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PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION

You are to discuss your visit to the Soviet Union with Percy Cradock and me tomorrow morning.

Background

The background to the visit is unusually fraught. Gorbachev is beseiged by problems: the economy, where the proposed reforms are already under fire as inadequate and are being modified (but it is not clear in what direction): the nationalities, with the Baltics continuing to hold out for recognition of their independence as the starting-point for negotiations with Moscow, with fresh violence in Armenia and with Yeltsin wishing to strengthen the Russian Republic's independence: the military evidently unhappy with the speed and scale of the force reductions envisaged by Gorbachev: Yeltsin, representing a major political challenge and a Party Congress just a few weeks away, which may well see an attempted backlash against Gorbachev's reforms.

To add to that there is some confusion on the external front, at least until we know the outcome of the US/Soviet Summit (and it may be Monday before we get a full briefing). The prospects for agreement on START and on chemical weapons look quite bright. But the real Soviet position on Germany's place in NATO is still hard to discern, as is the position on Conventional Force Reductions. There is talk of postponing the difficult issues to a second round: and of modifying the current western negotiating position to accommodate Soviet security concerns. For now, we are helpless observers to what may come out of Washington. We shall have to make some rapid judgements early next week. (On an operational point, I wonder whether it would not be advisable to leave London for Scotland on Thursday an hour earlier than planned, and have a debriefing from Jim Baker).

The Message

In short you will be entering quite a maelstrom in Moscow, and we need to give careful thought to the message which we want to emerge from the visit. The salient points are:

- your attitude to Gorbachev. The media will be trying to discern whether you continue to support his reforms or are beginning to distance yourself from him. I think you can only play this straight. It's not for us to get involved in the politics of the Soviet Union, but you support reforms intended to increase democracy and lead the Soviet Union towards a market economy. At the same time, we don't want to lose the advantage of your perceived special relationship with Gorbachev: this will in any case emerge if, as planned, he accompanies you to Kiev. We need to consider how to respond if Yeltsin asks to see you. I think you would be bound to take Gorbachev's advice as your host.

- The West's general approach. Your message here might be that we have no wish to exploit the Soviet Union's internal difficulties. Our interest lies in creating a stable situation in Europe, as a background for the Soviet reform process to proceed peacefully.

- Germany and NATO. Subject to what emerges in Washington, your message should be that a united Germany will be a member of NATO, but there are a multitude of safeguards on offer for the Soviet Union (transitional period for Soviet forces, no advance in NATO's front line, conventional force reductions, reconsideration of forward defence, prospect of negotiations on SNF, strengthening of CSCE) which means that they have nothing to fear.

- Attitude to Baltic States' Independence. You have a well-established line on this. The goal of independence is not in question, only how to get there.

You believe that an understanding on freezing/suspending Lithuania's declaration of independence should open the way to discussions.

- The Soviet military. Your meeting with them is the novel and unusual feature of the programme. We want it to come out as an occasion for some straight talking, in which you engage the Soviet high command in single-handed combat (so to speak), to explain first how their military activities look to us: and second why they have nothing to fear from NATO.

The Programme

The main talking is concentrated on the first day. You have talks with Gorbachev from about 1030-1445, including a working lunch. You will be next to him at dinner that night. There may be further opportunities the following day if, as planned, he travels with you to Kiev. You also have an hour with Ryzhkov, which will presumably be devoted to economic reform and to bilateral economic relations. And an hour or so with the military top brass.

The second and third days are in essence an extended photo-opportunity and a chance to promote Britain in the Soviet Union. We shall be aiming to bring you into contact with as many people as possible, both in the Ukraine and in Armenia.

The Agenda

The relative weight to be given to individual issues will depend in good part on what emerges from the Washington Summit. But the issues you will want to cover include:

- Germany and NATO. I have suggested above how you should approach this. It is in everyone's interest to have Germany firmly locked in an alliance: but we acknowledge that the Soviet Union has security concerns which have to be met.

- CFE. We can only decide the line you take in the light of what emerges from Washington. But you will want to press for a substantial agreement as the key to unlock a CSCE Summit this year. You will need detailed briefing on the sticking points in the present negotiations, and on the various ideas being canvassed (principally by the Germans) for further concessions to the Russians in the Central Zone.

- Nuclear arms negotiations. There will probably be little to discuss on START, except perhaps the non-circumvention clause. He may suggest that we forego our fourth Trident boat. You will want to go over the ground on SNF: readiness to negotiate post-CFE but determination to retain some nuclear weapons.

- Chemical and Biological warfare. You will want to welcome the US/Soviet agreement on CW. You will need to challenge him on our suspicions on BW.

- Soviet Internal. This is traditionally a major part of your talks with Gorbachev, and he will probably want to give you a full account of current problems. The subject of UK or wider western help may arise. There are some relatively small ways in which we can help - advice on small business, management training, energy efficiency. But we don't see much scope for massive financial help, especially when the Russians are experiencing growing difficulties in meeting their international payments' obligations.

- Baltic States. I have suggested above the general approach you might take.

- Human rights issues. You will want to commend progress, but there are still bottlenecks. You will need to raise the specific case of Mrs. Gordievsky (if we are to keep up his morale).

- Regional Issues. I doubt there will be much time for these. But in rough order of priority they would be Middle East (including emigration of Soviet Jews), China, Southern Africa, Cambodia, Central America. You will want to note the very considerable progress in resolving regional disputes since you and he first started discussing them in 1984.

- Bilateral economic issues. These will be mostly for discussion with Ryzhkov. There will be a full note from the DTI.

e.d.r.

C. D. POWELL

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