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cc: J/Tr.
C.O.

for Sact file

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

23 May 1979

Dear Paul,

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY THE SOVIET MINISTER OF FOREIGN
TRADE, MR. PATOLICHEV, AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON 23 MAY 1979

As you know, the Prime Minister accepted the joint recommendation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Trade that she should receive the Soviet Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr. Patolichev, during his current visit to London to open the National Exhibition of the USSR. Mr. Patolichev duly called at No. 10 this evening at 1715, accompanied by the Soviet Ambassador and an interpreter. The following is a summary of the main points which arose during a conversation lasting three-quarters of an hour.

Mr. Patolichev conveyed to the Prime Minister the congratulations of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. Kosygin, and added his own. The Prime Minister thanked Mr. Patolichev and said that although she doubted whether she would be able to remain in office for as long as Mr. Kosygin she was not without hope. The Prime Minister went on to say that the invitations which had been extended by her predecessor to President Brezhnev and Mr. Kosygin to visit the United Kingdom still stood: they would both be very welcome here.

After a further exchange of courtesies and reminiscences, Mr. Patolichev gave the Prime Minister an account of the National Exhibition of the USSR which he had opened this morning; he had read out, at the opening ceremony, a special message from Mr. Brezhnev. The Prime Minister said that she had read this message and thought it a kind gesture by Mr. Brezhnev which was greatly appreciated. Mr. Patolichev asked whether he could tell Mr. Brezhnev that the Prime Minister had read his message and the Prime Minister readily agreed, asking Mr. Patolichev to convey her thanks to President Brezhnev at the same time. The Prime Minister said that she would visit the National Exhibition if she possibly could, as a special compliment to Mr. Patolichev for his kindness in calling on her.

/ In response

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In response to an enquiry from the Prime Minister about Mr. Brezhnev's health, Mr. Patolichev simply referred to his recent discussions with President Giscard and the forthcoming Summit Meeting with President Carter.

After a discussion of current developments in the Soviet economy, and especially of the Soviet energy programme, in which Mr. Patolichev outlined the achievements of the tenth five-year plan on familiar lines, the Soviet Ambassador reminded Mr. Patolichev that when he returned to Moscow he would be asked to give an account of the Prime Minister's views on longer-term political issues. The Prime Minister said that Mr. Patolichev could take back to Moscow a message of the greatest goodwill. The Government believed in detente, so long as it was two way; they believed in trade, so long as it was two way; and, like the Soviet Union, they believed in defence. The Prime Minister said that she believed in making judgements on the basis of actions rather than on words; for example, when she had told Mr. Patolichev that she would visit the Soviet Exhibition, she meant it and would go - she had not simply said this for effect. She believed that the talks which international statesmen had together should live in terms of action: the Government would make its judgements on the basis of what happened after an agreement had been signed. Mr. Patolichev told the Prime Minister that it was urgent to conclude the SALT II Treaty, since otherwise the world would find itself in an impasse. The Prime Minister said that the British Government hoped that the Treaty would be ratified; she herself believed that it would be, since otherwise the consequences would be so grave. The US Senate might, of course, have some small amendments to suggest.

The Prime Minister went on to say that the United Kingdom naturally had a strong interest in the next negotiation, of SALT III, largely because of the deployment of the SS-20 missile by the Soviet Union; such weapons were described as "theatre nuclear forces" but in reality they were strategic in nature. Mr. Lunkov referred to Mr Brezhnev's proposal for an all-European conference at the political level to discuss disarmament and put an end to the arms race. The Prime Minister said that it was necessary to make progress in all the negotiations which had been begun, including those on CTB and MBFR. The purpose of nuclear missiles was to ensure that they were never used; but to be effective, deterrence had to be balanced.

The Prime Minister told Mr. Patolichev that lasting trust between countries could be built up only through the way in which they carried out the agreements they had arrived at, whether in the field of defence or in that of trade. The British Government would work to build up this trust; but, the Prime Minister said, if the Soviet Union was tough she would be tough too. Mr. Patolichev said that the Prime Minister had described the Soviet Union's own position; the Soviet Government

/ could not,

could not, however, understand why anybody should find the Soviet Union's proposal on the non-first use of nuclear weapons unacceptable. The Prime Minister commented that it was important that a balance should be maintained between East and West so that the Third World could develop in its own way, without pressure on it from either side. The UK was concerned by the appearance of Cubans and East Germans in Africa and the Middle East; this had an unsettling effect and was disturbing. Mr. Lunkov said that the Soviet Government was not responsible for the Cubans, who had been invited into Africa by the Angolans. Mr. Patolichev said that he would report the Prime Minister's views on all these matters to the Soviet leadership.

Concluding the conversation, the Prime Minister reaffirmed that the invitations extended by her predecessor to President Brezhnev and Mr. Kosygin still stood. Mr. Patolichev said that he would be glad to convey this to them and added that before taking his leave he would like to give the Prime Minister one word of advice: she had said that she could be tough, but he hoped that she would always be as she had been in receiving him.

I shall be in touch with you in due course about a possible date during the recess, and the arrangements, for the Prime Minister's visit to the National Exhibition of the USSR.

I am sending copies of this letter to Tom Harris (Department of Trade) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Bryan Coward.

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.