SOPHIE RAWORTH:
Now in his tribute to Lady Thatcher, David Cameron said she “made Britain great again.” Among her achievements, he cited bringing down inflation, reforming the trade unions and her leadership during the Falklands War. From all sides in the House of Commons and the Lords, her courage, conviction and patriotism were praised. But for many, there is another side to her legacy as well: the end of traditional industries, the rift with Europe, resentment in Scotland where the poll tax was first introduced. To discuss Lady Thatcher and her impact on the Conservative Party, the country and the left in Britain, we’ve brought together one of her closest cabinet colleagues, Lord Parkinson; the Labour peer and human rights lawyer Baroness Helena Kennedy; and our very own Andrew Marr who’s described her as “the most important, bravest and luckiest prime minister in the whole post-war period.” Welcome to you all, but a particularly warm welcome, Andrew, to you. It’s fantastic to see you back.
ANDREW MARR:
Thank you very much for having me, Sophie, if that is the right phrase.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
Lord Parkinson, first of all. David Cameron last week, he said of Margaret Thatcher that “She didn’t just lead our country; she saved our country.” I mean she certainly changed it irrevocably, but saved it?

LORD PARKINSON:
I think it’s not much of an overstatement. If you look back to the Britain we took over in 1979, we were universally regarded as a basket case. My first job was to go to Russia to lead the Joint Anglo-Soviet Commission. None of the Russian ministers wanted to meet me, and in the end the Trade Minister told me, “Look, we’re not going to buy anymore from you. We regard you as the sick man of Europe. Your goods are shoddy, they’re late, you’re always on strike. You’re unreliable. We’re planning to do less trade, not more.” And at the same time an American fan of Britain uttered that devastating phrase, “Britain offers a first class example of how to ruin a fine country.”

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
Andrew?

ANDREW MARR:
I think that words like ‘save’ and ‘saviour’ are slightly odd because they’re sort of religious words, but there’s no doubt that when she came to office things were terrible. I remember going to Liverpool where famously the dead weren’t being buried because of a gravedigger strike. What was actually going on there was Liverpool Council had a plan to take the corpses out to sea and drop them in the sea because there was nowhere else to put them. It was a particularly desolate and terrible time. And so she certainly changed the direction of the country - not always in ways I think that she would look back and approve of. If you set the people free, then they’re free to do all sorts of things you don’t want them to do. I think she thought they’d be free to be virtuous, hardworking, thrifty and saving. In fact, with all the restraints removed, we became a country who went shopping really for ten years - stopped working so hard and behaved in ways I think she would personally have disliked
intensely.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
Yes.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
And she changed politics enormously, didn’t she?

**HELENA KENNEDY:**
Well I mean I think there are a number of myths that are being created around Margaret Thatcher. I think there’s a myth about this business of saving the country because I don’t believe that she did. I think there’s a myth about her being a role model for women because I think that, yes, breaking through and being the first woman had great meaning for people, but she certainly was no friend to women.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
I don’t understand Helena saying you know she wasn’t any friend of women. She proved that a grocer’s daughter from Grantham could join the Conservative Party, allegedly the most high-bound party in the country, and become its first woman prime minister. I remember when she was chosen as leader, Jim Callaghan said, “We’ve just won the next election.” They just didn’t believe she had it in her to win an election, let alone to win three - with, by the way, increasing popular vote.

**ANDREW MARR:**
But she was not very keen, was she Cecil, on having other women around her in cabinet? It was one thing for her to be at the top, but she wasn’t enormously warm towards …

**HELENA KENNEDY:**
*(over)* She pulled up ..... Cecil.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
*(over)* There were very, very, very few women actually in Parliament at that time.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yes indeed.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
The range of people available was quite small.

**HELENA KENNEDY:**
There is absolutely no doubt that she won through against the odds and that was because she was an extraordinarily determined, incredible personality. You know she was ambitious and determined and she had great courage and I will not take any of that away from her. However, she did nothing to advance the conditions of ordinary women’s lives. She really didn’t really very much like other women. Actually many of the women who were around her at that time who could have been promoted say she didn’t talk up women. She wasn’t interested in being around women. She preferred to be around men, and men like you, Cecil, who was one of her favourites.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
She was focusing on getting the economy right because she felt until you did anything else could not be afforded.

**HELENA KENNEDY:**
*(over)* Well let’s go back to …

**LORD PARKINSON:**
*(over)* And therefore you had to get the economy right, you had to start getting inflation under control. And don’t forget, in the seven years she was … up to 86, it came down from 22 per cent to 3.7.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Can I ask? Do you think those first two Geoffrey Howe budgets, the really tough ones, if they hadn’t happen do you think the British industry would be configured more or less as it is now - in other words we’d have lost a lot of that old stuff?

**LORD PARKINSON:**
Yes I do.
ANDREW MARR:
You do?

LORD PARKINSON:
I do. And don’t forget, you know one of the industries which is most quoted is the coal industry, but under Harold Wilson 254 pits were closed. Under the Conservatives, less than 150. I think Wedgwood Benn …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) There weren’t many left, of course.

LORD PARKINSON:
… Wedgwood Benn closed more pits than I had operating when I went to the …

HELENA KENNEDY:
(over) Oh please …

LORD PARKINSON:
… Department of Energy.

HELENA KENNEDY:
… please, Cecil. Listen, no-one would argue that there had to be a modernising of the economy. No-one would argue with that and I think it would have happened in any event. I actually think that if you’d had one of the nicer folk in the Conservative Party actually leading the party, you might have seen modernisation but of a very different feel. And she had this ruthlessness that devastated parts of the country - particularly the North because she’d no interest in it - but she particularly devastated Scotland. And indeed what’s happening in Scotland now is actually a consequence of Margaret Thatcher’s policies. She did not understand Scotland.

ANDREW MARR:
But it was a bare knuckle fight on both sides though.
LORD PARKINSON:
If you look at the sort of country we were in 79, we had price controls, wage controls, dividend controls, exchange controls. Those all went. Has anybody ever … And were regarded … It was regarded as very brave to get rid of them. Has anybody ever suggested they should be reintroduced?

ANDREW MARR:
No.

HELENA KENNEDY:
No.

ANDREW MARR:
No, but there’s a great irony, isn’t it? Here is the politician universally regarded as the exemplar of a strong politician who changed things and made other politicians look small, but because she took all of those powers away from the state no politician today could really stand up to her in terms of stature. They don’t have the powers.

LORD PARKINSON:
No because she was quite … She thought that big government was a big problem and she set out to reduce the activities of government to the areas where government should properly be concerned and they did not include industry.

ANDREW MARR:
(over) And now we complain politicians are little people, you know we have a little state.

HELENA KENNEDY:
Yeah, there are a number of things that the Conservative Party today is not acknowledging and one is how divisive she was, how she completely … she left this country, its public services in squalor.

LORD PARKINSON:
(over) Not true, not true.
HELENA KENNEDY:
Schools were in a bad state, universities were in a terrible state. And can I tell you … I want you to answer this question. It was your party that did her in. You were the people who assassinated her.

LORD PARKINSON:
(over) It was people in my party. It certainly wasn’t me. And one of the reasons I left was because I disapproved very strongly of the way that cabinet treated her. But in there, I have … She once said to me about a European leader - I won’t mention his name - “He’s a very strange fellow. He thinks you lead by following.” And what did she do on the night before she resigned? Instead of getting the cabinet together and saying “You’re all here because I appointed you. Now I need your help”, she said to them “Tell me what I ought to do.” She actually, she actually made the mistake of leading by following.

HELENA KENNEDY:
You described her as being someone who was a very “lucky” politician. “Courageous” - and I would agree with that - and “lucky”, and I would agree with that.

ANDREW MARR:
Yeah, you need luck.

HELENA KENNEDY:
And one of the things … You need luck. But she destroyed major industries and she put people, made people unemployed in huge numbers, and that was paid for by North Sea Oil.

ANDREW MARR:
When I said “lucky”, I was thinking of two things. I was thinking of the Falklands War and that moment because in the run-up to that, it seemed as if the SDP and Labour were going to win that election and she turned things around in that
confrontation. You’re going to say that she was very brave to fight the war.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
Yes she was. She was …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Nonetheless she had the issue which turned the tide of the country at the right moment for her.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
*over* Yes it did, at that moment. And she did it very well. She decided if we were going to go to war, first of all the cabinet must be united, and every single member of the cabinet was asked do you support putting the fleet to sea at that Friday evening cabinet meeting. That was when she became a really national figure.

**ANDREW MARR:**
And a perfect piece of timing for her electorally as well, so that was the luck.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
Yuh, but we had just taken the day before the lead in the polls. The idea that we were lagging … We’d actually just taken the lead.

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yes.

**LORD PARKINSON:**
When I heard the Argentinians had invaded, I thought that’s the end of us, but she turned that.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
Can I bring it back to today and obviously this week is her funeral on Wednesday. In life, she was incredibly divisive, and in death she still is. What do you think she would have made of all the hooh-hah about the song in the charts and the sort of strength of feeling that has been voiced since she died?
LORD PARKINSON:
I don’t think it would have … She wouldn’t have liked it, I don’t think, but I don’t think it would have bothered her at all because, as far as she was concerned, if she was convinced that what she was doing was the right thing for Britain, she’d go ahead and do it. And she would …

ANDREW MARR:
(over) Would she have said, “Play the darned song?”

LORD PARKINSON:
I don’t think she would. She probably would have …

HELENA KENNEDY:
(over) She would have ignored it.

LORD PARKINSON:
… preferred to watch Songs of Praise or something. (laughs) But I mean I don’t think it would have upset her because …

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
Because some people …

LORD PARKINSON:
When you are as strong a character as she is, you are going to create divisions. But I don’t mind people disapproving of her, but what I do object to is the idea that she personally destroyed industries and this and that and the other.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
And, Andrew, I mean still to this day for David Cameron there’s still the problem he’s got to distance himself from the whole sort of Nasty Party tag of the early 90s.

ANDREW MARR:
That was Theresa May’s words, wasn’t it?
SOPHIE RAWORTH:  
Absolutely.

LORD PARKINSON:  
(inaudible)

SOPHIE RAWORTH:  
(over) And that’s something he is still having to grapple with now.

ANDREW MARR:  
And it’s very, very difficult if you’re trying to appeal to the sort of centrist Middle England liberal vote and at the same time retain real support with your Tory heartlands. Now that’s something that every Conservative leader one way or another wrestled with. She didn’t wrestle with it because she didn’t try to appeal to the milk sop liberals at all. But no, I mean she certainly sharpened debate inside the Conservative Party. I don’t think it’s true that she created the European divide. I think that’s a divide between the problems of having a national democracy on the one hand and being part of a supranational organisation. It would have been there anyway. But she certainly sharpened the language and made it a specifically Conservative Party problem.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:  
Let me just ask you, with the funeral on Wednesday, what you think that day will be like. Do you think each of you, Helena first of all, do you think there will be a real sort of coming together on that day?

HELENA KENNEDY:  
I think, I’m sure there will be. I mean I think there will be demonstrations and I think there will be a lot of pain in parts of the country who remember too vividly what it felt like when their folk were thrown out of their jobs, when she seemed to relish all of that. I think there will be pain in certain areas, but I think that generally people will still feel respectful of somebody who was a leader and who was certainly a leader of conviction and a leader of a different order from others. And I think that people will
be respectful of that. And I think that’s what people feel - they feel respectful of the kind of person she was. She was a powerful personality. But I think that unfortunately she led to a great deal of divisions in our society.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
Lord Parkinson?

LORD PARKINSON:
Yes I think one of the joys of being British is that we are free to demonstrate and to show how we feel, and if people feel hostile or they want to express it, I think it’s a pity. I think the dead are in a special category. The old Latin tag “De Mortuis nil nisi bonum” - of the dead speak nothing but good - can be overdone …

ANDREW MARR:
Yes …

LORD PARKINSON:
… but nevertheless.

ANDREW MARR:
… pretty widely ignored in the last week, it has to be said.

LORD PARKINSON:
Yes. But, nevertheless, I would hope people if they express their disapproval will do it in an agreeable way.

SOPHIE RAWORTH:
And Andrew?

ANDREW MARR:
What it won’t do is draw a line under the controversy about Margaret Thatcher because whether it’s welfare policy or the future of the union with Scotland or whatever it might be, a lot of the crucial issues are going to carry on over the next year in politics. I think what it will do is it will draw a line under the sort of hysteria
and the shouting of the last week or ten days.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
Well thank you very much to all of you. And Andrew, before we go I must of course ask you about you. I mean it’s wonderful to see you back here holding forth in the studio you should be in. But four months ago …

**ANDREW MARR:**
Yes.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
… you had this stroke. What happened?

**ANDREW MARR:**
Well I had a major stroke. I’m frankly lucky to be alive. I had been very, very heavily overworking - mostly my own fault - in the year before that. I’d had two minor strokes, it turned out in that year, which I hadn’t noticed. And then I did the terrible thing of believing what I read in the newspapers because the newspapers were saying what we must all do is take very, very intensive exercise in short bursts and that’s the way to health. Well I went onto a rowing machine and gave it everything I had and had a very strange feeling afterwards and then a blinding headache and flashes of light. Served out the family meal, went to bed. Woke up the next morning lying on the floor unable to move. And what I’d done is I’d torn the carotid artery which takes blood into the brain and had a stroke overnight, which basically just wipes out a bit of your brain. In my case, luckily, not my voice or memory or anything like that, but the whole left hand side of my body, so I’m still not able to walk fluently. I do a kind of elegant hobble is the best I can manage. My left arm isn’t much good yet. I’ve got a lot of physio still to do.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
But you did that literally on a rowing machine?

**ANDREW MARR:**
On a rowing machine, yes. Beware rowing machines - or at least beware being too
enthusiastic on rowing machines would be my message to the nation.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
It’s been a long road for you already, hasn’t it?

**ANDREW MARR:**
And the only way through is intensive physio and doing a lot of it. And I am now in the period where if I really concentrate on the physio, I will get better; and if I don’t, I won’t, which is why I’m not back trying to do the job full-time, I have to say.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
The bottom line is you’re going to back in the studio and back in this chair?

**ANDREW MARR:**
I’m going to be taking your chair, I’m absolutely sure, when I’m ready to do so. I’m certainly coming back. I’ve got a lot more to say about it all, but I’m going to wait until I’ve gone through the physio to do so.

**SOPHIE RAWORTH:**
Well, Andrew, fantastic to see you back here. Thank you very much. And thank you to Lord Parkinson and Helena Kennedy.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**