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(Smith/Grossman)
March 5, 1991
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MAGGIE MAY

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: MEDAL OF FREEDOM
STATE ROOM
THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1991
5:30 P.M.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends of what is indeed our special relationship. Dennis Thatcher. Mark and Diane Thatcher. Above all, the greengrocer's daughter who shaped a nation to her will.

//

America's highest civilian award is the Medal of Freedom. We are here to present it to one of the greatest leaders of our time. / For over 11 of the most extraordinary years in British history, she helped freedom lift the peoples of Europe and the world. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. //

She has been called the Iron Lady -- / irrepressible / at times, incorrigible / always indomitable. She summoned the best in the human spirit -- speaking for our values, and our dreams. // Once, she said, "Turn if you like, the lady's not for turning," and she wasn't. Instead, the Free World turned to her. For counsel. For courage. For leadership that proclaimed a belief in right and wrong -- not a devotion to what is popular.

//

It has been said that great leaders reflect their time. Margaret Thatcher did. She also transformed her time as few leaders ever have. // Consider the 1980s and early '90s -- a

Margaret Thatcher helped bring the Cold War to an end. Helped the human will outlast bayonets and barbed wire. Helped the lamp of liberty resemble a lighthouse guiding people to safe harbor. / Yet she remembered how St. Thomas Aquinas said, "If the highest aim of a captain is to protect his ship, he would keep it in port forever." So she sailed freedom's ship wherever it was imperiled. Prophet and crusader -- idealist and realist - - this heroic woman made history move her way. //

For more than a decade, I have worked with Margaret Thatcher as a colleague and friend. I have marveled at her humor, her grace under pressure, her honesty, her fearlessness. // Above all, I have admired -- and do today -- her fidelity to the highest ideals of public service. // Her resilience and dedication -- especially to the men and women in uniform -- set an example for all of us. I have never met a leader who cared more deeply about her responsibilities to the people she served. //

It is not surprising that there have been, literally, millions of words written about Margaret Thatcher. But let me close with a passage from Mrs. Thatcher herself. / It was her final week as Prime Minister -- as her mission changed from transforming Britain to evangelizing the world. // There she was, giving one of the most memorable speeches in the history of Parliament. Teaching. / Exhorting. / Defying. / Dreaming. // Like Churchill and Sadat and Dwight Eisenhower -- beloved Ike -- the very embodiment of her Nation. //

can't lock people behind walls forever -- when moral conviction uplifts their hearts. // Go to Budapest or Gdansk. You will find pictures of her in shops and restaurants and churches and stores. / Travel anywhere where those once enslaved are now free. They will tell you: The Iron Curtain was no match for the Iron Lady. //

Margaret Thatcher helped bring the Cold War to an end. Helped the human will outlast bayonets and barbed wire. Helped the lamp of liberty resemble a blizzard of fireflies in the night. // She remembered how St. Thomas Aquinas said, "If the highest aim of a captain is to protect his ship, he would keep it in port forever." So she sailed freedom's ship wherever it was imperiled. Prophet and crusader -- idealist and realist -- this heroic woman made history move her way. //

There have been, literally, millions of words written about Margaret Thatcher. But let me close with a passage from Mrs. Thatcher herself. / It was her final week as Prime Minister -- a time her mission changed from transforming Britain to evangelizing the world. // Even now, I remember how she delivered one of the greatest speeches in the history of Parliament. // There, she was. Teaching. Exhorting. Defying. Dreaming. Like DeGaulle and Churchill and Dwight Eisenhower -- beloved Ike -- the very embodiment of her Nation. //

Toward the end, she talked of policies "in tune with the deepest instincts of the British" -- and I would add, American -- "people," and of the global triumph of "democracy, the rule of

law, and human rights." / Then, she said: "These immense changes did not come about by chance. They have been achieved by strength and resolution in defense, and by a refusal to be intimidated."//

It was a remarkable moment -- you were caught between tears and applause -- and as she spoke, I thought of another British leader, Edmund Burke, and how he said: "Here he stands -- at the summit. / He may live long. / He may do much. / But he can never exceed what he does this day." //

Prime Minister, there will always be an England. God willing, she will forever be near the summit. But there can never -- will never -- be another Margaret Thatcher. // Thank you / this Nation loves you / and may God bless and keep you for all the peoples on this Earth. //

Now, it is my great honor and privilege to present the Medal of Freedom Award. [READ SCRIPT]: "Three times elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Hilda Thatcher led her country with fearlessness, determination, integrity, and a true vision for Britain. In over a decade of achievement, she extended prosperity at home and made signal contributions to transatlantic partnership, the unity of the West, and overcoming the postwar division of Europe. With a strong sense of her Nation's history and of the principles which brought it to greatness, she restored confidence to the British people. The United States honors a steadfast and true ally and a firm friend of political and economic achievement throughout the world."

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