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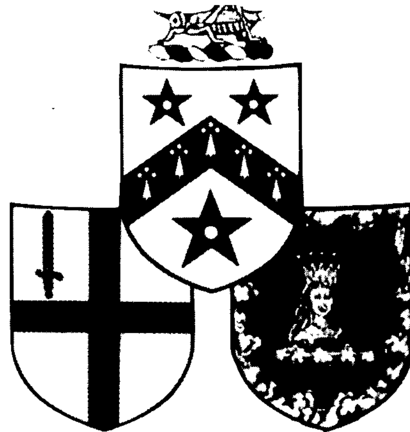

PREMIERSHIP

Lecture 5

'TIGRESS SURROUNDED BY HAMSTERS': MARGARET THATCHER, 1979-90

by

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'TIGRESS SURROUNDED BY HAMSTERS': MARGARET THATCHER,

PETER HENNESSY, GRESHAM PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC.

Whenever I think of Margaret Thatcher her place in history, her position on the spectrum of prime ministerial types that ranges from the presidential to the collegial, her careful cultivation of her outsiderness even when commanding the innermost of inner circles, the surging force of her will and her personality down even the obscurer capillaries of Whitehall, I think of only one comparable Downing Street phenomenon this century - David Lloyd George: the man from Outside'[1], as A.J.P. Taylor called him; 'the big Beast', as his contemporaries nicknamed him.[2] And, instantly, I have to be on my guard. Because my first reaction to both these phenomenal premierships is that of a constitutional traditionalist, of someone who thinks with Mrs Thatcher's successor, John Major, and like him by 'instinct that if you carry people with you rather than ride through people you will get a better outcome than otherwise.'[3]

I also share the conviction of Douglas Hurd, her Northern Ireland, Home and Foreign Secretary at various times, that: 'The main reason for Margaret Thatcher's loss of the leadership was...her failure over the years to make the best of the Cabinet system...[which]...depends on mutual tolerance and mutual support which in turn depends on knowledge of each other.'[4] Similarly, when it comes to her great comparator, Lloyd George, I am with Stanley Baldwin who denounced him at the famous Carlton Club meeting which precipitated the collapse of his coalition as 'a dynamic force, and it is from that very fact that our troubles...arise. A dynamic force is a very terrible thing; it may crush you, but it is not necessarily right.'[5]

In other words , I am not neutral about Margaret Thatcher even now over five years after the 'constitutional coup', as she described it to the Soviet Ambassador,[6] which dislodged her in November 1990. I suspect very few people are. And she herself has made it almost impossible to be so by claiming frequently, from the moment of her election as Conservative Party Leader in February 1975, to have 'changed everything'.[7]

However, I have come in a strange way to be protective of the lady's significance if not her hotly disputed reputation. For almost from the moment of her demise as Prime Minister, commentators who had commendably resisted falling under her spell during her ascendancy, such as Alan Watkins, began to engineer the beginnings of what I like to call the 'Ozymandias syndrome' whereby the reputations of the once-mighty end up as decaying pillars of stone in the pitiless desert of popular memory.[8]

As early as April 1991, for example, Watkins was writing: 'Large claims were made for Mrs Margaret Thatcher as a great Prime Minister: but they are melting before our eyes like the snows of spring. My prediction is that history will judge her as just above average, below C.R. Attlee and H.H. Asquith, who has better claims than she to being a great peacetime Prime Minster, but above Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson.'[9] And on the fifth anniversary of her resignation announcement both Hugo Young and Andrew Marr added to the Ozymandias effect. For Young 'time has not accorded her the reputation selective memory sometimes fondly allows to former leaders. Instead, it has removed most of the halo she placed above her. The icon has self-destructed.'[10] While for Marr, 'Five years on, there is no monument to Baroness Thatcher...The woman who was once a political iconoclast, a radical force of world class, is reduced to the level of an exiled Stuart, restlessly travelling and remembering past glories.'[11]

I am well aware of the potency of Dr Johnson's judgement that 'Names which hoped to range over kingdoms and continents shrink at last into cloisters and colleges. Nor is it certain that even of these dark and narrow habitations, these last retreats of fame, the possession will long be kept.'[12] As an

occupant of a college, if not a cloister, her 'fame', I think, will fight off, rightly, that 'last retreat', though interest in Lloyd George waned enormously after his death in 1945 and it took the wordpower of A.J.P.Taylor to revivify LG studies in his Leslie Stephen Lecture at Cambridge in 1961.[13]

But back to the problem she continues to present to would-be rescuers like me even with five year's perspective plus two bulging volumes of memoirs from her[14] and a veritable shelf-full from her former ministers who sat, with varying degrees of pleasure and pain, around her Cabinet table between 1979 and 1990.[15] These last, of course, do not help. For the most anti-consensual occupant of the Cabinet Room, at least since Neville Chamberlain, did not inspire a consensus among her colleagues either at the time or in their memoirist phase.

Just listen to this cacophony. For reasons of balance I should start with a defender, Nicholas Ridley:

> 'Margaret Thatcher was going to be the leader in her Cabinet. She wasn't going to be an impartial chairman. She knew what she wanted to do and she was not going to have faint hearts in her Cabinet stopping her...She disliked having votes in Cabinet. She didn't see it as that sort of body. Nor was it suitable to decide matters by vote in view of the constitutional position. She was Prime Minster, she knew what she wanted to do, and she didn't believe her policies should be subject to being voted down by a group she had selected to advise and assist her...I myself have no complaints to make about the way Margaret Thatcher ran her Cabinet.'[16]

Ridley had not sat in a Cabinet under any other premier but then neither had Norman St John-Stevas who declared at the height of her dominance: 'There is no doubt that as regards the Cabinet, the most commanding Prime Minister of modern times has been...Mrs Thatcher. Convinced of both her own rectitude and ability she has tended to reduce to Cabinet to subservience.'[17]

Lord Soames, well placed to observe a range of postwar Cabinet styles as both Churchill's son-in-law and his Parliamentary Private Secretary with direct full Cabinet experience under Macmillan and Home as well as Mrs Thatcher, told me with great passion from his sickbed, clothed in a giant marquee of a dressing-gown, that 'She was not really running a team. Every time you have a Prime Minister who wants to take all the decisions, it mainly leads to bad results...The nearest parallel to Maggies is Ted.' (After her very first Cabinet meeting Soames, not the most emollient of characters himself, said to Jim Prior, 'I wouldn't even treat my gamekeeper like that').[18]

Peter Walker, who <u>had</u> sat under Ted Heath, did not care for his successor's Cabinet Room style and made his dissent public, while still in office by recalling in speeches the Duke of Wellington's amazement after his first Cabinet. 'An extraordinary affair', roared the Iron Duke. 'I gave them their orders and they wanted to stay and discuss them.' Walker would then pause and say: 'I'm so glad we don't have Prime Ministers like that today.'[19]

For Ian Gilmour, another carry-over from the Heath Cabinet, 'Mrs Thatcher regarded her first Cabinet...not as an aid to good government but as an obstacle to be surmounted. Her belief that dialogue was a waste of time rather than a means of arriving at an agreed course of action was part of her rejection of consensus politics.'[20] It wasn't just bone-bred consensualists like Gilmour who came to regret the gulf this created with colleagues. For Nigel Lawson, 'The practice of taking important decisions in smaller groups and not in Cabinet itself can clearly be taken too far',[21] though he found Cabinet-as-a-discussion-free-zone positively beneficial because 'as Chancellor, I used to look forward to Cabinet meetings as the most restful and relaxing event of the week' as 'the Cabinet's customary role was to rubber stamp decisions that had already been taken.'[22]

To be fair to Mrs Thatcher, we were warned. In a now famous interview with <u>The Observer</u> a few months before becoming Prime Minister she told Kenneth Harris: 'I've got to have togetherness. There must be a dedication to a purpose, agreement about direction. As a leader I have a duty to try and inspire that.

If you...choose a team in which you encounter a basic disagreement, you will not be able to carry out a programme, you won't be able to govern...it must be a Cabinet that works on something much more than pragmatism or consensus. It must be a conviction Cabinet...As Prime Minister I could not waste time having any internal arguments.'[23] We now know that it was reading this declaration of intent in The Observer while on a flight from Geneva to Paris that Ted Heath decided he could not serve under Mrs Thatcher.[24]

It was David Howell, a junior minister under Heath who had had a considerable influence in designing the bureaucratic infrastructure of Heath's new style of government in 1970,[25] who produced the most eloquent summary of how that statement of her intentions actually played out in the Cabinet Room when talking to me for a BBC Radio series on Cabinet government. 'If by "conviction government",' he said,

> It is meant that certain slogans were going to be elevated and written in tablets of stone and used as the put down at the end of every argument, then, of course, that is what indeed happened...Of course there is a deterring effect if one knows that one's going to go not into a discussion where various points of view will be weighed and gradually a view maybe be achieved, but into a huge argument where tremendous battle lines will be drawn up and everyone who doesn't fall into line will be hit on the head.'[26]

No wonder some ministers were actually physically sick[27] before going to ministerial meetings with a piece of business likely to be on the receiving end of the most famous handbag in political history. (Julian Critchley, by the way, cannot have known quite what he was starting when he wrote as early as 1982 that 'She cannot see an institution without hitting it with her handbag.'[28])

Mrs Thatcher was both self-aware and quite unrepentant about these traits. On one occasion she opened a ministerial meeting by banging that celebrated handbag on the table declaring 'Well, I haven't much time today, only enough time to explode and have my way!'[29] And when she failed to get her way she was furious. 'Why won't they do what I want them to,' she fumed to a member of the Cabinet secretariat once ministers had left after a particularly fractious Cabinet committee meeting.[30]

Mrs Thatcher had no idea of what it was like to be on the receiving end of that handbag and the accumulation of resentments it could build-up to the point where some, even some of the other big beasts in the ministerial jungle (Heseltine in 1986, Lawson in 1989 and Howe in 1990) could take it no more. Howe, whom (according to Lawson) she 'treated as a cross between a doormat and a punchbag',[31] said of her outburst in her memoirs against Heseltine's alleged breach of collective responsibility over Westland: 'Coming from the past mistress at marginalising Cabinet committees and deciding issues in bilaterals, this is quite a statement.'[32]

In such matters Mrs Thatcher was quite without self-irony. And she was unrepentant to the end and beyond the end. In her televised memoirs screened in the autumn of 1993 she was as fiercely a conviction person as she had been when talking to Kenneth Harris 14½ years earlier. 'I think sometimes the Prime Minister should be intimidating', she told Denis Blakeway. 'There's not much point being a weak and floppy thing in the chair is there?'[33]

She was almost Marxian in her sense of struggle. 'Life for me was always a daily battle', she would say.[34] 'I must govern!' she told a member of her No.10 staff during her first summer as Prime Minister when he was bold enough to suggest she might need a holiday.[35] 'I still had so much to do,'[36] she declared almost three years after nearly two thirds of her Cabinet had told her she could not go on without risking defeat at Michael Heseltine's hands in the second leadership ballot in November 1990.[37]

'My trouble was,' she explained, 'that the believers had fallen away.'[38] Note that word 'believers'; the famous 'one of us' syndrome at its perpetual work. No sign here of the tolerance which is traditionally part of the British way of governance, of open discussion before decision, the very bone-marrow of collective government at the top. Dissenters were not honourable men and women. 'There is no consensus,' she told Sir Anthony Parsons (himself a dedicated consensualist who, rather to his surprise, found himself her Foreign Affairs Adviser in No.10 after the Falklands War). 'I call them Quislings and traitors.'[39] To his intense mirth she once bowled Tony Parsons over by telling him 'Do you know, Tony, I'm so proud I don't belong to your class?' 'What class would that be, Prime Minister?', Tony replied. 'The upper middle class who see everybody's point of view but have no view of their own.'[40] (At risk of absurdity, is it too fanciful to say that remarks like that and her January 1996 Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture built around the political primacy of the middle class,[41] now makes Margaret Thatcher, in the age of 'New Labour', the leading proponent of the argument that class is the motor of British politics?)

One must be careful at this point not to be swept away by the cascade of post-trauma catharsis in which so many of her former ministers and even some of her Civil and Diplomatic Service advisers have indulged since the night of 'treachery with a smile on its face'[42] as she put it – when Cabinet government really did reassert itself and she realised she could not carry on. ('Have you seen a situation slip away from you', she said later. 'I'm a politician. I can sense it.'[43]) For a very long time the atmosphere in Whitehall gave the general impression that she was, as Harold Macmillan expressed it with characteristic bite, 'a brilliant tyrant surrounded by mediocrities.'[44] And her colleagues standard if not omnipresent supineness around the Cabinet Table understandably must have given her the impression, in John Biffen's brilliant phrase, that 'she was a tigress surrounded by hamsters.'[45] Once the 'tigress' was caged in the House of Lords ('a prophet who..[occasionally] descends from Concorde rather than the hills,' as Peter

Riddell put it rather nicely[46]) the hamsters' suddenly acquired teeth. 'The Revenge of the Unburied Dead'[47], was how John Biffen described the process which began on that now legendary night in November 1990.

Mrs Thatcher was, after all, a formidable shifter of business, a ruler of the state rather than its servant,[48] and, for her, part of this required regular Cabinet purges rather than the softer form of political management-by-reshuffle like, in Roy Jenkin's choice metaphor, the 'annual gymkhana' organised by Harold Wilson for his ministers[49]. Hence the inevitability, in Mrs Thatcher's case, of vengeful catharsis as the deposed reached for their pens. And who is to say that a rough way with 'a cumbrous and unwieldy instrument'[50] like Cabinet government was always and in all circumstances such a bad thing given the political and personal conditions in which Margaret Thatcher found herself presiding over it?

She was never 'house trained' in the Whitehall sense which brought such pride to Harold Wilson.[51] She never wanted to be. This meant that many of the great institutions in the land, especially the Whitehall monuments to cool reason and calm procedure, were in for the kind of storm none of them (unless they had worked in any of the ministries filled by Duncan Sandys) could remember. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office comes particularly to mind.

Yet this lack of 'house training', (which was partly the product of her rather narrow prior ministerial life at Pensions and National Insurance and Education and Science but mainly the result of that struggle-driven temperament) could be strangely and sometimes productively effective.

Listen to that coolest and most rational of Diplomatic Service minds, Sir Percy Cradock, on her early approach to the question of Hong Kong's return to China. 'Casting around at the time for adjectives to define our discussions,' Sir Percy recalls in his memoir of Experiences of China,

'I hit on two: "unstructured" and "abrasive". Abrasive certainly. Unstructured, because the Prime Minister's mind moved in unusual ways. We were accustomed to a frontal approach to the topic in hand, logical and step-by-step, as in eighteenth century pitched battles. The Prime Minister recognised no such rules and conducted a species of guerilla warfare, appearing suddenly behind the lines, or firing from unconventional angles.

'She also often operated behind a smokescreen of her own making, a series of remarks which were commonplace or even off the point and which induced a false and fatal sense of security on the part of her listeners. Then, amidst the dross and the chaff, would come the missile, a question or comment of such relevance and penetration that it destroyed the opposition. I have seen so many redoubtable visitors and seasoned Whitehall warriors emerge worsted and reeling from such encounters, with a vague sense that there had not been fair play, or that they had not seen fair play, or that they had been somehow prevented from doing themselves full justice.'[52]

To cope with Mrs Thatcher in full trajectory did require a very quick, very tough and very high-level form of counterballistics of which few were capable and even fewer tried when she was on a high either after the Falklands victory in 1982, or her third electoral triumph in 1987 or in her bunker phase, once her deputy and the one-person fire brigade for collective restraint, Willie Whitelaw, had gone into retirement in 1988[53] (after which, as Nigel Lawson believes, 'there was no restraint on her at all'[54] or as Geoffrey Howe sees it, she had succumbed, in her dealings with her colleagues, on European questions especially, to the 'language of the battlefield rather than the language of partnership.'[55])

Even Whitelaw, a genuine deputy prime minister (though he never acquired the title) unlike Howe (who did), confined his hosing-down interventions to private bilateral sessions with his boss rather than formal Cabinet or Cabinet

committee occasions.[56] And there was simply no-one to replace him in this role. Those well placed to observe the shifting geography of power saw still more influence syphoned inside the tight little No.10 circle after 1988 which is one of the reasons it is difficult to exempt her Foreign Affairs Private Secretary, Charles Powell, and her Press Secretary, Bernard Ingham (formidable operators both) from the charge that they were, to some degree, politicised while in her service (a charge from which I, at least, exempt the senior Civil and Diplomatic services as a whole).

Many of the characteristics of an 'overmighty premiership' were apparent from the start to insiders like Christopher Soames, to the wider political nation after the September 1981 ministerial purge and, by the mid-1980s, they had become part of the standard analysis and almost a conventional wisdom. For example, a scholarly admirer of Mrs Thatcher, the historian Professor John Vincent, wrote in 1985-87 that

> 'Mrs Thatcher is an exponent more of presidential than Cabinet government. These things are relative. She has not sought to build up a White House. Indeed, she rejected plans for a Prime Minister's Department and abolished the Think Tank: hardly the actions of a centralizer. Rather, the conduct of business has turned on personality and on faction. By temperament Mrs Thatcher is not a good listener. Her Cabinet technique, it is said, is a brisk exchange of fire with individual ministers on their special topics, not an Asquithian waiting game as discussion unfolds round the table. Moreover, her assertion that her aim is to get things done has to be taken seriously.'[57]

The key phrase here is 'these things are relative'. I have never subscribed to the Tommy Cooper school of analysis about Cabinet government that in April 1979 under Jim Callaghan we had such a thing then – just like that – it went, crushed by Mrs Thatcher's determination to extinguish all things collective including the collectivism of the Cabinet Room.

Quite apart from that formidable lifebelt for collectivism in the considerable frame of Lord Whitelaw, just think what could have happened, even by the time John Vincent took up his pen, if the 'core executive' had become a personal adventure playground for Mrs Thatcher in terms of her being able to drive through her preferred polices by sheer force of personality at full Cabinet, by packing Cabinet committees with the pliable and by using her No.10 Policy Unit as a counter-Whitehall backed by her patronage and her will. Would there have been a Hillsborough Agreement on Irish matters in 1985? Would healthcare have continued to be provided by a national, taxpayer-funded service free at the point-of-delivery? Would the BBC licence fee ('taxation without representation', she liked to call this[58]), let alone the BBC itself, have survived?

She was, in this sense, a sensitive politician. She knew, most of the time, what would run at Cabinet, party and parliamentary level and what would falter or crash. And if the collective spirit had flown the Cabinet Room most Thursday mornings on most weeks, surely it is as much the fault of the other figures around the Table - the Downing Street 22, as one might call them - as of her?

Nigel Lawson has a very revealing (and convincing) passage in his memoirs about the all too human reasons for this apparent timidity. His account in part explains, too, I think, why neither he nor Geoffrey Howe went to Heseltine's rescue when the Westland helicopter crashed through the Downing Street ceiling on to the Cabinet Table at the turn of 1985 and 1986 and why Howe did not lift much of a finger for Lawson himself in 1989 over the Walters Affair (not that she would have listened; she did not consult Howe about Lawson's successor and he was taken by surprise by it.[59])

In a section evocatively title 'Consent of the Victims', Lawson asked:

'Why did the colleagues allow her to govern in the way she did? While spinelessness or careerism may be adequate explanation in the case of some, it will not do for all. And belief in her infallibility was even more narrowly shared. Of course all Prime Ministers are in a position of great power, so long as they can retain the office; and she was a particularly formidable Prime Minister who, over the years...had acquired considerable experience.

'But beyond this, her method of Cabinet Government was accepted because in many ways it was highly convenient to her colleagues. Most Cabinet Ministers, particularly after a longish period in government, tend to be preoccupied with fighting their own battles and pursuing the issues that matter within their own bailiwick, and lose interest in the wider picture. Most of the time it is comforting for them to feel that all they need to do is strike a deal with the Prime Minister, and not have to bother overmuch about persuading their other colleagues. (And if they are fighting the Prime Minister on an issue that means a great deal to them all the more reason to concentrate on that). It was noticeable that, towards the end, those colleagues who most bemoaned the lack of collective discussion of issues outside their own departmental field were busy making private bilateral delays with Margaret over issues within their own departmental responsibility.'[60]

This 'creeping bilateralism', as Lawson called it on another occasion,[61] is corrosive of the collective spirit and a powerful contributor by the victims to the overmighty premiership which so bruised their psyches. (Not for nothing did Chris Patten liken his colleagues emerging after their first Cabinet meeting of John Major's premiership to the 'Prisoners' Chorus' in Beethoven's Fidelio as they emerged from the dungeons blinking into the sunlight and singing of freedom![62])

The Major experience showed, too, from day one that far from Mrs Thatcher converting a consensual premiership into a command one in a fashion that could not revert because of the tough, changed world in which prime ministers would find themselves operating (whoever they were), the old way would and could return almost as if the system had reverted to auto-pilot. John Wakeham carefully placed this on-the-record in a lecture on 'Cabinet Government' at Brunel University two years after the transfer from Thatcher to Major. Quite deliberately he cast his theme in the context of the 'c' word – '...the process of Cabinet government has to work by building consensus', he said. 'Colleagues must be able to support collective decisions. It is not possible to conduct business by putting them in a position where the only options they have are to submit or resign.'[63] This for me is the insiders' view – the victims' view, if you like – of what the Thatcher experience meant and the lesson to be drawn from it. And Wakeham, after all, had been her campaign manager at the end in November 1990.[64]

What was that lesson? Simply this – set aside the traditional practices of Cabinet government and you have instead pressure-cooker government. On some occasions steam can burst through with the valve taking the strain as happened over the Heseltine and Lawson resignations. But the Howe resignation was the final build-up which was to cause her premiership to blow, once and for all. As she explained in her memoirs, 'a prime minister who knows that his or her Cabinet has withheld its support is fatally weakened.'[65]

Yet, deep into retirement, she still cannot make the connection between the first reflections in her memoirs of her Cabinet life and her last. She talked of the 'culture shock' of her officials at the Department of Education and Science in 1970 which stemmed 'from the opposition between my own executive style of decision-making and the more consultative style to which they were accustomed.'[66] But the Cabinet is a 'collective executive'[67] above all else. Cabinet government simply cannot work properly without it. The key to successful premiership is a Prime Minister's ability to combine the jobs of both chairman and chief executive, tilting towards one rather than the other according to circumstances.

But would she have achieved so much if she had conducted her version of Cabinet government differently? Might she have lasted deep into the 1990s perhaps even outstripping Walpole's record of 21 years in the post? Who knows. Despite that Ozymandias syndrome, achieve she did. What will endure to be dissected inside the cloisters as Margaret Thatcher passes through on her way to 'the last retreat of fame'?

I had a stab at answering this on the very day John Major arrived on the steps of No.10 and declared he wished to create 'a country that is at ease with itself.'[68] By a bizarre coincidence I had long been booked to deliver a lecture at Georgetown University in Washington on 'Mrs Thatcher as History.'[69]

'History is a ruthless sifter', I declared grandly. 'Time reduces even the greatest reputations to a few sentences on a single side of A4. What will remain on the Thatcher ledger?'[70] Five entries I suggested:

> 1: The breaking of trade union power. The balance will never again tilt so far in favour of the Labour Movement as it had by the late 1970s.
>
> 2: The public-private boundary will not return to the _status quo post_ Herbert Morrison or _ante_ Margaret Thatcher. The argument from now on will be more about regulation than ownership.
>
> 3: With two thirds of state assets sold off in her first 10 years, the spread of shareholding from 3 million individuals in 1979 to 9 million in 1989 will have a significant permanent place in British economic history.[71]

4: That other significant form of public asset disposal – council house sales – saw a million homes transferred to private ownership on very favourable terms,[72] a substantial shift towards that long standing Conservative ideal of a 'property owning democracy.'

5: By playing midwife to the 'Next Steps' executive agencies inside the Civil Service, Mrs Thatcher put the kind of mark in Britain's 'permanent government'[73] that Gladstone left when he turned Whitehall from a patronage society into the country's first meritocracy by establishing the principle of recruitment by competitive examination in the late nineteenth century.[74]

I would stand by that – and it is a formidable list by any criteria. And it might be more widely appreciated if only she could model herself on Alec Home or Jim Callaghan in their retirements and curb her desire to descend firing thunderbolts upon political battlefields old and new. But if she was like that now she could not have been what she was between 1979 and 1990. She was, after all, a classical example of what Keynes called a 'copybook wisdom...statesman'[75] – that endless quoting of Kipling[76] and those home pieties, the stars she steered by, picked up in the course of her Grantham childhood.[77] Perhaps the earth-movers among politicians have to be of the 'copybook' type.

Let me pay tribute to her terrible/wonderful Lloyd George-like dynamism by ending on a human note with four vignettes: two real; two possibly apocryphal. The real first.

1: A mature student of mine coming round from an anaesthetic in a day ward some years after her resignation 'babbling', not of Falstaffian 'green fields' but railing, to his embarrassment and the amusement of the other patients, about the damage he believed her polices had inflicted on the NHS.[78]

2: The explorer David Hempleman-Adams, the first Briton to walk alone and unsupported to the South Pole, bashing his way across, the wastes of Antarctica while recalling reading in Margaret Thatcher's memoirs, 'how she had been told as a child that it was easy to be a starter, but was she a finisher?' And 'I'm no great fan of hers', he added.[79]

Finally, the possibly apocryphal.

1: The rumour that psychiatrists had, by the mid-1980s, ceased asking their more disturbed patients not their own names, birthdays and so on, but for the name of the Prime Minister because they all, without fail, got it right!

2: The little boy asking his father just after the 1987 general election: 'Dad, are men allowed to be Prime Minister?'

Those, ladies and gentleman, are the marks of true singularity.

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GRESHAM RHETORIC LECTURES 1995-96.

'PREMIERSHIP' 5.

'TIGRESS SURROUNDED BY HAMSTERS': MARGARET THATCHER, 1979-90.

FOOTNOTES.

1. A.J.P. Taylor, 'Preface' in A.J.P.Taylor (ed), Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson, (Hutchinson, 1971), p.ix.

2. Ibid.

3. 'My first five years - John Major', The Daily Telegraph, 27 November 1995.

4. Douglas Hurd, 'Chairing from the Front', The Spectator, 6 November 1993.

5. G.M. Young, Stanley Baldwin, (Hart-Davis, 1952), p.41.

6. 'The Fall of Thatcher', The Economist, 9 March 1991.

7. Peter Hennessy, 'The Last Retreat of Fame: Mrs Thatcher as History', The Modern Law Review, 54:4, July 1991, p.492.

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10. Hugo Young, 'The Lady's for earning - and the legend is dead', The Guardian, 23 November 1995.

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12. Quoted in Jonathan Steinberg, All or Nothing, (Routledge, 1990), p.xv.

13. 'Lloyd George: Rise and Fall' is reproduced in A.J.P. Taylor, Politics in Wartime, (Hamish Hamilton, 1964), pp.123-49.

14. Margaret Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, (HarperCollins, 1993); Margaret Thatcher, The Path to Power, (HarperCollins, 1995).

15. These range from the sympathetic [Nicholas Ridley, My Style of Government: The Thatcher Years,(Hutchinson, 1991)] through the restrained and gentlemanly [William Whitelaw, The Whitelaw Memoirs, (Aurum, 198)] and the sycophantic [Lord Young, The Enterprise Years: A Businessman in the Cabinet, (Headline, 1990)] to the acidly critical [Ian Gilmour, Dancing with Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism, (Simon and Schuster, 1992)] to the detailed and revealing [Nigel Lawson, The View From No.11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical, (Bantan, 1992)] and the dull, but revealing, [Geoffrey Howe, Conflict of Loyalty, (Macmillan, 1994)].

16. Ridley, My Style of Government, pp.29-30.

17. Norman St John-Stevas, 'Prime Ministers rise and fall but the Cabinet abides', The Daily Telegraph, 7 August 1986.

18. Conversation with Lord Soames, 1984. For his 'gamekeeper' remark see Jim Prior speaking on The Thatcher Years I, BBC 1, 6 October 1993.

19. 'Friday's People', The Guardian, 22 November 1985.

20. Gilmour, Dancing with Dogma, p.4.

21. Lawson, The View from No.11, p.127.

22. Ibid, p.125.

23. Interview with Kenneth Harris, Observer, 25 February, 1979.

24. John Cole, As It Seemed To Me: Political Memoirs, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), p.78.

25. John Campbell, Edward Heath, A Biography, (Cape, 1993), pp.315-6.

26. Conversation with David Howell, 21 February 1985.

27. Private Information.

28. The Times, 21 June 1982.

29. This choice episode was recalled by Malcolm Rifkind on Maggies' Ministers, BBC 2, 11 September 1993.

30. Private information.

31. Nigel Lawson speaking on The Thatcher Years, IV, BBC 1, 27 October 1993.

32. Geoffrey Howe, 'The triumph and tragedy of the Thatcher years', Weekend Financial Times, 24 October 1993.

33. The Thatcher Years, II, 13 October 1993.

34. The Thatcher Years, III, 20 October 1993.

35. Private Information.

36. The Thatcher Years, IV,

37. For superb accounts of her last days in power see Robert Shepherd, The Power Brokers; The Tory Party and Its Leaders, (Hutchinson, 1991) and Alan Watkins, A Conservative Coup; The Fall of Margaret Thatcher, (Duckworth, 1991).

38. The Thatcher Years, IV,

39. The Thatcher Years, I

40. Ibid.

41. 'Thatcher pours scorn on federalist creed of 'No Nation Tories,' The Times, 12 January 1996.

42. The Thatcher Years, I

43. Anthony Bevins, 'Decision to Quit followed Loss of Faith among Friends', Independent, 29 June 1991.

44. Peter Hennessy, Cabinet, (Blackwell, 1986), p.94.

45. John Biffen, 'The Revenge of the Unburied Dead', Observer, 9 December 1990.

46. Peter Riddell, 'Thatcher's role as prophet is true to tradition', The Times, 11 January 1996.

47. Biffen, 'The Revenge of the Unburied Dead'.

48. This useful distinction belongs to Roy Jenkins. See his 'R.A.Butler' in Roy Jenkins, Gallery of 20th Century Portraits, (David and Charles, 1988), p.51.

49. Roy Jenkins, 'Changing Patterns of Leadership' in Ibid, p.214.

50. The phrase is Lord John Russell's; quoted in Olive Anderson, 'Cabinet Government and the Crimean War', English Historical Review, vol.79 (1964), p.549.

51. Public Record Office, PREM 13/353. 'Ministerial responsibility for the universities.'

52. Percy Cradock, Experience of China, (John Murray, 1994), pp.175-6.

53. For the circumstances of his resignation health grounds see Whitelaw, The Whitelaw Memoirs, pp.268-70.

54. The Thatcher Years, IV

55. Ibid.

56. Whitelaw, The Whitelaw Memoirs, pp.264-5.

57. John Vincent, 'The Thatcher Government, 1979-1987', in Peter Hennessy and Anthony Seldon (eds), Ruling Performance: British Governments from Attlee to Thatcher, (Blackwell, 1987), p.288.

58. Private Information.

59. Howe, Conflict of Loyalty, pp.603-5.

60. Lawson, The View From No.11, p.129.

61. Lord Lawson, 'Cabinet Government in the Thatcher Years: Some Reflections and Wider Lessons', paper delivered to the Twentieth Century British History Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, 9 March 1994.

62. 'Bagehot' 'Selling a newsprint', The Economist, 8 December 1990.

63. Lord Wakeham, 'Cabinet Government' delivered at Brunel University, 10 November 1992.

64. Thatcher, The Downing Street Years, p.850.

65. Ibid, p.851.

66. Thatcher, The Path to Power, p.165.

67. The phrase belongs to the former Cabinet Secretary, Lord Hunt of Tanworth. Lord Hunt delivered it as a discussant on 'The Failings of Cabinet Government in the mid- to late 1970s', a paper delivered by Edmund Dell to the Twentieth Century British History Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, 20 October 1993.

68. Mr Major's draft notes for his doorstep remarks on arriving at No.10 on 28 November 1990 are reproduced in Sarah Hogg and Jonathan Hill, Too Close to Call: Power and Politics - John Major In No.10 (Little Brown, 1995), opposite p.148.

69. It was reproduced, with amendments, as 'The Last Retreat of Fame: Mrs Thatcher As History.' I had given it a dry run when addressing the History Society of Trinity Hall, Cambridge in 18 October 1990.

70.Hennessy, 'The Last Retreat of Fame', p.497.

71. Peter Riddell, The Thatcher Decade: How Britain has Changed during the 1980s, (Blackwell, 1989), pp.13-26.

72. Alan Murrie, 'Housing and the Environment' in Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon (eds), The Thatcher Effect: A Decade of Change, (Clarendon Press, 1989), pp.218-21.

73. The phrase in Anthony Verrier's. See his Through the Looking Glass: British Foreign Policy in the Age of Illusions, (Cape, 1983).

74. Hennessy, 'The Last Retreat', pp.497-8.

75. J.M. Keynes, Essays in Persuasion, (Macmillan, 1931), p.328.

76. Hugo Young, One of Us, (Pan edn, 1993), p.408.

77. Thatcher, The Path to Power, pp.3-34.

78. Private Information.

79. 'Iron Lady steels polar explorer', The Times, 9 January 1996.