Sir Charles Powell, her former foreign affairs adviser (he presently holds the same post on Prime Minister John Major's staff). Thatcher is reportedly slated to travel to Moscow later in 1991 for meetings with Boris Yel'tsin and President Mikhail Gorbachev, her old sparring partner. Latvian Foreign Minister Janis Jurkans has told the press that she has expressed an interest in serving as an intermediary between Gorbachev and the Baltic states. She has also been in touch with French President Francois Mitterrand, who called to wish her a happy new year. Observers have suggested a variety of international roles for the former Prime Minister, including the presidency of the EC Commission and the ambassadorship to the United States. The Thatcher Foundation, her proposed international think tank, has failed to generate sufficient financial interest, however, and its future is in question. [Redacted]

"I Have Changed Everything"

During her nearly 12 years at 10 Downing Street, Thatcher used a combination of grit, determination, and self-confidence to place her stamp on a decade. Her supporters paid tribute to her command of detail, her directness, and her iron will. Her detractors claimed that she was autocratic, inflexible, and narrowminded; the Labor Party's Denis Healey once accused her of practicing "Rottweiler politics." Her isolation on the issues of South African sanctions and German unification, as well as her continued foot-dragging on EC monetary union, prompted many observers to accuse her of failing to keep pace with a changing world. She also demonstrated a singular obliviousness to the depth of public resentment of the gov-

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ernment's poll tax. The combination, together with mounting criticism of her autocratic governing style, helped trigger the events that led to her resignation.

"I Am A Warrior"

Thatcher has taken Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln as models. She once noted that, like her, Lincoln had to fight for what he believed in. "I have to fight every day still," she told an interviewer in 1989, and shortly after leaving office she vowed: "I shall go on fighting for everything I believe in." Observers note that she loves to argue and relishes a debate with someone worthy of her mettle. According to a friend, she especially likes her meetings with Gorbachev because he gives as good as he gets. Press accounts of her impending trip to the Soviet Union have speculated on the possibility of a television debate between the two.

"99.5 Percent Perfect"

"Margaret is 99.5 percent perfect," her father once reportedly said. "The other .5 percent is that she could be a little warmer." A notorious workaholic, she has little patience or talent for relaxation or chitchat. In social settings she gravitates to the company of men and the discussion of business. She has a legendary lack of humor and claims that vacations cause colds and interfere with one's working rhythm. Even during her schooldays, says a childhood chum, she was obsessed with work and politics. During the early 1950s she squeezed part-time legal study into a schedule already filled with work as a research chemist, Tory party duties, and responsibilities as a wife and mother: she passed the bar exam only four months after giving birth to twins Carol and Mark. According to the press, Thatcher sleeps only three to five hours a night; she recently told the press that she is amazed at how little some people seem to do with the 24 hours of a day.

The daughter of the late Alfred Roberts, a greengrocer and local politician, Margaret Roberts was born on 13 October 1925. She was greatly influenced by her father: "I owe just about everything to him," she says. The doting Roberts often took schoolgirl Margaret to university lectures, where he encouraged her to question speakers. By contrast, Thatcher's mother, who died in 1960, was a stolid homebody whom Thatcher rarely mentions. Thatcher's older sister, by far the more popular of the two girls, plays little part in her life. A devout Methodist, Alfred Roberts instilled in his daughter a respect for independence and hard work. Encouraged by him, she secured admission to Oxford and became the first woman to head the Oxford University Conservative Association; she used the post as a springboard to local and national Tory politics. (She says that she once aspired to a career in the civil service in colonial India.)

Thatcher began campaigning for a seat in Parliament in 1950, but it was nine years before she was successful. Two years later, in 1961, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan appointed her joint parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance. In 1964, when the Conservatives were defeated by Labor, she moved into the Tory shadow cabinet, handling gas, coal, electricity, and nuclear energy; then transportation; and finally, education and science issues. When the Conservatives returned to power in 1970, she retained the education and science portfolio—the only woman to serve in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Edward Heath. Heath resigned the prime-ministership in 1974; almost a year later Thatcher deposed him as Tory leader. She was recently made a member of the Order of Merit, one of the highest honors the Queen can bestow. Membership is limited to 24.

Thatcher is married to Denis Thatcher, who was created a baronet in the resignation honors list; although he is now addressed as Sir Denis, Thatcher herself has declined to be referred to as Lady Thatcher. The Thatchers became grandparents in February 1989.

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