

A Meeting with Margaret

17th June 1997

Václav Klaus, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic., gave the Sixth Annual Hayek Lecture at One Great George Street, London SW1. Although I had anticipated eminent persons, I was surprised when Lady T. walked into the foyer. I resolved not to let my opportunity pass. A reception followed the lecture, and I moved to the edge of the group to whom Lady T. was playing. I took my chance as she turned away and towards me. She was looking to rejoin Dr Klaus:

'Where is Dr Klaus's drink? He wants a whisky and soda.'

I would not be put off. When she gave up on the drink, I held out my hand and opened with the white lie,

'We swapped books on one occasion. I sent you a copy of my book on Hayek's economics.'

'Ah Yes, I remember,' she lied.

*(I had sent her a copy - which she acknowledged - but she had declined to reciprocate with *The Downing Street Years*)*

I continued:

'I remember how you recommended Hayek's books to members from the floor of the House, but I was unable to find the date from Hansard.'

'Oh, I cannot recall that!', she said rather unnecessarily.

Thereafter, there was no further opportunity to contribute. Her 'constituency visit manner' was to employ loops of conversation in the way of a street preacher. She addressed the circled group:

'I invited Hayek to Downing Street and told him that we had implemented his policy but it was not working. He replied that we should stick to the principles. Stick to your principles.'

She paused briefly to select another conversation loop.

'You know, the economy is much more complicated now than it

used to be. It takes longer to see the effects of your action. When you pull the levers, it used to take about eighteen months to see the effects, but now it is longer. It's about two-and-a-half years. But we stuck to our principles.'

And one final loop:

*'But we never cut defense. We never cut defense. And then there was the Falklands, which showed that we were right
.....'*

And that was it, as she turned to rejoin Dr. Klaus.

The next day Lady T. endorsed William Hague (against Kenneth Clarke) for the Tory Party leadership (which is how I would have advised, had she asked, but she didn't); and the following day Hague polled 84 votes against Clarke's 82.