

RESTRICTED



RECEIVED IN
REGISTRATION
19 MAY 1976
NFR 026/8485

BRITISH EMBASSY,
TEL AVIV.
30 March 1976

A B Urwick Esq
Near East & North Africa Department
FCO

Am 5/4
M. Blatter
M. W...
M. W...
PS / 241
Si A Duff
M. Wei
...

Dear Alan,

VISIT OF THE RIGHT HON MARGARET THATCHER MP

1. Mrs Thatcher left Israel on 24 March after her two-day visit, which went, I think, very much according to plan.
2. The first day of Mrs Thatcher's very full programme included visits to the Israel Aircraft Industries plant at Lod, a tour of the Golan Heights and lunch at Kibbutz Kfar Hanasi, where her daughter had worked during a recent summer vacation.
3. At the Aircraft Industries plant at Lod she made a rapid tour of the company's three main production lines, seeing various stages of the construction of the Arava Stol freighter, the Westwind executive jet plane, and the Kfir fighter. (On this visit she was accompanied by my Defence and Air Attachés, who had never before been given permission to see the Kfir production line.) She showed keen and apparently well-informed interest in the commercial, technical and defence aspects of the visit, and was much photographed seated at the controls of a Kfir.
4. The party then flew to Rosh Pinna in the north. The "standard VIP tour of the Golan Heights" (according to a veteran among the four carloads of accompanying press and TV teams) followed the normal pattern. Mrs Thatcher was escorted by General Vardi, Adjutant-General of the Army; and both at the Command Headquarters

/briefing



RESTRICTED

-2-

briefing and the Tel Avital hilltop observation-post she clearly impressed her military hosts by her grasp of the essential historic and strategic detail.

5. In the evening Mrs Thatcher was present at a very well attended reception given jointly by the Israel Britain and Commonwealth Association and the Anglo/Israel Chamber of Commerce. There, after being introduced to a large number of people, including many immigrants from Britain and in particular from her own constituency of Finchley, she made a short and tactfully phrased speech in reply to the host's words of welcome. She subsequently came to dinner at my house, and met Mrs Meir, with whom she had had an hour's talk in the afternoon. Mr Peres, Minister of Defence, Mr Zadok, Minister of Justice, and prominent Israeli officials. It was perhaps a rather dangerous undertaking on my part to have invited on the same occasion two of the principal candidates for future succession to the post of Prime Minister, especially as both of them represent tendencies in the Labour Alignment which have not always been in line with the views of Mrs Meir. Nevertheless, the evening (it seemed to me) passed off well and cheerfully and Mrs Thatcher was able to have long conversations with both Ministers, as well as with the Head of the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Amos Eran.

6. On 23 March Mrs Thatcher paid a short formal call on the President of Israel, Professor Katzir, with whom she discoursed at length about the problems of enriched enzymes; (the President is a biophysicist of substantial reputation). Mrs Thatcher then had an hour's conversation with the Prime Minister, Mr Rabin, who was in unusually expansive mood. I am giving an account of the talk in a separate letter.

7. In the afternoon Mrs Thatcher gave a press conference. She dealt with a variety of questions with ease, and with great caution. For instance, she told the local BBC correspondent, Michael Elkins, in reply to his request for a statement

/about

RESTRICTED



RESTRICTED

-3-

about the wisdom of HMG's decision to abstain from voting against PLO admission to the Security Council's discussions in January, that that was not a matter on which she was prepared to make a judgment in the middle of a fact-finding tour. She similarly refused to commit herself to any statement on the merits of Israel's position on the Golan, although she did go so far as to say that the position on the ground was different from the impression one got from maps. I have the impression that the Israel journalists present had hoped that she would have taken a more forthright attitude on that issue.

8. Finally, on the evening of 23 March, Mrs Thatcher called on Mr Allon at his home in Jerusalem. Their discussion before dinner lasted for an hour and ranged widely over the Middle East and world. Although his comments on the Lebanese situation were of some interest (see paragraph 2 of my telegram no 76) Mr Allon said nothing very new; but I was struck (as on several occasions before) by the relative toughness of his line, in particular in relation to the development of Soviet policy. He told me at the end of the evening that he had been much impressed by Mrs Thatcher; she might differ from him on ideological matters, but they saw eye to eye on international problems, and particularly on the overriding need for resistance to Soviet communism.

9. In general, the Israeli press and public paid a great deal of attention to Mrs Thatcher's visit, which was heralded by a five-minute programme on Israeli television, considerably more than VIP visitors usually get. Most of the major events during her visit attracted two or three TV crews (IBA, BBC, ITN) and between ten and thirty reporters and photographers; thirty-four turned up at the press conference on 23 March. Reports on her activities were universally favourable and generally full, though I had the impression that rather less was said about the

/later

RESTRICTED



RESTRICTED

-4-

later stages of her programme than the earlier. By any criteria, however, the visit was a real success. We are sending excerpts from the press coverage to you separately.

Forwarded to
Mrs T's office
(Mr Nease)

ML
7/4

Yours sincerely,
Anthony Elliott
Anthony Elliott

Copies to: HM Ambassadors at Amman
Cairo
Damascus
Washington

RESTRICTED