

A Letter from the Publisher

For anyone who followed the British election that resulted four years ago in Margaret Thatcher's becoming her country's first woman Prime Minister, the contrast with last week's triumph is striking. Recalls London Bureau Chief Bonnie Angelo, who reported on this week's cover subject in both campaigns: "In 1979 I was with a group of political scientists and journalists, and when someone said, 'She can win the election, but can she lead the country?,' no one would hazard an unqualified yes. Four years and a landslide later, that doubt seems incredible." Since Thatcher assumed high office, Angelo has chronicled her activities from No. 10 Downing Street to the Great Hall of the People in Peking. Says Angelo: "I have watched with fascination her emergence as one of the most dynamic world figures. Last week, as she settled amiably into a sofa in the white drawing room at No. 10 for our interview, I recalled the tension of our 1979 talk and thought how much more relaxed and self-confident she is today." TIME's Frank Melville, who reported on the election's foreign, defense and economic issues, agrees: "In talking to ministers and senior officials, I was struck by the extraordinary dominance Thatcher has established in almost every area of government. Her writ runs supreme like that of no Prime Minister since Winston Churchill."



Angelo outside No. 10

Correspondent Mary Cronin, reporting her first British general election, marveled at the intensity of the four-week campaign, an eye-flick in duration compared with the marathon U.S. presidential quadrennial. "One day," Cronin says, "we caught up with Labor Leader Michael Foot at noon in the industrial Midlands. In the next four hours, he dropped in at local party headquarters, gave speeches at shopping centers, talked to a university students' gathering and held a press conference, all followed by a speech that night in Coventry and a radio interview."

Associate Editor Jim Kelly got out on the hustings in Britain before returning to New York to write the main cover story. Traveling for two days with the Prime Minister through Scotland and the Manchester area, Kelly noted one other major difference from American politics. "I was amazed by how close anyone and everyone could get to Thatcher," he says. "She had few security people, and they kept at a distance. At one stop, a bakery, a couple of dozen demonstrators were shouting only a few yards away from her black Jaguar. As she got out, an egg splattered the back of the car. On her way out of the bakery, a second egg came even closer. In the U.S. that kind of risk would be intolerable."

John A. Meyers

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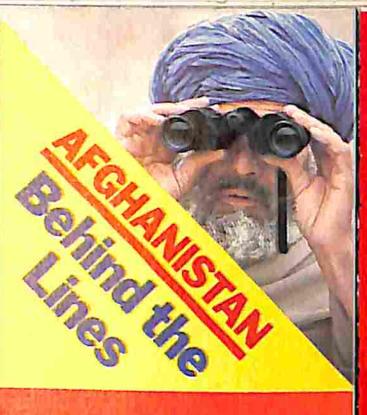
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