

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15407/mzu2021.30.363>  
UDC 94(4)(341.238:316.64/.65 M.Thatcher)

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## MARGARET THATCHER'S VISION ON THE RUSSIAN FACTOR IN THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SYSTEM (Late Twentieth - Early Twenty-First Century)

*The article analyzes the memoirs and scientific legacy of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during 1979–1990 Margaret Thatcher on the role of the USSR and Russia in the international relations system of the last third of the 20th – early 21st century. The evolution of Soviet/Russian-British relations in the active phase of the Cold War and its gradual extinction is studied: from the categorical rejection of the Soviet political regime at a time of stagnation to the establishment of active dialogue during the period of rebuilding and Gorbachev's "new political thinking". The paper focuses on the predictions of a respected British politician regarding Russia's role in the future of Europe and the world. The role of the nuclear factor in the implementation of Soviet-British relations is analyzed. The process of implementation of the "German question" through the prism of these relations is considered. The role of the United States as an important factor influencing the course of the Soviet/Russian-British dialogue is defined, in particular in the context of NATO's role, operation "Desert Storm". The paper describes the main problems of Europe and the world, exacerbated during the collapse of the Soviet Union. Particular attention is paid to the consideration of interpersonal relations between Margaret Thatcher and Mikhail Gorbachev and the characteristics of his successors as leader of the state: Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin.*

**Keywords:** *russian factor, Soviet/Russian-British relations, the Cold War, "new political thinking", reforms, nuclear potential, NATO, collapse of the USSR.*

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## ПОГЛЯДИ МАРГАРЕТ ТЕТЧЕР НА РОСІЙСЬКИЙ ЧИННИК У СИСТЕМІ МІЖНАРОДНИХ ВІДНОСИН (ОСТАННЯ ТРЕТИНА ХХ – ПОЧАТОК ХХІ СТ.)

*У статті проаналізовано мемуарну та наукову спадщину прем'єр-міністра Великої Британії (1979–1990 рр.) Маргарет Тетчер щодо ролі СРСР та Росії у системі міжнародних відносин останньої третини ХХ – початку ХХІ століття. Досліджено еволюцію радянсько/російсько-британських відносин в умовах активної фази «холодної війни» та поступового її згасання: від категоричного несприйняття радянського політичного режиму стадії застою до налагодження активного діалогу в період перебування та «нового політичного мислення» М. Горбачова, процес кризи та розпаду СРСР, прогнози авторитетного політика щодо ролі Росії у майбутньому Європи та світу. Проаналізовано роль ядерного чинника у процесі здійснення радянсько-британських відносин. Розглянуто процес реалізації «німецького питання» через призму цих відносин. Визначено роль США з огляду на їхній вплив на перебіг радянсько/російсько-британського діалогу, зокрема в контексті ролі НАТО, операції «Буря в пустелі». Окреслено основні проблеми Європи та світу, що загострилися у процесі розпаду СРСР. Окрему увагу приділено розгляду міжособистісних стосунків М. Тетчер і М. Горбачова та характеристикам його наступників на посаді лідера держави – Б. Єльцина та В. Путіна.*

**Ключові слова:** *російський чинник, радянсько/російсько-британські, відносини, «холодна війна», «нове політичне мислення», реформи, ядерний потенціал, НАТО, розпад СРСР.*

“Russia has always had a unique ability to surprise”<sup>1</sup> — one of the judgments of the influential world politician Margaret Thatcher does not lose its relevance in modern realities. The Prime Minister led Britain in a landmark period for humanity — the 1980s, during which the world evolved from a sharp escalation of international tensions during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to the thaw of the second half of the 1980s and the gradual abatement of the Cold War. These fateful changes for the world are connected first of all with the coming to power

in the USSR of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader of the new generation, and his proclamation of the policy of “new political thinking.” As Thatcher recognized relations with the Soviet Union as one of the decisive vectors of her government’s foreign policy, she invariably paid special attention to the analysis of first Soviet and then Russian political realities. Even after resigning as leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in her speeches, memoirs, and analytical studies, Thatcher continued to pay special attention to the Russian factor as an important component of the modern world order. Undoubtedly, the authoritative opinions of an experienced politician deserve special attention given the destructive, destabilizing role of Russia in the modern world.

The evolution of Soviet-British relations began in February 1984, when Thatcher decided to go to Moscow to participate in the mourning ceremony of the funeral of Yuri Andropov and meet the new Soviet leader. It is worth noting that after Brezhnev’s death, the Prime Minister did not even express sympathy in the book of the Soviet Embassy in London, so such a political move was aimed at “demonstrating to Andropov’s successor Britain’s readiness to establish better relations between West and East, that signaled the new leadership’s desire for a closer dialogue with the USSR, while Reagan preferred to stay in Washington”<sup>2</sup>. This was Thatcher’s first visit to Moscow as prime minister, except for a transit stop at Vnukovo Airport in 1979 on her way to Japan.

During this visit, Thatcher met Mikhail Gorbachev. In December 1984, he headed a delegation of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR visited London. According to the Soviet ambassador to Britain, L. Zamyatin, it was during Gorbachev’s conversation with Thatcher in Checkers that the Soviet politician set out the main provisions of the future foreign policy strategy of the “new political thinking”<sup>3</sup>. Summing up the meeting, the British Prime Minister in an interview with reporters uttered the famous phrase “You can deal with this person... He can be trusted!”<sup>4</sup> One of the main results of the visit was the agreed position of both sides on limiting the arms race in space, increasing trust and cooperation between the countries and as a necessary condition for the realization of these intentions more frequent meetings and contacts at all levels<sup>5</sup>.

During Thatcher’s visit to Moscow in March 1987, her fateful talks with Mikhail Gorbachev took place, which were quite intense, in particular due to fundamental differences over the role of nuclear forces. At that time, Washington and Moscow completed work on a Soviet-American agreement on the reciprocal reduction of medium-range and short-range missiles (RMS, RMD), which later played a crucial role in limiting the arms race and easing international tensions. NATO member states, including Britain, have agreed to stop missile deployment in Europe once the RSD and RMD reduction agreements are signed. This decision was particularly difficult for Britain, as the country’s nuclear weapons program has always been key. In the early postwar years, Britain’s most authoritative po-

litician, W. Churchill, noted the need to avoid renouncing nuclear weapons until there was full confidence that we had other supreme means of preserving peace<sup>6</sup>.

M. Thatcher has always followed a similar argument regarding the preservation of her country's nuclear potential. During the dialogue, the parties were able to reach mutual understanding in the development of bilateral relations, in particular in the field of peaceful space exploration and trade development.

Another significant meeting of Thatcher with Mikhail Gorbachev in December 1987 on the way to Washington, where the above-mentioned Soviet-American agreement on the mutual reduction of RSD and RMD was to be signed. Realistically assessing the fate of the event, Thatcher, through the Soviet ambassador to Britain,

L. Zamyatina, invited the Soviet leader on his way to Washington to meet at one of the largest British military bases in the Atlantic, Bryze Norton, which was also to become significant. The mutual benefit of this meeting deserves special attention: Thatcher sought to demonstrate support for the agreement, defending the interests of Europe, Gorbachev, in turn, sought to show respect for the European position on the agreement. The meeting lasted two hours and seemed quite difficult. From the outset, the British Prime Minister, on behalf of Western European leaders, has shown full support for the signing of the future agreement. The Soviet leader, in turn, asked about her attitude to the possibility of Soviet-American agreements on a 50% reduction in strategic offensive weapons and, in addition, on French and British nuclear forces. Thatcher's position on this issue remained steadfast: "Any war in our time is terrible. And it should be restrained only with the help of some minimal stockpile of nuclear weapons"<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, against the background of the warming of international relations, the "new political thinking" of the British leader did not lose vigilance and consistently defended both her own national interests and European and world security in general.

Gorbachev's third visit to London in April 1989 was no less significant. Although the conversation began with an exchange of views on the state of the rebuilding process in the USSR, the leaders exchanged views on the disarmament process, including the ban on chemical weapons and the reduction of conventional weapons. During the rather sharp dialogue, Thatcher once again demonstrated her firm and unwavering position of nuclear deterrence and flexible response.

After Gorbachev's visit, L.Zamyatin was instructed by him to meet with the prime minister and discuss the possibility of providing the USSR with a 2 million loan to stabilize the Soviet economy. During the meeting, M. Thatcher voiced her concept of conditions for providing economic assistance to the Soviet Union, which provided for fundamental assistance subject to the identification of domestic economic programmes, improving economic efficiency.

The Prime Minister also noted that social and psychological difficulties have become more and more noticeable recently. "People are used to being commanded, most of them have lost the ability and skills of "self-initiative". An effective

mechanism and a clear motivation for the government's intentions and plans are needed to revive such capabilities”.

During this conversation, Thatcher noted that she did not support the idea of full state sovereignty, which is promoted by some leaders of the Soviet republics. “Such a path is politically wrong. It can lead to the collapse of a huge country, its fragmentation. And what will happen to your multimillion-dollar army, with weapons, in such a situation? All these issues are sensitive for the West”<sup>8</sup>.

With similar views, Thatcher visited Kyiv in June 1990 during her official visit to the USSR. On the streets of Kyiv, she was unpleasantly surprised by the numerous yellow and blue flags that she associated with the problem of separatism in French Quebec, Canada. And only after Thatcher's speech in the Verkhovna Rada and a brief conversation with Ukrainian dissidents, who thanked her and R.Reagan for their release and called on the British Prime Minister to treat Ukraine as a Baltic state that had already declared independence, her position on sovereignty of Ukraine has changed somewhat<sup>9</sup>. From this visit to Kyiv, Thatcher, as an experienced politician, realized the importance of the problem of national identity for the people with whom she had the opportunity to communicate, which raised serious doubts about the possible preservation of the integrity of the USSR<sup>10</sup>.

Thatcher consistently supported Gorbachev in his reform activities because she was convinced that sooner or later their influence would spread to all the countries of Eastern Europe. At the initial stage, both leaders saw the ultimate goal of the rebuilding policy quite differently. Gorbachev did not predict the possibility of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact Organization (ATS), let alone the USSR. His goal is to radically reform the essence of the very concept of socialism, to give more powers to republics and local authorities. Thatcher was not a sympathizer of socialist ideas, considering them wrong. However, like the Soviet leader, she was not a supporter of the collapse of the Soviet Union, as she saw it as a serious threat to international stability, but as the realization of the inevitability of Soviet disintegration came over time, Thatcher sought to broaden the British-Soviet dialogue and used every opportunity to communicate representatives of the Soviet political and intellectual beau monde, to some extent in opposition to Gorbachev.

The question of M. Thatcher's relations with Boris Yeltsin deserves special attention in this sense. Thatcher first learned about the first secretary of the Moscow Party Committee from the materials of the British media in October 1987, when a conflict between him and Mikhail Gorbachev took place at a plenum of the CPSU Central Committee. In particular, Yeltsin criticized the ways of restructuring, the glorification of Gorbachev. His persecution by the political entourage of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee began, culminating in the removal of Yeltsin from the leadership of the Moscow party organization.

Analyzing the reports of British journalists from Moscow, Thatcher concluded that there was opposition in the country to Gorbachev and the methods of

his leadership. According to her, Yeltsin was a political figure that should not be ignored, especially given the real situation in the country, so it is necessary to get acquainted with this “rebel”. So when he came to London on an unofficial visit in 1989 to present his book, “A Confession on a Specific Topic”, the prime minister decided to meet with a Soviet oppositionist<sup>11</sup>. Their conversation lasted about an hour. In her memoirs, Thatcher said: “I was struck by the fact that Yeltsin, unlike Gorbachev, freed himself from communist thinking and rhetoric... He managed to get to the heart of some fundamental problems much deeper than Gorbachev... Openly opposed the Communist Party’s monopoly ... He spoke about the transfer of powers to the republics, in particular in the formation of their own budgets, the creation of their own laws and constitutions”<sup>12</sup>.

“When I later shared with President Bush my positive impressions of communicating with Yeltsin,” Thatcher recalls, “he made it clear to me that the Americans do not share him.” And this is a big mistake. Later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Thatcher, without belittling the role of Gorbachev, proclaimed his “new thinking” and personal sympathy for the Soviet leader, expressed the belief that the coming to power of Boris Yeltsin was in favor of Russia<sup>13</sup>.

The opportunity to communicate with the representative of Soviet dissent for Thatcher was a visit to London in July 1989 by Academician A. Sakharov, who gave a long speech at the Center for International Political Studies “Chatham House” to politicians, diplomats, senior military officials, political scientists who followed on the development of events in the USSR. The academician began his speech with the words: “It seems to me that today is a critical point in the historical development of socialist countries, when it is possible to turn in different directions. The fate of our country’s further development is now largely determined... it would be a mistake to assume that everything has been finally determined, that we are firmly on the path of democratic development... The country is facing great changes and they can happen both right and left. In such a situation, anything is possible, even a military-fascist coup”. A. Sakharov further concludes that “this situation, when it is dangerous for the West to give advances..., it must be extremely careful in its assessments”<sup>14</sup>.

1989 was a period of profound change for the whole of Eastern Europe, which attracted the attention of Western leaders, including the British Prime Minister. She visited Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, where she said that assistance to these countries would depend on the extent of its progress through radical reforms. In autumn of 1989, during a regular meeting with Gorbachev in Moscow, Thatcher expressed her conviction that the processes of renewal in Eastern Europe were nothing but the collapse of communism, a confirmation of the advantages of the Western model of development and Western socio-political values. Thatcher also stressed that democratic processes in Eastern Europe would be impossible without reforms in the Soviet Union, that they would continue to

depend on the success of reforms in Russia. At the same time, she was well aware that the West should not use the situation to harm Gorbachev's political course. According to Thatcher, the West's actions should be based on a clear consideration of the military and political interests of both ATS and NATO alliances, on the post-war realities<sup>15</sup>.

The "German question" occupied an important place in Soviet-British relations. Thatcher's next meeting with Gorbachev took place in autumn of 1989, before his visit to Berlin to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the GDR. The Prime Minister, on behalf of the leaders of Western Europe, was quite critical of the unification of the country in the near future, as she saw it as a balance of power in Europe, as well as strong economic and political competition from a united Germany. Thatcher criticized the level of efficiency of the "Committee of Four" according to the 4 + 2 formula (USA, England, USSR, France plus two Germany), which, according to the Prime Minister, worked extremely inefficiently<sup>16</sup>.

The British leadership also called for the preservation of both blocs, NATO and the ATS, as this guaranteed European stability and should be a favorable condition for the resumption of negotiations on the reduction of conventional weapons, especially by the USSR. Later, in March 1990, when the de facto unification of Germany had already taken place, Thatcher wrote in a personal message to Gorbachev: "Now that it has become clear that unification will take place, and probably soon enough, the importance of the task lies in order to properly organize the security system, protect the interests of all stakeholders and ensure conditions under which the association does not jeopardize stability. She went on to say that she was of the opinion that "this goal will be achieved if a united Germany becomes a member of NATO". As for the territory of the former GDR, the security interests of the USSR will be taken into account<sup>17</sup>.

In late March, German Chancellor G. Kohl paid an official visit to London, where he met with the British Prime Minister. The two political leaders agreed on a united Germany's membership in NATO. At the same time, a common position was reached on granting a special military-political status to the eastern part of a united Germany. This status was to ensure the presence of Soviet troops there for a transitional period, according to various estimates, it was to last from 4 to 7 years. In turn, NATO troops were to remain in West Germany "with all the necessary weapons".<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the achievement of common positions of Germany, the USSR, and Great Britain on the "German question" became the factor that made it possible to solve the German problem in such a way as to meet the interests of all European countries, including both German states.

A special period in Soviet-British relations was August 1990, when Iraq carried out aggression against Kuwait. In the historiography of the Cold War, this event was given special significance as one of the last outbreaks of tension at the

stage of its gradual attenuation and reconciliation of the two opposing sides of the USSR and the United States. In the means of resolving the situation in the Middle East, the positions of the Soviet and British leaders differed in principle. Thatcher, who was in Washington at the time and was consulting with George W. Bush on the reunification process in Germany, insisted on sending an additional fleet to the Persian Gulf and persuaded his American ally to develop a military operation against Iraq. This operation was later codenamed “Desert Storm”. The British Prime Minister informed the US President that she was ready to send additional ground forces to the conflict zone: tanks and artillery, as well as British ships. Thatcher noted that Hussein must be opposed collectively and through the United Nations<sup>19</sup>.

From the very beginning, the position of the Soviet leader provided for “Reversing aggression”. In a personal message to Thatcher, Gorbachev stressed that the collective action against aggression approved by the UN Security Council should be political in nature, because, according to the Soviet leader, a new war in the Middle East would have dire consequences<sup>20</sup>.

Thus, Thatcher supported a massive military coup with the transfer of hostilities to Iraq, while Gorbachev continued to use diplomatic channels, including negotiations with Hussein and Thatcher through a personal representative, an experienced Soviet official E. Primakov. At the same time, through the ambassador in London, Gorbachev tried to convince the prime minister of the ineffectiveness of using force against Iraq, which, in his opinion, could lead to unpredictable developments. On November 20, 1990, the two leaders met in Paris. In the course of the dialogue, Thatcher demonstrated one of the characteristic features of her political character - absolute uncompromisingness, when required by the severity of the situation, which threatened the world and affected the real, in this case oil, interests of the West. Thus, the Soviet leader had no chance to defend his view that the Iraq crisis should be resolved exclusively by political means, through the UN, that any other decision would be a blow to the process of political change, a new way of thinking<sup>21</sup>.

Operation “Desert Storm”, launched by the West, using the latest military equipment: a new generation of aircraft, tanks, shells with a depleted uranium hull, missiles — from satellite to unmanned radio-controlled - has shown its enormous superiority over Iraqi weapons. Thus, the last measurement of forces between the West and the East was hopelessly lost by the USSR, as was the Cold War as a whole.

In late November 1990, Thatcher resigned as leader of the ruling Conservative Party and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, but did not give up political activity, was keenly interested in the situation in Russia and the Baltics. During a meeting with the Soviet ambassador in London, she expressed her advice to Gorbachev: “Stabilization, strengthening the rule of law. Freedom can only exist under the rule of law, and that is democracy!” L. Zamyatin, having repeated meetings with Thatcher after her resignation, said: “During the conversation, the British former prime



minister demonstrated her analytical mind, intelligence, ability to predict the future course of events. She clearly saw in the processes of “sovereignty of the republics”, in the facts of their struggle with the center the danger of unity and integrity of the state “it is very important that your president is surrounded by a group of reformers, people who can think new, able to take responsibility for decisions”<sup>22</sup>.

In March 1991, Thatcher paid an informal visit to the United States, where she met with President George W. Bush. In particular, they discussed the West’s ability to assist Gorbachev. In late May, Thatcher visited Moscow, lecturing at the Moscow Institute of International Relations on the “Revolution of Freedom.” Her meeting with Gorbachev took place, which demonstrated the former prime minister’s thorough knowledge of the economic, social and political realities of the USSR at the time and the peculiarities of the international situation.

In summer 1991, Gorbachev was invited to a meeting with the leaders of the world’s seven leading countries (the so-called Big Seven) in London. The initiative to invite the Soviet leader belonged to Thatcher, for which she even flew to the United States to convince George W. Bush of the need for Gorbachev’s presence at this international forum. This allowed the American president to clearly articulate the vision of world leaders of the USSR’s prospects for the near future, known as Bush’s six conditions to Gorbachev: democracy, market, federation - the three terms covered such international aspects as the transition from confrontation to cooperation with the West, collaborating in overcoming international tensions in the Middle East and other regions<sup>23</sup>. In fact, the conditions put forward by Bush to Gorbachev were almost identical to those discussed in 1985-1990 during meetings between the Soviet leader and Thatcher.

Undoubtedly, the political experience gained by Thatcher during the 12 years of his presidency has not lost its relevance. Therefore, her memoirs “Years on Downing Street” and a thorough scientific work “The Art of Government. A Strategy for a Changing World”, written and published after her resignation as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, deserves special attention. In particular, they contain analytical information in which the Russian question occupies one of the key places and make it possible to study the evolution of Thatcher’s views on the Russian question after the collapse of the USSR.

Covering her visit to Russia in July 1993, the former prime minister has always been interested in the state of reforms in the country after Yeltsin’s two-year rule. Although during the conversation with A. Chubais, who at that time was the First Deputy Prime Minister for Economic and Financial Policy, the concept of the government’s reform program sounded quite convincing, Thatcher felt dissonance with what she saw on the shelves of Moscow stores. And only a visit to Nizhny Novgorod, her communication with the young governor B. Nemtsov gave hope for the possibility of coming to power in Russia “reformers” of the Western caliber<sup>24</sup>.

“A serious attitude towards Russia today is, among other things, a calculation,” Thatcher said. “When former President Yeltsin, during a visit to Beijing in December 1999, undiplomatically reminded us that Russia still has a strong nuclear potential. And it was absolutely true. “ Thatcher then sums it up: “Weak or strong as a partner or as a headache, Russia always matters”.<sup>25</sup>

Analyzing the international realities of the second half of the 1990s, Thatcher considered naivety to be the biggest mistake in the West’s relations with Russia. From the beginning, the Clinton administration tried to see Russia as a “strategic partner”. However influential Russia may have been, it has never had the desire or ability to engage in global cooperation with the United States in any form<sup>26</sup>.

The ex-premier’s argument is more than convincing. In November 1993, a new Russian military doctrine proclaimed the Soviet Union’s previous promise not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and introduced the principle of more flexible use. In April 1999, President Boris Yeltsin held a special meeting of the Security Council in response to the bombing of Serbia. During his speech, he noted: “Nuclear forces have been and remain a key element of Russia’s national security strategy and military power”. His successor, Vladimir Putin, inherited from Yeltsin a similar vision of the role of nuclear capabilities as an important factor of foreign policy advantage. Elected to the post in March 2000, he visited the Nuclear Weapons Development Center and told his staff: “We will support and strengthen Russia’s nuclear forces and its nuclear complex as a whole”.

Both Russian leaders share a view on building nuclear capabilities as a means of blackmail in the international arena, despite the Camp David Declaration of Reconciliation signed by George W. Bush and Boris Yeltsin in February 1992. Thatcher therefore had good reason to argue that the cause of Putin’s call for “further reductions in the nuclear arsenals of America and Russia lies in limited resources, not in the desire to show goodwill”. As long as Russia has a nuclear capability that it cannot keep in good condition, the world is in danger<sup>27</sup>.

According to the former prime minister, Russia’s chemical and biological potential is no less dangerous for the West. Thatcher therefore suggests ways to overcome the destabilization emanating from Russia: First, the creation of a program like the Nunn-Lugar program (the so-called joint threat reduction program for Russia and the CIS, adopted in December 1991), aimed at ensuring proper, in terms of our own security, control over Russia’s nuclear weapons; second, an attempt to convince Russia that its willingness to sell military technology to rogue states could easily turn against itself; third, the impossibility of underestimating the potential threat posed by Russia, as its seeds germinate on the basis of chaos, as the world has seen in its own experience<sup>28</sup>.

Another difficult problem, which with the collapse of the USSR increased tensions and destabilization in the former Soviet and European space, is the international issue. According to Thatcher, the most clumsy statement of Soviet

leaders was made by Leonid Brezhnev in December 1972 during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the USSR: "The national question, which we inherited from the past, has been resolved completely, definitively and irrevocably"<sup>29</sup>. In less than 20 years, the same nationalism will contribute to the collapse of the Soviet Union. "It remains to be seen whether it will be able to do the same with the Russian Federation," the former prime minister said<sup>30</sup>.

Russia's main concerns, according to Thatcher, were related to Russia's concern for the Russian minority in the so-called "near abroad", an attempt to use the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a means of integrating the former Soviet republics into the confederation under its direct leadership. Under such conditions, the task of the West, according to Thatcher, to make it clear to Moscow that it has no reason to expect that it will be allowed to determine the direction of development of these countries<sup>31</sup>.

In the case of the Baltic States, the best way was to admit them to NATO, which involved the use of force if necessary to preserve the territorial integrity of any country in the bloc.

Among post-Soviet countries, Thatcher paid particular attention to Ukraine. "Ukraine cannot be seen as a country in the" Russian sphere "of influence. For a strong Ukraine, the role of a buffer between Russia and NATO is more appropriate. "Defend independence and at the same time try to resolve existing conflicts as peacefully as possible. Ukraine vigorously opposes Russia's attempts to turn the CIS into a kind of Soviet Union. At the opposite pole is Lukashenko, the president of Belarus, who has consistently sought to unite his authoritarian state with Russia and create a new political, military and economic union"<sup>32</sup>. These views-predictions were expressed by Thatcher 20 years ago, but have not lost their significance, but have become even more relevant for Europe and the world today.

In the five Central Asian republics, according to Thatcher, their ethnicity is of particular importance, as well as the problem of tensions between ethnic groups that make up their population, the growing influence of external forces, especially militant Islam. "The strategic importance of Central Asia is also due to economic factors, primarily oil and gas, which is key in relations in the Caucasus," Thatcher said. In this ethnic powder keg... Russia, seeking to maintain control over this oil, has joined a new "big game" with the same energy with which it has done so in the past. The West, according to the former prime minister, should seek to establish legality and stability in the region, gain access to this source of oil and gas as an alternative to the Middle East, provided, of course, that Russia's interests are reasonably respected<sup>33</sup>.

Summing up the analysis of interethnic problems against the background of the collapse of the USSR, M. Thatcher, on the one hand, stressed the respect for Russia's interests, the continuation of cooperation with it to combat Islamic

extremism in Central Asia. On the other hand, she called on Western leaders not to recognize Moscow's right to destabilize the situation in the former Soviet Union and to provide them with political, technical and economic assistance.

Thatcher always closely followed the Soviet and Russian leaders, realizing their role in leading a large and influential state. The range of her assessments of them was quite wide: from openly negative to the Soviet gerantocratic secretaries general of the CPSU, in particular L. Brezhnev and K. Chernenko, to positive and at the same time critical of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. In her reasoning, she assessed the figure of Russia's second president, Vladimir Putin, very carefully and ambiguously in the context of Russia's foreign policy. In particular, she called him "a shrewd pragmatist in Russia's relations with NATO". She even suggested that Russia would only benefit from joining NATO in order to combat the threat posed by Islamic extremism, and possibly from China in the long run. "Isn't it wise to tear Russia away from the East, bring it back to Europe, and join NATO to another great power whose resources we can attract to our side?"<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, Thatcher expressed some reservations about such a possibility. This is primarily due to unresolved domestic economic problems, so she believed that Russia could not yet be called a "normal country." In addition, according to Thatcher, it will always be equally Asian and European, Eastern and Western, it will never be able to be limited to "Western", while NATO is basically "Western". And the last argument in favor of her predictions was that Russia, as a potential member of NATO, would never accept domination of the US alliance. Therefore, Russia's accession to NATO could be quite dangerous. And while Thatcher wanted to see Putin as a strong and energetic leader capable of assessing and responding to international events boldly, soberly, effectively, "he should not be credited with the Democrat's conscientiousness and liberal instincts to portray him as a leader the West can deal with", - she emphasized<sup>35</sup>.

Under such conditions, it should be noted that Thatcher in her memoirs and scientific-analytical works traditionally attached special importance to the analysis of the Soviet/Russian factor in the international arena as one of the decisive, always carefully and meticulously characterized the leaders of the USSR and Russia. Thatcher invariably recognized the United States as her main partner in the international arena, symbolizing the consolidation of the West in the difficult conditions of the 1980s, when the systemic crisis in the USSR threatened the world with destabilization against the background of the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Thatcher's judgement shows that for her, as a global politician, any international issue was considered not only in the context of national interests, but also taking into account European and world priorities. Such a position runs like a red thread through all policy considerations on ways to resolve complex international issues, primarily with the participation of the USSR / Russia.

Even though not all of her conclusions about the role of the USSR/ Russia in the international arena can be accepted, not all predictions made by the British leader came true, most of the warnings about the potential danger emanating from Russia can be read in her works between the lines. No wonder one of the sections of her scientific and analytical work is called “Russian mystery”.

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<sup>1</sup> Thatcher M. The art of governing the state. A strategy for a changing the world. Moscow, 2003. P.95.

<sup>2</sup> Popov V.I. Changes in the camp of traditions (Notes of an ambassador and a scientist about Britain in the 80s). Moscow, 1991. P. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Zamyatin L. M. Gorby and Maggie. Notes of the Ambassador about two famous politicians - Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher, Moscow, 1995. P. 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Thatcher M. The Downing Street Years. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993. P.461.

<sup>5</sup> Popov V.I. Op. cit. P.172.

<sup>6</sup> Churchill W. World Crisis, Autobiography, Speeches. Moscow, 2003. 768 p.

<sup>7</sup> Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P.51.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. P.77.

<sup>9</sup> Thatcher M. The Downing Street Years. P.806-807.

<sup>10</sup> Cherevko O. M. Thatcher: Problems and Prospects of the Modern World (review of the memoirs of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 1979-1990). *International relations of Ukraine: scientific searches and findings*. 2007. Issue 16. P.323.

<sup>11</sup> Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P.83.

<sup>12</sup> Thatcher M. The Downing Street Years. P.804.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. P.803-804.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P.480; Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P.93.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P.792; Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P.100.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. P.769, 799.

<sup>17</sup> Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P.107.

<sup>18</sup> Thatcher M. The Downing Street Years. P.798-799; Zamyatin L.M. P.101; Bush J., Scowcroft B. The world has changed. Moscow, 2004. P.239.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P.769,817-822.

<sup>20</sup> Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P. 118.

<sup>21</sup> Thatcher M. The Downing Street Years. P.769.

<sup>22</sup> Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P.130-131.

<sup>23</sup> Zamyatin L.M. Op. cit. P.144.

<sup>24</sup> Thatcher M. Op. cit. P.96.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. P.97.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. P.115.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. P.118.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. P.115.

<sup>29</sup> Conquest R. *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future*. Hoover Institution Stanford University. 1986. 325 p.

<sup>30</sup> Thatcher M. Op. cit. P.120.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. P.121.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. P.123.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. P.128.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. P.135.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. P.136.

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