

# Thatcher sees no early settlement

By Frank Johnson

Mrs Margaret Thatcher said yesterday that she could see no early settlement of the coal strike and insisted that she had no intention of intervening between the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers.

On the international issue of the hour, the Gulf war, she refused to discuss whether the United States, or the West, would intervene militarily to ensure oil supplies.

Those were the most immediate points she made in an interview with *The Times* in the spring sunshine of an airy upstairs room in Downing Street, to answer questions about summitry in general, and in particular the annual economic summit meeting of the western industrial powers in London next week.

Almost a year after the general election, Mrs Thatcher was in relaxed mood – serene, even. But not bland.

In search of points of possible conflict among the summitters I asked, among other things, about whether she and President Reagan would discuss Ireland and, if so, what it had to do with President Reagan.

“I suppose I would say to him: ‘how did you enjoy your visit?’ But you’re putting your questions – if I may say so – as

if there’s going to be confrontation on almost everything. There isn’t, and I think it’s a great mistake to present it that way.”

Constantly, Mrs Thatcher spoke warmly of the United States. “You did have a small disagreement over Grenada”, I suggested. “Yes I did”, she replied. But it was water under the bridge? “Yes, they looked at it, as I said at the time, from a different aspect.”

Mrs Thatcher said: “I see no point in going back over it again.” But she carefully added: “Most of the Americans are out. That’s a fantastic contrast to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.”

● Millions of American television viewers yesterday saw the Prime Minister suffer a prolonged coughing fit which almost brought an interview with her to a halt

Mrs Thatcher was in discomfort for several minutes as she appeared on US breakfast television, in one of five interviews she gave yesterday.

At the end she declared: “I am sorry about this early morning cough.” The interviewer suggested: “Perhaps it’s hay fever”, but she replied: “No, a dry throat.”

**Times interview, back page**

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