

No 10

CONFIDENTIAL

BBC o/r.

MP 29/12



cc PS (with spare copy for Mr Gantledge, No: 10)

BRITISH EMBASSY

MOSCOW

PS / Mr. Blaker

PS / Pss

Mr. Bullard

Mr. Ferguson

Mr. Russell Esq

News Dept

27 June 1979

C L G Mallaby Esq
EESD
FCO

Mr Bond

(Mr Mallaby has seen)

Dear Christopher,

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MRS THATCHER'S VISIT

1. So far as we can judge here, without having had a chance to debrief members of our team, all aspects of the visit seem to have gone off very well. At the end, as we were leaving the airport, Kosygin went out of his way to tell me how impressed he had been with Mrs Thatcher's sincerity; how glad he was to have met; how much he looked forward to further opportunities of talking to her, preferably at greater length, in the future; and how sure he was that an excellent relationship could be developed between our two Governments. These were no doubt the obvious platitudes for the occasion. But there was no actual need for him to have said anything at all at that stage; and he did not strike me as a man given to making polite noises for their own sake.

2. He was clearly in excellent, even ebullient form. While we were waiting for the aircraft to arrive (it was punctual to the microsecond), he chatted enthusiastically about what had clearly been a long day's work with the CMEA Prime Ministers' meeting, and made light of the fact that having just completed a banquet in their honour he was about to eat his second dinner of the evening. The FRG Ambassador had been struck by his physical and mental alertness at the Schmidt meeting the previous day; and I would myself have taken him for a well-preserved 65.

3. The Russians had clearly done their best to provide a light rather than heavy meal, and they stuck honourably to their agreement about no speeches. Kosygin proposed a one-sentence toast to Mrs Thatcher early in the meal, and a two-word toast to The Queen a few minutes later. That was all, apart from Mrs Thatcher's prompt response in kind on both occasions.

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4. Bryan Cartledge (for whom I enclose a spare copy of this letter) has kindly undertaken to put together a report on the main topics of dinner-table conversation between the principals. Russians who were within earshot the whole time say that the "agenda" was the Soviet economy; energy questions with special reference to Iran; and Vietnam refugees. I myself only heard the last part of the last of these, when the whole table just happened to fall silent and listen to what seemed to be a trenchant but aimable dialogue about the nature of the Boat People phenomenon, Kosygin's line being that they were mostly black marketeers who were leaving of their own accord.
5. The Chancery will keep the Department posted about Soviet press coverage, for which there has been no time so far apart from a routine piece in Tass. The local British press seemed pleased that Mrs Thatcher agreed to have a brief word with them as she left the supper room; and that the Russians included them in the buffet for everyone not at the Kosygin supper table. The BBC and Financial Times representative even managed to get Kosygin to say a few words to them as the aircraft was taking off - to the effect, I gather, that the talks had been good.
6. Zemskov, when he summoned me yesterday afternoon for the Kosygin bombshell, looked like a cat who had got at the cream; and the 2nd European Department spent the evening busily assuring us that it was all the result of an energetic initiative by them. However it came about, Kosygin's presence certainly saved us from looking uncomfortably 2nd Division, by contrast not only with Schmidt but also Andreotti, who though he only got routine technical-stop treatment on his way eastwards yesterday afternoon is apparently to have talks of substance (it is not clear for how long or with whom) on his way back through Moscow later this week. But given that the Soviet gesture was entirely unsolicited from our side (so far as I know), and given that we could have had no complaint if during a 90-minute technical stop Mrs Thatcher had seen no one more interesting than Dymshits, the Russians can reasonably claim, I think, to have behaved constructively and imaginatively.

R L Wade-Gery