

British Establishment prepares to dump Margaret Thatcher

by Mark Burdman

The British Establishment is rapidly losing patience with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Were it only a matter of the devastation she has caused to the British economy itself, the Establishment could perhaps tolerate her for some time yet. But her consistent foreign policy blunders, particularly her obsessive hostility to German unity, coming on top of the economic devastation, have made the situation intolerable. Britain is now threatened with a catastrophic loss of influence in Europe and throughout the world.

From their own standpoint of reference, many British influentials comprehend what Lyndon H. LaRouche has been saying about Mrs. Thatcher in the past days. In LaRouche's formulation, a Germany moving toward unity is emerging as the centerpiece of a Western-Central European "golden goose" that will lay the "golden eggs" that will help revive the world economy. Mrs. Thatcher, by contrast, is acting like a "silly goose," squawking hysterically against the Germans. Her attempts to destroy the "golden goose" are only doing damage to Britain itself, both by denying Britain the potential benefits of an economic-industrial boom in continental Europe, and by shutting Britain out of the historical political developments on the European continent.

LaRouche has stressed that the "golden goose" issue brought about a divergence of views between Thatcher and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov on the subject of Germany: While Thatcher maintains her ideological obsessions, Gorbachov has come to the practical realization that good relations with a united Germany are vital if the Soviet leadership is to provide food and other necessities to its own people.

Certain among those in the U.K. who are hoping to dump Thatcher, don't necessarily have the noblest motives. They would prefer to associate themselves more closely with continental Europe, to shape and contain developments there, in the usual British "balance of power" way. Such Britons are at least orienting to reality, while Mrs. Thatcher would appear to be becoming mentally unhinged.

Editorials and commentaries questioning her competency and calling into question her ability to rule Britain have appeared in leading newspapers. Similar sentiments were expressed privately at a meeting at the Ditchley Park estate

over the Feb. 16-18 weekend, in the context of a meeting involving former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former British Prime Minister Lord James Callaghan, and others. Said one Ditchley participant: "Thatcher has been guilty of botching the whole issue of Europe, not just Germany. But to be gotten rid of, it has to happen within her own Tory party." He said that former British Defense Minister Michael Heseltine was preparing to make a challenge to Thatcher, and that others might come forward as well.

On Feb. 20, London *Times* political editor Robin Oakley reported that parliamentarians in the Tory Party were in a "state of panic" about the future prospects of the Conservative Party, under conditions of Mrs. Thatcher staying on as prime minister and party leader. More than ever, they were pointing to Thatcher herself as the problem the party faces, and "one-time Thatcher enthusiasts are inquiring if the magic has gone." Stated Oakley: "Never before under her leadership have I heard the doubts so widely expressed in her own ranks."

'A stench of decay in the air'

Of the published attacks on Thatcher, the most significant was a Feb. 21 editorial in the *Financial Times*, since this is the mouthpiece of the City of London. The paper charged: "The world has moved on, while Mrs. Thatcher has not. . . . She has allowed her personal doubts and fears to overrule the imperatives of contemporary diplomacy." It attacked her "inevitably negative-sounding signals" toward the Germans, which don't take into account "the sensibilities of Germans, East and West, who see the prospect of unification as an occasion for national rejoicing."

The City of London is indeed smarting. Reportedly with encouragement from Mrs. Thatcher's 10 Downing Street, certain powerful City institutions have, since mid-February, been running periodic raids on the Frankfurt, West Germany financial markets, hoping to destabilize the German-German talks on monetary and economic union. But this operation has only caused an upward trend in interest rates worldwide, hurting the Anglo-American markets in the process.

The fears about her foreign policy fiascos come amidst the ongoing collapse of the British economy; this is disrupting would-be partners on the European continent, a fact that is only further undermining Britain's relations to Europe.

For example, on Feb. 21, a warning was delivered to the government-owned British Aerospace (BAe) company by Henri Martre, chairman of Aérospatiale, the French state-owned aerospace company which is a member of the consortium that is producing the Airbus passenger airplane together with BAe, West Germany's Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (MBB), and Spain's Casa. He pointed to BAe's failure to resolve a 16-week strike by engineering workers at a BAe plant, and charged that this had cost the Airbus consortium as much as \$300 million, and was threatening to bring the Airbus production line in Toulouse, France to a halt.

Similarly, British obstructionism is threatening the famous "Chunnel" (Channel Tunnel) construction project that would connect Britain and France through a tunnel across the English Channel. The 10 construction companies involved in the project have insisted that they cannot work with the British director, Sir Alistair Morton. The banks that would be funding Chunnel have threatened to stop the £9 billion credit line to the project. The Bank of England was forced, over the Feb. 16-18 weekend, to take the historically unprecedented move of appointing a "buffer manager" to smoothe out the conflict between the construction companies and Morton; the bank has never before gotten involved in such a dispute.

Meanwhile, within Great Britain, there is a calamitous combination of high mortgage rates, high interest rates, and infrastructural collapse that is unmatched in any European country. Building societies raised mortgage rates in mid-February to over 15%, threatening millions of homeowners with devastation. Inflation is close to 8%, with fresh food prices for January having had their largest monthly rise in almost a decade. The British base interest rate is 15%.

On Feb. 18, London *Sunday Times* commentator Robert Harris warned that "domestically, there is a stench of decay in the air," and Thatcher is apparently "losing touch with reality." Under the headline: "Isolated in a granny's flat: will this be the Lady's chosen fate?" Harris observed that Thatcher had become isolated from the course of history, "wondering what on earth" the revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe were all about. He asked whether Thatcher had become "a relic of another age, like the elderly rulers who have been swept away in Eastern Europe." Harris pointed to Mrs. Thatcher's disorientation on foreign policy issues, "easily the worst" of these being "our attitude to German reunification."

Mrs. Thatcher's Germanophobic ravings are backfiring against her. On Feb. 18, she went so far as to call for Soviet troops to remain in East Germany to help contain a united Germany. This was too much for even the pro-Thatcher *Daily Express*, which warned on Feb. 19 that "there is little or

nothing the Prime Minister, or anyone else, can do to brake the process [of German unity]. Frantic and open attempts to do so simply create resentment in a people we shall continue to have as partners and allies for many years to come. . . . Do we really want to humiliate the Germans again? . . . This though the Germans have been exemplary democrats for almost two generations and their Eastern brothers have thrown off the yoke of totalitarian Communism?"

The London *Sunday Times* lead editorial on Feb. 18 attacked her for her "act of consummate folly" in her handling of the German reunification question. "It is always foolish to oppose something that is inevitable (and it has been inevitable that Germany would be reunited from the moment the Berlin Wall was breached), doubly so when, like Britain, you are without real power to slow down the course of events," the paper argued. Furthermore, "Mrs. Thatcher's use of language has only made matters worse," as she hysterically conveys the image that "a united Germany carries the risk of the Hun going on the rampage in Europe for the third time this century. . . . Of course, there would be every reason to be dragging our feet if there was a purpose to it. But there is none. . . . Britain's future role in the world is more uncertain than at any time since the end of the second world war. Our Downing Street-dictated foreign policy has distanced us from Germany, the future dominant power in Europe, at a most crucial juncture in its history. . . . No wonder Britain is set to play only a marginal role in the reshaping of Europe, an increasingly irrelevant voice that nobody bothers to listen to."

The paper made the observation, that British and Soviet policy toward Germany was no longer synchronized, since Soviet Gorbachov was more of a "realist" than Thatcher on the German question.

On Feb. 22, London *Times* commentator Ronald Butt charged Thatcher not only with being "counterproductive" toward Germany, but also with encouraging a "licensed racism" toward the Germans. Butt stated: "We should give up our obsession with the particular horror of Hitler's 12-year rule, which pretends that it represented something peculiarly German, and ignores the reality: that in the worst atrocities there was no lack of willing executants among people of other nations. . . .

"We are in danger of a new kind of licensed racism. Things can be said of the Germans which if said of any other people would be stigmatized as racist. We must put a stop to it. . . . The Government should change its tone."

Butt pointed to the fact that one day after Thatcher's speech on "containing" the Germans, the tabloid the *Star* published a two-page spread, warning of "the old Teutonic lust" and the revival of "Master Race" ideology in Germany, and counterposing photos of Hitler's soldiers goose-stepping, to supposed "young neo-Nazis" in Leipzig today. Mrs. Thatcher's attitude was helping unleash this "insensate anti-Germanism" in Britain, he said.