

Margaret Thatcher, The Power of Good Ideas, by José María Aznar [La Razón, 10.04.13]

I didn't get the chance to see Margaret Thatcher as much as I would have liked. However, that didn't stop me from paying close attention to her ideas. One of the first things that I learnt from her was that bad ideas always breed bad policies while good ideas tend to spawn good policies.

For Thatcher, the ideology of British socialism was afflicted by ideas which were either bad or very bad. The result of their implementation was the epitome of catastrophe: a UK diagnosed with economic-sclerosis, surrendered to the most static elements, such as trade unions, lost and overwhelmed in the European Union, and socially discredited. When Thatcher assumed power in 1979, the UK was a nation in decline, kept alive by the lifeline of the International Monetary Fund's rescue and with its citizens in a perpetual state of resignation.

At the time, the momentum instilled by Margaret Thatcher was primarily of an intellectual nature. In other words, it was guided by a profound conviction in freedom and a very clear idea of what that conviction represented. She never accepted that the unfortunate state of her cherished country was the result of an inexorable evolution, or that it should be passively accepted.

On the contrary, she strongly believed that through the clarity of ideas, moral authority, and resoluteness, the disadvantageous conditions that prevailed in the country would regress completely. As an advocate of freedom and individual responsibility, she never left any sphere of power unattended. She initiated a crusade for deregulation and liberalization, which not only allowed the United Kingdom to exit the crisis in which it was immersed, but also to restore its growth and its leadership position in Europe and the world. As a former minister of Education, she knew first-hand that this strategic field was key to the future of any nation, and she always defended the recognition of academic excellence end effort. In Europe, she defied the dictates of what she labelled "the bureaucracy of Brussels" and tore off for Britain the freedom of decision she wanted for all nations, the basic, irreplaceable element to the European project, bended under the yoke of the socialist vision prevailing in the continent.

In the sphere of Defence, she helped to strengthen the Armed Forces and didn't hesitate to use them to serve the highest interests of State, as it occurred with the Falkland Islands, where she didn't surrender to the geography nor the military audacity of Argentina and fought for what she considered to be a part of the UK's national sovereignty. And she won. She maintained a very close relationship the United States. When many European states loudly demonstrated their disagreement with Ronald Reagan, she always stood by his side, from the deployment of the Euro-Missiles to the Gulf war in 1991, forging an almost indestructible alliance. With regard to foreign issues, she was a defender of democratic ideals, as emphasized by her desire to bring change to the USSR. Margaret Thatcher radically changed the status quo of a country, which, like any other of the Democratic Europe, remained loyal the so-called

"social democrat consensus". In this sense she was a revolutionary. If change were to yield clear benefits, she always opted to change things. Her attitude, which would be adopted in the future by George W. Bush in the US, and by Tony Blair in the UK, she generated a political environment which as paradoxical as it was real: the left wing became reactionary while the conservatives were seen as true revolutionaries. In the context of a bewildered Europe, I think that the teachings of Thatcher, far from being lost with her death, remain valid as the ethos of a transformative way of understanding politics.

Her ambitious determination to "make possible the desirable" is the reflection of someone devoted to honour the commitment entrusted by the citizens. Her zeal to make citizens, both men and women, and families (which she believed to be the foundations of society) the sole owners of their lives and their fates, predicted a culture of individual entrepreneurship in the face of the unsustainable and inefficient expansion of a State that depleted efforts and resources, restricted freedoms, and made, individuals dependent rather than responsible.

A paradigm of stimulus, dynamism, innovation and wealth-creation which, since then, has been adopted and respected by anyone seeking to win the elections in the United Kingdom. It was based on the precept of relying less on what the State can do for us and more on taking responsibility for our actions and the result of our efforts. All of this was set in a country which, with Thatcher in power, attained a high level of social protection because, amongst other reasons, it was her who saved the United Kingdom from the demise of the public services brought upon by the unrestrained left-wing interventionism of the seventies.

Thatcher was a great example, a historic example, of what a good politician can do for his or her country and for the world. We must not forget how or why she succeeded. Unfortunately, her death also reflected the worst that politics can sometimes bring. However, Lady Thatcher deserves that we keep alive all of the positive things that her barnstorming, transformative mind was able to do. The best things one can say about a statesman go for Thatcher: she lived up to the times, up to the challenges of the historic moment she presided, up to the expectations of the citizens, and up to the foes she faced.