

# Hungary visit for Thatcher

By Philip Webster, Political Reporter

Mrs Margaret Thatcher last night presented her New Year visit to Hungary as evidence of her government's determination to work for a safer world.

Announcing at the annual Lord Mayor's banquet at the Guildhall, London, that she had accepted the Hungarian invitation, the Prime Minister said that Britain was ready to pursue, in the right circumstances, a sensible dialogue with the Soviet Union and the countries of eastern Europe.

Mrs Thatcher said that the Government would not compromise on principles and would do everything necessary to defend Britain's way of life; the conflict of ideas would continue and the Government would do all it could to win.

"But we seek no other kind of conflict. We will do everything possible to reduce the risks of war and to avoid misunderstandings which increase those risks . . . We want and will work for a safer world. Let it never be said that we failed because East and West misunderstood one another."

News of the visit follows a marked change of tone in Mrs Thatcher's utterances on East-West relations which began in the summer on her American tour and was noticed clearly in her address to the Conservative Party conference in Blackpool. On that occasion she said: "When the circumstances are right, we must be ready to talk to the Soviet leadership. That is why we should grasp every genuine opportunity for dialogue".

The invitation to Mrs Thatcher was made by Mr Jozsef Marjai, the deputy prime

minister of Hungary, when he visited London on March 8.

It would be her first official visit to the Soviet block, although in 1979 she stopped in Moscow for a meeting with Mr Kosygin, the former Soviet Prime Minister, on her way to an economic summit in Japan.

Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, visited Hungary in September; Lord Carrington went there as foreign secretary in 1980.

The Prime Minister used the speech to give an optimistic assessment on the economy, making clear her belief that the credit for it should go to the tough financial strategy on which the Government had embarked and which it would continue.

She said that, international debt problems apart, the prospects for the world economy were more encouraging now than for years. Britain's growth this year would be the fastest in the European Community and the commission had forecast the same next year.

"How was this achieved? By increased public spending? By still more public borrowing? Quite the reverse." The recovery dated from 1981, when Sir Geoffrey Howe took steps to cut Government borrowing, she said.

Looking ahead to the publication of the autumn economic statement on Thursday, the Prime Minister said that the Government has set itself the task of holding public spending next year (1984-85) and the year after and when the statement was published "it will be clear that we have done just that".

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