

ATCHERISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE SOCIAL LIFE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Margaret Thatcher is one of the most influential women of the 20th century. While serving as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, she was the initiator of several reforms that influenced the social life of the British. Her policy, which was called Thatcherism, caused a lot of protests all over Britain. But despite this, it had an impact on the development of the economic sphere. Margaret Thatcher's policy influenced almost all aspects of the social life in the United Kingdom and sometimes went far beyond the country. Thatcher is a controversial figure in the history of political life in Britain. Some consider her a national hero, while others see her as an eccentric woman with her outrageous reforms.

Key words: *Thatcherism; Margaret Thatcher; monetarism; Iron Lady.*

In the 1980s a wave of demonstrations and protests swept the United Kingdom. Protests were provoked by unpopular and abhorred reforms of the new government that was making painful changes hiding behind the prospect of future prosperity. The social fallout was very strong in 1984. The United Kingdom was on the brink of civil war [1]. And the tension in the country was caused by one woman – Margaret Thatcher, who earned herself from a soviet media a reputation of “Iron Lady” due to her determination and stubbornness.

Margaret Hilda Thatcher (1925–2013) was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990 and Leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990. The longest-serving British prime minister of the 20s century, she was the first woman in Europe to hold that office [2]. Leading the country, she pursued a policy that became known by her name – Thatcherism.

Margaret Thatcher's policies affected all aspects of the social life of the British. But what does the term mean? A handful of political leaders were prominent enough to have a suffix “ism” after their names. But no one influenced the nation in quite the same way as the policies of Margaret Thatcher.

Speaking in a simple term, Thatcherism includes free market economy and non-intervention of the state to the economic sphere. Rather than regulating people's lives and planning business, government's job is to get out of the way. This policy was drastically different from many others at that time. This was a revolutionary and even dangerous concept to most postwar politicians [3]. Thatcherism was noticeably different from the socialists' ideas, which were very popular and far-famed in Britain at that time.

Margaret Thatcher was popular for her criticism of the representatives of the Labour Party. Once she said, “Some socialists seem to believe that people should be numbers in a state computer. We believe they should be individuals. We are all unequal. No one, thank heavens, is quite like anyone else, however much the socialists may pretend otherwise. We believe that everyone has the right to be unequal, but to us every human being is equally important” [4].

Taking her cue from Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, she supported monetarism, controlling the money supply with high interest rates. Margaret Thatcher tamed inflation without resorting to union-negotiated pay policies. Her battle against increased inflation led to mass unemployment, and as a result, caused a resentment among the people in the United Kingdom. But despite all these factors she managed to win a second general election [3]. She increased interest rates to slow the growth of the money supply, and thereby lower inflation. Margaret Thatcher also reduced expenditure on social services such as housing and education and introduced cash limits on public spending. Her reforms were not supported by the British, but they were quite effective for the economy.

One of the key contributions that Thatcher made to the development of the United Kingdom was her reformative leadership, with which she changed not only the course of her country, but also the understanding of what a prime minister of the United Kingdom can achieve and how [5]. Margaret Thatcher’s name was known far beyond the country. She played a significant role in all European countries. She contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall, which started a major transformation of central and eastern European economies from relying mostly on central planning to being governed by free markets.

1982 has become the beginning of the Iron Lady’s moment of praise and glory. Margaret Thatcher decided to show the military power of Britain to the whole world. She sent a fleet of nearly one hundred ships to liberate the Falkland Islands off the coast of South America. This decision was very uneasy and costly. Thatcher spent almost a quarter of annual budget of the United Kingdom to return its citizens a pride of being called “British”. Just as Winston Churchill sent a civil fleet to Dunkirk to save his soldiers in 1940, in 1982 Margaret Thatcher mobilized over 70 traded and passengers’ vessels for a military operation [1]. This event raised her rating among the population. This was the victory that immortalized her name.

One of the important directions of Thatcher’s policy was the privatization. The policy of privatization has been called “a crucial ingredient of Thatcherism”. After the 1983 election the sale of state utilities rushed; more than 29 billion pounds was raised from the sale of nationalized industries, and another 18 billion pounds from the sale of council houses. The process of privatization, especially the preparation of nationalized industries for

privatization, was associated with marked improvements in performance, particularly in terms of labour productivity [2].

Margaret Thatcher's policies influenced almost every aspect of social life. Her reforms even influenced football. Thatcher had no interest in this game, despite occasional embarrassing photos. But when one of the worst incidents of football hooliganism broke out at a Luton-Millwall match in 1985, she right away acted. The Football Spectators Act was passed in 1989, making identity cards compulsory for stadium visitors and fans [6].

Thus, the policy of Margaret Thatcher influenced almost all spheres of Britain's social life. Thatcher is a controversial figure in the history of Europe. Some people think she is a dictator, but for others she is a national hero. Her policy had a significant impact on various areas of society, modernizing and improving the lives of the British. Thatcher's policy made the United Kingdom a great nation on the world stage. But, on the other hand, Thatcherism didn't have support of other parts of the population, causing riots, rallies, and demonstrations. Some people consider her the "Iron Lady" who made a huge contribution to the development of the social life in the United Kingdom, while others think she is an eccentric woman with her unpopular reforms.

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