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Note
A. Copy to the...
my...
John

BRITISH CONSULATE-GENERAL
SUITE 2250 DRESSER TOWER
601 JEFFERSON
HOUSTON TEXAS 77002
TELEPHONE AREA CODE 713 659-6270
TELEX 762 307 AMU 026/24

RECEIVED
21st September, 1977
18 OCT 1977

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Handwritten in red: AMU 026/24

Handwritten in black: li. Howan
li. F. Howard

Mark Russell Esq.
British Embassy
Washington, D.C. 20008

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VISIT TO HOUSTON OF MRS. MARGARET THATCHER, M.P.

I am enclosing the programme of Mrs. Thatcher's visit and copies of articles in the Houston Post and Houston Chronicle.

The start of the visit on Friday evening was marred by the failure of the Warwick Hotel (chosen by the ESU) to provide either a hairdresser or someone to press Mrs. Thatcher's dress. Both of these had been ordered by the Secretary of the ESU and they had, at our request, double-checked that everything was in order. The hotel in fact became a joke with the Thatcher Party. The inside door handle of the bathroom would not work properly and both Mr. Thatcher and Mrs. Thatcher had to be released from bondage on different occasions. There were no laundry facilities on the Saturday and Mrs. Thatcher's secretary and mine did the laundry at the latter's home on the Saturday evening. This was all rather surprising as the Warwick is considered to be one of the best hotels in Houston.

The speech to the ESU was heard by over 400, probably double the usual attendance. You will see from the press cuttings that Mrs. Thatcher took a predictable line. She talked in a similar vein to the industrialists who attended the Saturday lunch and also to those who attended the Saturday evening dinner. There was a very good turn-out of top tycoons at these two functions. At all of them, the hosts and those who spoke made it quite plain that she would get 99% of the votes of those who had come to hear her. There were no awkward questions as far as she was concerned and she so much enjoyed the question period that she had a short wrestling match with the President for the microphone to enable the questioning to go on when he thought she had had enough.

I met Mrs. Thatcher at the airport and my wife and I escorted her through the programme apart from the visit to the oil rig. She was 50 minutes late returning from the oil rig and therefore 30 minutes late for the dinner but she told me she had enjoyed the rig visit enormously. On the Sunday morning I took her, at her request, to see the modern shopping complex "Galleria" in a neighbouring suburb. I took the opportunity to show her the opulence of the River Oaks district and the terrible squalor of the black area not very far away.

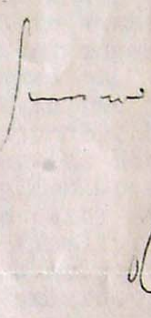
x Mr. and Mrs. Thatcher expressed great satisfaction with the visit. Evidently Mrs. Thatcher had been particularly pleased with the Saturday lunch as the Chairman, Tom Love managed to get the Texas industrialists to say their piece.

Mark Russell Esq.

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X || She said this was a very welcome relaxation for her instead of having to do most of the talking herself. It was noticeable that after the Saturday evening dinner, where she said a few words, she commented that the Americans "all seemed to want their pound of flesh". I told Adam Butler M.P., her PPS, that she didn't really need to say more than a few words and invite questions if she preferred that method. Adam smiled and said "you are privileged to see the reaction of a rather tired lady late at night". There had been another sharp reaction from Mrs. Thatcher at NASA (which she very much enjoyed) when a CBS cameraman persisted in asking questions about the British economy immediately after the astronaut Captain John Young had finished his wind-up talk. She said she would answer questions on her visit to NASA but not about the British economy and that this was being rude to her hosts. She later asked her secretary to confirm that this was a CBS cameraman and to remind Mrs. Thatcher in future that she should not give any further interviews to CBS.

Adam Butler, whom we all enjoyed very much and Caroline Stephens both told me the visit had gone very well indeed.


(Roy Fox)