



BRITISH EMBASSY

CAIRO

12 January 1976

F Wheeler Esq
NENAD
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VISIT BY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION TO EGYPT

1. Mrs Thatcher, accompanied by her Parliamentary Private Secretary, Mr Adam Butler MP, and by Mr Gordon Reece to handle the press, visited Cairo between 7 and 9 January.
2. Mrs Thatcher came as the guest of the Egyptian government, having received an invitation during President Sadat's visit to London last November. The programme was drawn up by the Egyptian authorities. Mrs Thatcher stayed at the Residence. The Ambassador or the Counsellor accompanied her on all her calls. The only opportunity for the Ambassador to offer entertainment was before lunch on 8 January when he gave a reception for Mrs Thatcher to meet leading representatives of the British community.
3. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr Ismail Fahmi, was Mrs Thatcher's host. He received her at the airport on arrival on 7 January. On the evening of that day Mrs Thatcher, accompanied by the Ambassador and Mrs Morris as well as Mr Butler called on President and Madame Sadat for talks and dinner. The Egyptian Vice President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Speaker and the Minister for Social Affairs were present throughout. The MFA Protocol Department told us that it was most unusual for an appointment with the President to be arranged before a visitor's arrival in Egypt. The fact that the President gave Mrs Thatcher a private dinner, attended by most of Egypt's leading political figures, also demonstrates that the Egyptians were intent on paying her particular attention.
4. On 8 January Mrs Thatcher called on the Foreign Minister, the Speaker, the ASU First Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Arab League. (A call on the Vice-President was cancelled, since he and Mrs Thatcher had met over dinner the night before). She also paid visits to the Cairo Museum and the Pyramids. In the evening she attended a dinner in her honour, given by the Foreign Minister. It was unusually large and was attended inter alia by the Speaker and the ASU First Secretary. There were no speeches.

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5. On 9 January Mrs Thatcher gave a press conference, arranged by the Egyptians in the Sheraton Hotel. I enclose a cutting from the "Egyptian Mail" of 10 January which shows the general line of questions and answers though we understand from British journalists who were present that the headline misquotes Mrs Thatcher. She did not refer to the need to give full recognition to a Palestinian national entity but went no further than the current EEC formula on the right of the Palestinians to express their national identity.

6. Later that morning Mrs Thatcher visited the Faith and Hope Rehabilitation Centre in the company of Madame Sadat and made a brief tour of the Citadel and the Khan El Khalili Bazaar. She left Cairo on the afternoon of 9 January, having been seen off by the Foreign Minister.

7. With regard to the substance of Mrs Thatcher's talks, those with the President were disjointed and gave rise to nothing new. Much of her meeting with Mr Fahmi was taken up with a monologue by Mr Fahmi describing events since the 1973 war, the main purpose of which was to demonstrate that the Soviet Union and Syria had not initially opposed step-by-step disengagement and had no grounds for criticising Egypt's policy now. Mr Fahmi also gave an account of how he saw the Middle East Security Council debate due to begin on 12 January which we have reported in our telno: 27 of 9 January. The other calls Mrs Thatcher made took very much of the nature of courtesy calls.

8. The most striking aspect of the visit was the exceptional treatment given to Mrs Thatcher at the highest level. A number of our diplomatic colleagues have commented on this.

John -

John Cole.

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cc: Chanceries: Damascus

Tel Aviv

PS/MR KENNALS
PS/PUB
SIR A DUFF
MR WEIR