

THE RT HON. BARONESS WILLIAMS OF CROSBY CH PC

The Great Britain–Russia Society was much saddened to learn of the death on 12th April 2021 of one of our Honorary Vice Presidents, The Rt Hon. Baroness Williams of Crosby CH PC. Shirley Williams, as she was known to so many for so long, served our Society as an Honorary Vice President from its foundation, almost 20 years ago, and before that was President of The Great Britain-Russia Centre.

Baroness Williams is known to have carried from youth to early adulthood the ambition to be Britain's first woman Prime Minister. Sadly, that was not to be: *The Guardian* at one stage ran a picture of her with the headline 'Is she too nice?' She did, however, serve for an extended period on the government and opposition front benches, and was one of the 'Gang of Four' who in 1981 left the Labour Party to found the Social Democratic Party, which later worked in alliance with and ultimately merged with the Liberal Party to form the Liberal Democrats. It was as a Liberal Democrat that she was in 1993 elevated to the House of Lords.

Baroness Williams was a proponent of Britain's membership of the European Union and, in her last years in active politics, our continued membership. Her final speech on retiring from the House of Lords in 2016 was notably strong on that theme. Her vision for the betterment of humankind through cooperation between nations was, however, by no means bounded by the European Union. She has been described as an Internationalist, and that perhaps best explains her willingness to be associated with and to serve our Society and its predecessor; our objective of promoting knowledge of and understanding between nations being so much in accord with her own ethos.

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