

affairs in good times and in bad, a country that is always reliable, then you have to have a touch of iron about you. " She might have needed the iron touch, but not for the reason she stated. Like Churchill, Thatcher often held a weak hand in international affairs. Like him, she made the most of her cards as she tried to revive a nation that in almost every way had seen better days. She went to war with and defeated Argentina after it invaded the Falklands to press a claim to the tiny islands in the South Atlantic, even though the U.S. initially pushed her to negotiate. She was early to embrace Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's liberalization in the late 1980s, saying the West could " do business " with him. " She had been a stalwart opponent of Communism, " says Ben Tonra of the School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin, " yet she was then the first person to say Gorbachev is someone that we can work with. " She prodded President George H.W. Bush to lead the fight against Saddam Hussein after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. " This was not time to go wobbly, " she later said she told the president. Remarks like that fed the Iron Lady image, but she was more complicated and paradoxical than the political caricature would suggest: In a time when feminism was waxing, here was a self-made woman and working mother who was neither a feminist nor a liberal. She happily answered to " Mrs. Thatcher. " " Americans were taken aback, " says Grossman of the American Historical Association. American feminists didn't know what to think. " Some women were happy to see a