House of Lords

Prime Minister

I thought you might like to see the enclosed note about my visit to Russia with the Anglo Soviet round table in May

Margaret Thomas
Aug 2, 1984

Box

A Journey to Russia and Finland

P R O G R A M M E

of the Eighth Soviet-British Round Table symposium on the problems of security and cooperation in Europe, Moscow,

16-17 May 1984

/This is a transcription of the Russian programme/

Tuesday May 15
- 17.40 - Arrival of participants at the 'Sheremetyevo-2' Airport
- 20.00 - Dinner. Discussing the programme of Symposium

Wednesday May 16
- 8.45 - Breakfast at the Hotel
- 9.30 - Leaving for IMEMO
- 10.00-11.30 - Opening session
- 11.30-1200 - Coffee break
- 12.00-13.00 - Plenary session
- 13.30-15.00 - Lunch
- 15.00-17.00 - Evening session
- Evening: attending performance at Bolshoi Theatre

Thursday May 17
- 8.45-9.20 - Breakfast at the Hotel
- 9.30 - Leaving for IMEMO
- 10.00-11.30 - Plenary session
- 11.30- 12.00 - Coffee break
- 12.00-13.30 - Plenary session
- 13.30-15.00 - Lunch
- 15.00-17.00 - Final session
- 20.00 - Reception at the Embassy of Great Britain

Friday May 18
- 8.45-9.20 - Breakfast at the Hotel
- 9.30 - 13.30 - Reserved time
- 14.00 -16.00 - Lunch party
- 17.55 - Departure of the foreign (Sic; who were the rest?) participants.

(ie Sir F. Bolton, Lord Chalfont, Lord Harlech, J. Robertson)

- 23.53 - Leaving for Leningrad

Saturday - Arriving in Leningrad

May 19 - Breakfast

- Sightseeing of Leningrad

-Visiting Hermitage Museum

- Visiting Isaak Cathedral

- Evening: attending performance at a Leningrad theatre

Sunday - 11.25 - Departure to London by air from Leningrad

May 20

15 May 1984

I accepted an invitation to go on the British group attending the Anglo-Soviet round table in Moscow, May 1984. The British group were Admiral Sir James Eberle, the new director of Chatham House; David Harlech, the retiring chairman of the same: Alun Chalfont; John Roper also now in Chatham House; Andrew Knight, editor of the Economist; Sir Fred Bolton, chairman of the British Council of Shipping; George Robertson, a deputy to Healey, Labour MP for Hamilton; a secretary, Caroline Adams; and Michael Kaser, who alone of the above speaks Russian and who is Reader in Soviet economics at St Anthony's.

May 15

We are just setting off from London to Moscow in a Russian version of a VC 10. The Russian air hostess is telling us how to put on the lifejacket. Apart from letters in cyrillic, and the Russian preceding English in all instructions, there is little difference between this journey hitherto than any other such expedition. The'team' assembled rather sporadically at Heathrow with the bonhomie normal on such occasions: I had coffee before departure in the departure lounge with Andrew Knight and David Harlech. The latter explained that he would not be too unhappy if the plane were to leave without us.

London was grey when we left - the sun of the last few weeks has gone and Ladbroke Square was deserted except for Webber digging in the circle by the blackbird's house. He made a gesture with his hands to indicate good wishes. The paths were heavy with fallen may and cherry blossom.

Huysmans' famous nineteenth century "journey" to London in A Rebours (which he cancelled at the last minute because he could not stand the idea of London's fogs, steam etc, as reported by Verlaine) rather influenced my reaction to this Moscow journey. When I thought of the obfuscation, the tedium, the dishonesty, the evasion of modern Russia, not to speak of the hideous new building, at the last minute I was half inclined not to go. When to this craven hesitation is added the fact that I am very happy when I am sitting in my own library in Ladbroke Grove, especially in May when I can have the door open into the garden, and I always think of such journeys as a waste of time from my book, I am surprised that I gathered the decision to go at all.

My chief difficulty hitherto has been self-induced. I wrote to Francis Haskell saying I was going to Moscow and Leningrad and he said"good, go and see my friends in the Hermitage and could you take the catalogue of the Romanesque exhibition? I said, of course, and a very heavy book arrived - 3½ pounds! It would not go into my well arranged bag. It adds much to my troubles.

The journey was effortless. George Robertson, and the Admiral exchanged jokes. There was lunch. A glass of "wine": could it have been parsnip wine? In the lavatory there was a shoebrush as well as a clothes brush. The plane was half full of a tour, but we had the first two rows in the economy class section and were more comfortable than in Concorde. In the first class compartment a group of aparachiks kept to themselves. A woman in a long brown leather coat looked like an agent in an early Grahame Greene novel. Desultory conversation. The admiral had prepared a few briefs which I did not read.

At Moscow airport, Sheremetyevo, built for the Olympics in 1980, we arrived at 5.40 their time - I think 2.40 ours. On time and indeed not much longer than the Concorde to New York two weeks ago. Russia lay beneath - fields and woodland. Very green. On arrival, it was warm and I was glad not to have a coat, as everyone else did. We were welcomed by a secretary from the Embassy (red haired Mr Meyer) and three members of the "hosts' organisation" - Mr Bykov, Mr Martynov and Mr Perenosov of IMEMO. They greeted us warmly, took our passports and luggage tags (I had none). We waited with them over coffee in the VIP lounge. Chalfont said later that Karpov the chess champion was being met also. If so, I did not see him. There was a friendly atmosphere and we chatted, but it took a very long time, at least an hour, other delegates passing us by, for us to get clearance. I had met Bykov and Martynov before in London, at last year's round table. Tall, smooth, executive, excellent English, Bykov could easily be an American and I recalled that another Bykov had played some part in the Hiss case: his father? However, Michael Kaser says Bykov is a very common name in Russia. Bykov said to me "of course your Prime Minister has said some harsh things about us but personally I must admit to admiration for her."

At the bar in the front lounge a Russian looking exactly like Rafael Alberti sat and talked. I asked him if he was Alberti. He refused the compliment but seemed to know about whom I was talking. Perhaps because of this intrusion of normality, Martynov suggested that we should go to a better VIP lounge, which we did. Here there were no windows, plenty of chairs, but no other delegations. It was much duller. We sat there and chatted on a bit more. Mr Bykov told me that he could recognise "a Brit from a very long way off" - something about his stance, skin, clothes combined. I said the Russians were often physically indistinguishable from us. Bykov disagreed.

Eventually the luggage came and we left, again waiting outside this time in the warm evening. (Alun Chalfont in his article in the Daily Telegraph on June 7 said it was a sparkling May morning. I find it hard to understand how he could have made that mistake.) A bus took us to Moscow. I took special, and I suppose absurd, care not to allow anyone to handle my own bag. Each of our team sat in separate seats with his luggage, and there was also the 3 hosts. The Embassy secretary vanished. Michael Kaser sensibly had an up-to-date guidebook and told us something of the route. My 1914 Baedeker was useless. The journey was first past birch woods, remarkably similar to

those of Maryland two weeks ago. Fresh green young trees. Less traffic than in Maryland though, and instead there is a VIP lane (if that's what it was). We passed the memorial - a tank trap - to where the Germans had got on their drive to Moscow in 1941 and then crossed into Moscow proper, still driving along a long straight avenue which lay next the Moscow River. A few pre-war blocks were to be seen, several tower blocks and the Peter Palace where Napoleon stayed in 1812 on his abortive effort to conquer Russia and where Czar Nicholas had fled to during the execution of the Decembrists in 1825. This was then well outside Moscow in that section of the surrounding park which is still a public one. Now the Dynamo football ground is close by, and we passed that also. The park, according to a quotation in Laurence Kelly's excellent guide, was "once fashionable."

We reached the hotel, Sovietskaya, where we were to stay. A pale freckled worried guide called Alexei, looking left and right continuously, joined us. I saw him outside the bus and concluded that he was also from the Embassy. His features were deceptive. He is a young Russian with adequate English and not much knowledge of how his system of government works. The hotel is a large building built before 1914 I think, pillars, high ceilings, broad staircase and frequent chandeliers. The bedrooms are the size of a stable, the walls hung with green cloth, furniture heavy and wooden, the beds vast. I had two bathrooms and a large separate writing room, with an (upright) piano in my room, a setback special sofa section, huge french windows onto balconies, one of which opens onto what appears to be woodland. Clearly our hosts want to make us happy. John Roper said had I been a hereditary peer I might have had a grand piano.

After a very short unpacking and washing time, we met downstairs at 8.15 and went to dine in the restaurant which, Michael Kaser says, was where Rasputin made a famous scene in 1915. But it is not quite clear whether this is exactly the same Yar restaurant, where the gypsies used to dance, or that it is another one on the same site. The 1914 guidebook says, among restaurants, "Yar, much frequented in the evening (not cheap)". The large restaurant anyway had a feeling of China, with a band and innumerable tables and a few dancers in the swirling gloon. We dined apart, in a separate room, I had vodka and Bulgarian wine, with smoked salmon and other smoked fishes as well as some meat. Good vodka, bad wine. Fairly quiet dinner. I sat between the Admiral and Perenosov. The latter told me about the joys of Sussex University where he'd been in 1966. (It subsequently turned out that Pereonosov is not only the chief administartor of our hosts, the Institute for the Study of the World Economy - IMEMO - but he is also its chief policeman: the man who can get things done. Opposite was David Harlech who told me why he is not planning to write a memoir about his time in Washington during the Kennedy days. (Too many people still alive: Harold Macmillan in particular). One brief toast from Bykov who wished us "comfort and rest" in Moscow. No one answered. First black mark to the Admiral, I thought.

After dinner a small group of us went on a brief walk in the nearby park. It looked pretty and seemed untroubled. George Robertson, whom I did not know before this journey, made many jokes in his broad cheerful Scots accent. He seems sensible, on the Right of his party, lively as well. We reached the Dynamo underground, but nobody had any money so we returned home on foot. Alun Chalfont was last seen asking patiently if he could have breakfast in his room. A very obvious lady of the night in furs patrolled the woods.

May 16th

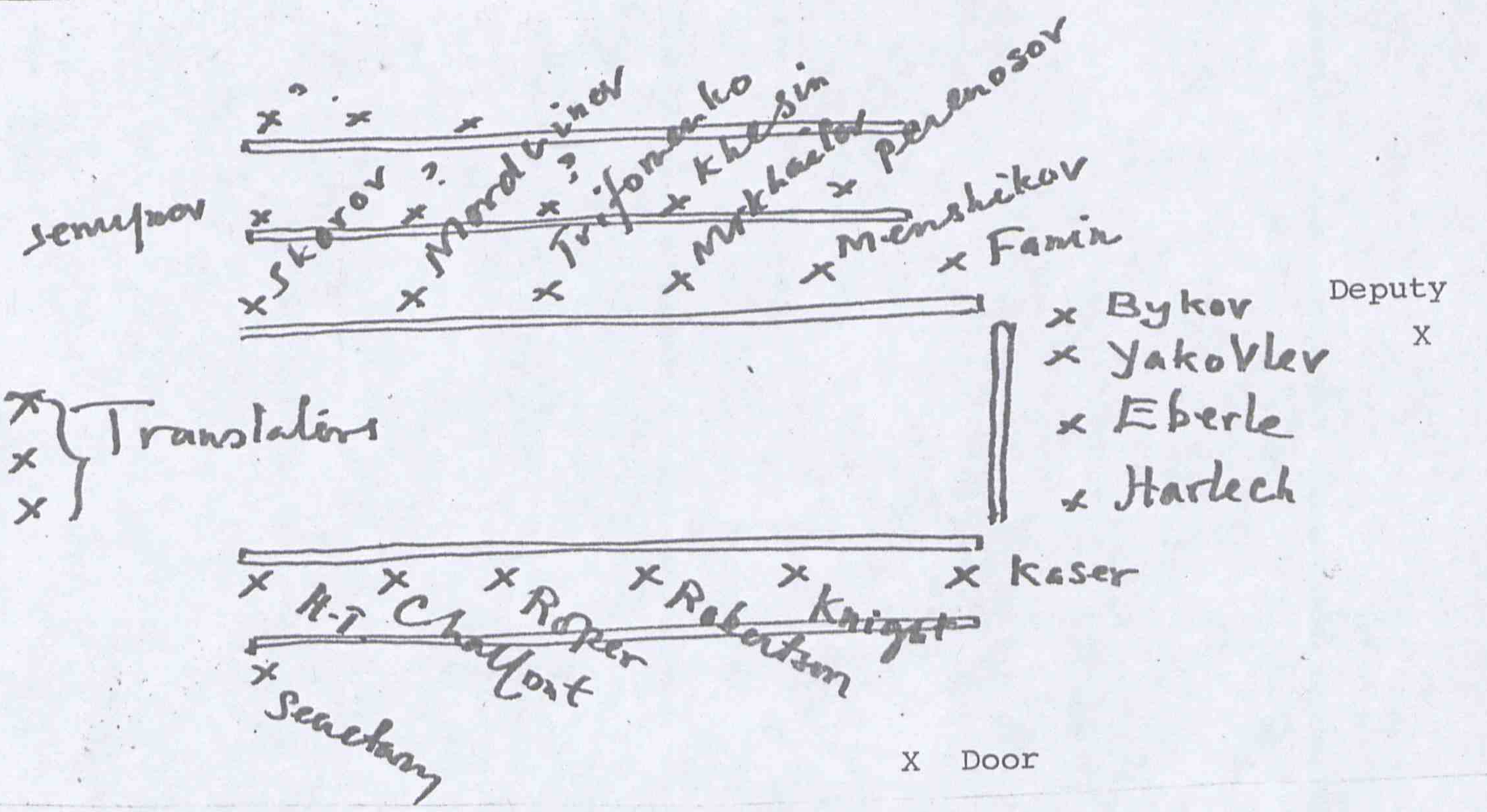
I slept well though it was as well to have arranged to be called since otherwise, despite daylight, I should not have been able to wake up at five o'clock English time. Michael Kaser fixed this. All theinstructions in the room were in Russian except for the very urgent and explicit fire instructions. There are bath plugs.

Breakfast. 3 lightly fried eggs. I arrived later than the others and ate at a table on the side at which sat two Russians, one of whom was reading Smiley's People, in English. At the other table there was a group of Indians. Alexei the guide worried whether I would like something else than eggs. Then he said, "Please, Lord Thomas, do not be late. Be in the bus by 9.30".

The bus drove us past the Warsaw station to the IMEMO building. Trams. Streets fairly full of quite well dressed pedestrians: not much difference from the West in dress in the street - women's clothes notably superior to what I remember from 1960. The trees being out, Moscow also presented a rather appealing impression, with many more old buildings than I recalled. We saw the queue lining up already, near the tomb of Lenin curling down into Alexander Gardens. We saw Red Square in the distance, and a group of red hatted little "pioneers" waiting to go into the Kremlin. We passed the Manège, which used to be the Tsar's stable and the Kremlin car park. I imagined Stalin's car being summoned and shooting out at uncontrollable speed. It is now an exhibition hall. We passed the Lenin Library and a famous grey 1920ish appartment block where the names of Mikoyan and of Tukhachevsky were on the outside to proclaim the fact that they'd lived there - presumably Tukhachevsky had gone from there to his execution. We also passed the "house of the people" from which it seems Lenin once addressed the people.

We had not started from the hotel at exactly 9.30 and so we were a little late (not my fault). The soberly dressed Soviet group looked decidedly cross, though they all stood up. This was perhaps the fault of Alexei, who looked perplexed not sorry

The conference room in IMEMO is about 100 feet long and 40 feet broad. At the right, as we came in there is a large tapestry commemorating the history of Moscow. Facing us were three large windows with ruched lace curtains and two or three layers of desks and chairs thus



The tables are heavy pinewood, the brown chairs leather, tipped. We had in front of us little identity cards with our Russian names one one side ("ACPA TOMAC") and English on the other. There are 3 trays of potted flowers between us. The room is high and lit by a chandelier.

Introduction and presentation of the Soviet group by Mr Yakovlev, who looked very oriental. The cardinal problem of our time was the nuclear threat. The use of our talks was to remove the obstacles to disarmament. Yakovlev introduced his colleagues and they introduced themselves:

Mr Falin; a wild looking journalist on Izvestia, actually ex-ambassador to, and apparently specialist in disinformation in, Bonn.

Menshikov, son of the ambassador to the US in the 50's, in the Central Committee, heavy, who looked like a disagreable Jimmy Goldsmith.

Martynov, with whom we dined last night and met us.

General Mikhailov; in uniform and medals; major general, 6 rows of ribbons.

Mr Trifomenko: US/Canada institute.

Dr Skorov: " " " very good English, slight.

Mordinov: Gosplan - heavy.

Semyonov: Foreign Office.

We introduced ourselves also.

The admiral then made a brisk and good statement of what we took to be the western position to urgent problems. While he spoke, the Russians all took notes, occasionally sitting back and sighing. Like the bus which brought us to IMEMO, the microphone and equipment for interpreters (impeccable, from the end of the room) were made in Hungary. The admiral, who had sometimes seemed out of his depth up to now, made a good firm statement, but thereafter his control over the procedings slipped. We none of us had any agenda. It was Yakovlev who decided whether we should discuss disarmament, Middle East, or what. A lack of leadership, I'm afraid, characterised our group, all the worse since we included people who were quite good at leading groups of this sort (Harlech, Chalfont).

Mr Yakovlev, who is quite Asiatic in appearance and therefore perhaps not related to Herzen's father of that name, replied that he was glad to see the admiral worried. So too were the Democrats in the US. The Reagan administration aimed at superiority in nuclear weapons and these were not aimed at the USSR alone. US missiles in Western Europe added an extra dimension. He then continued with a long onslaught against President Reagan. With the Pershings, he said, the arms race had entered a qualitatively new stage. The Americans were seeking ever more destructive means of war. The Pershings were only one side of the matter. 100s of millions were spent on first strike weapons and chemical weapons. Washington could afford anything for war nothing for peace. But the USSR could do anything to resist superiority. He was glad Eberle recognised that the USSR might feel encircled. The USSR was prepared to tackle production of nuclear weapons in disarmament discussions: "That we support a better international atmosphere ought to be well known to you. See Mr Chernenko's recent plans for eg a ban on the use of nuclear weapons in space, troop cuts in Europe, cuts in strategic weapons. The prevention of nuclear war should be the cornerstone of our policies."

Harlech then made a good speech easily delivered if a trifle degagé for the mood of the discussion. Yakovlev, he said, had exaggerated: we'd all be better off to have equal security at a lower level.

Mr Falin, the ex-ambassador in Bonn, now Izvestia, then spoke. Could it really be that the Pershings and Cruise were introduced to counter SS20! What nonsense! We should look back to 1977. General Haig had then said that the targets for the Pershings should be bases in Russia, communication centres etc. He was convinced from reading statements by Gene Rostow, Reagan, Haig etc, that the US is seeking superiority. Falin took a long time and was gloomy as befitted his physique. Alun Chalfont then made a firm statement saying that neither Pershing nor Cruise could be looked upon as a first strike weapon.

Yakovlev replied:

"We showed restraint over the Cuban missile crisis, for example. We withdrew then. We didn't complain when Senator Jackson intervened in Soviet affairs over the issue of Jewish

immigration. In Vietnam we showed restraint. We now ask the USA to do so for once."

Menshikov spoke next. He did so in excellent English, rather lazily and arrogantly, without any apology to his own colleagues who, of course, had to listen to the interpreter. He also recalled the missile crisis. (His father had been ambassador to the US and he himself is a member of the international secretariat in the Central Committee). Suppose the rockets remained there? Would they have constituted a danger to the US? No. But the missiles were thought to be a danger by the US. Perceptions were important. Now these new US missiles were perceived by the USSR as dangerous. He then returned to a heavy castigation of the West and the US on the missile issue. He thought the West needed education and was now receiving that education at Geneva in the fact that the USSR were not present!

George Robertson spoke next. He said he was different from the rest of us because he had to appeal to an electorate. That made things simpler for him. He thought questions of nuclear superiority profoundly academic. There was something of an attitude of "plague on both your houses" in Britain. He could not understand why the USSR did not return to Geneva. Also, why was Mr Falin so gloomy?

Mr Falin replied that he was a realistic optimist, not a pessimist.

Yakovlev: We are ready tomorrow to sit down at Geneva if we get the word.

General Mikhailov (K F Mikhailov):

I'm not a pessimist. A man with my past cannot be so (He did not explain what he meant). But the position in Europe is very dangerous. There are grounds for pessimism. We have withdrawn lots of troops from East Germany, we've put a moratorium on intermediate range nuclear forces, and we've made undertakings not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. In reply, the West has insisted on war preparations. The US seeks to dominate the world and then dictate conditions. This is a purely military position. The US has not abandoned its first strike policy, it is developing chemical weapons and it is seeking to put nuclear weapons into outer space. The US seeks intervention in internal affairs of other states. That is mere terrorism. The US has 1500 military bases encircling the USSR. We had manoeuvres involving 100,000 men for the first time - whilst NATO countries have that every year. We have three aircraft carriers but they have antisubmarines. The US corps of marines outnumbers Soviet marines sixteen times.

General Mikhailov spoke without notes in a rather plaintive voice, insisting on his concern over the world situation. But afterwards he was much the brightest and most jovial of our colleagues.

Admiral Eberle then said that he had to believe the General was entirely sincere. Yet all the things said by

General Mikhailov could be said by the US of the USSR. We are still at the beginning of the dialogue, yet already "We are in a total mirror-image-situation".

With this infelicitous, if I suppose accurate, remark, about 1.30, we adjourned for lunch, walking to the nearby restaurant Tchereymutshki, so called after the village that used to be on that spot before Moscow had grown up around it. As usual, we were not allowed into the restaurant proper but were put into a private room so that we could see nothing of the life of the Muscovites, or of academicians - IMEMO is in the zone of Moscow characterised by institutes etc. (I suppose we were on the road to the Sparrow Hills). Note: I notice that Donald Maclean, in his dull book on foreign policy, offered thanks to IMEMO for their help in his research!

Lunch was much the same mixture as dinner - cold slices of good fish and radishes - vodka - meat and Georgian wine, no 3. I sat between Bykov, rather silent, and Chalfont, quite jolly. We all noticed that the wine did not flow very well. Perhaps this was as well. I walked back to IMEMO with Trifomenko.

After lunch: Andrew Knight started off and talked about mistakes made by the West and the East. He thought that the shooting down of the Korean airliner was an unconscious mistake by the Soviet Union. This caused Chalfont to have apoplexy. The worst Soviet mistake recently has been to try and involve themselves so much in European opposition parties eg social democrats in Germany. He did mention also human rights.

To the latter Yakovlev said the subject of human rights had ceased to irritate him. It now made him laugh. He recalled certain exchanges between the famous writers Sheridan and Cumberland. We were all bemused by this reference. Could he mean Coleridge?

Falin interjected that there were 150 states in the world where there are elections (?) but that we can't devote all our time to worrying about their problems.

We had a great many further exchanges on these diffuse issues with no attempt to organise the debate. I then tried to reflect what I think is the Prime Minister's current view. I thought that I had to do that since they know that I am an adviser to Mrs Thatcher and whatever I was to say would be taken as her policy to some extent. So I then repeated, with a good many additional thoughts of my own, the gist of her remarks to me last Monday afternoon, sandwiched between the Prime Minister of Botswana and the Foreign Minister of Canada. This was approximately as follows (after some preliminary politenesses).

The British Government naturally wishes a modus vivendi with the Soviet Union. That is a better word than détente which, besides being French, has connotations of drawing together of doctrines, which looks a little improbable. Mrs Thatcher, as we know, has no intention of abandoning her alliances and her own philosophy. She believes the British way of life is the best in the world and, judging from the

evident enjoyment of certain of our Russian friends when in England (for example at the University of Sussex), this way of life does not always seem disagreable to some Soviet citizens. Mrs Thatcher wants to continue the argument with the USSR about the merits of our two systems - but by the test of real debate and relative economic success, not by the test of force.

In the meantime, against this background of a desire for modus vivendi, we might do well to consider (outside the arguments previously sustained) certain evident dangers: the risk of war by accident (computer error, for example). "This is a danger which must make us all re-examine our ideologies. Khrushchev said that and he was right". To be conciliatory I recalled that in 1962 on at least one occasion during the missile crisis the USSR had acted responsibly in this kind of matter (when a US reconnaissance aircraft had mistakenly been found over Soviet territory). There was the risk of error developing in an area such as the Middle East where, really, no one desired such a confrontation; and there was the risk that the arms programmes might one day get out of control. Furthermore, one could look back in history and find an occasion when powers which believed that they had superiority had NOT used it. Even in 1982, the Argentine government had misread what they took to be British weakness and then had encountered unexpected British strength - with the tragic consequences which we all know. We also accepted the argument that spending on weapons could be a waste though I had to say that there have been very many occasions in history when there have been unexpected benefits from military expenditures (eg computers themselves). Nor did anyone have to remind the USSR that one could lose a great deal from merely conventional war, as Mrs Thatcher had herself recently said in an interview on television when she recalled Russia's sufferings in World War II (I did not add that many were self-induced or deliberately caused by Stalin).

We could do worse than bear in mind, I added, that Russia and Britain (indeed, the whole West) had many points in common if one looked hard enough: Obviously none of us would benefit from a nuclear exchange; it might be that we both had common apprehensions deriving from the danger of the Iran-Iraqi war; we shared problems arising from certain aspects of negligent policies on environmentalism - acid rain or the famous greenhouse effect, for example. Then theremight always be unexpected threats - a new recurrence of religion in an unforseen guise, for example: who could have forseen the role of the Ayatollah (and the Pope) ten years ago?

Given that any modus vivendi would have to look at disarmament, we ought all to approach that matter with some degree of humility. Thus the West might admit that the Baruch plan of 1946 contained some weaknesses and that the Soviet proposal of May 10 1955 some benefits. The Soviet Union in turn should recall that Khrushchev had admitted mistakes when, in the last pages of his memoirs, he recalled that he and Zhukov

had been wrong in their policies on inspection. (I'm not at all sure whether this section was interpreted).

The Soviet Government might also like to wonder whether they may have misunderstood President Reagan. I am sure that he is interested in nuclear disarmament. He had the merit of being personally much more secure in himself than several previous presidents. An insecure president - and we had had them - might be less easy to deal with.

What sort of disarmament agreement were we able to aim at? Well, why not think of one which would begin by a simple joint declaration that any East-West war would presumably become nuclear and that that being so, the pursuit of nuclear superiority was vain (despite the intimidation factor). So why not seek a break in the deadlock by withdrawing all battlefield weapons? Then have another look at the zero option. Then take up the idea of START.

I made this speech with some misgivings since I do not have much faith in disarmament agreements, recalling Jules Moch's comment in 1955 (?) that to have disarmament one requires a good system of inspection; but for a good system of inspection one needs such confidence that there would be disarmament without agreement.

After this statement which was listened to in silence, and to which I received no formal reaction, Alun Chalfont said that the Soviet Union would be better understood if Lenin and every other Soviet intellectual hadn't said that they expected to spread Communism throughout the world.

Yakovlev scarcely bothered to deny this. Hadn't the British interfered in the Russian civil war? And often in Asia in the 19th century? Trifomenko then returned to the issue of the first strike and first use: the US was trying to make Western Europe a battlefield between US and USSR. Why don't you educate Reagan? Don't leave it to us. You are nearer to him than us.

There followed some further exchanges, skilfully cleared up by Chalfont who agreed that Pershing and Cruise added to our nuclear capacity but since they could not dismantle the entire Soviet machine, they could not therefore be first strike in the usual sense of the phrase. The difference between first strike and first use should be made clear. It was not apparently clear in the mind of Mr Falin.

I have subsequently given a good deal of thought to the wisdom of my own speech but have reached no conclusion. Did I deliberately offend in it against the rule which I know to be correct normally that with the Russians one should never give way in anything of importance to oneself because that diminishes their respect of one? Just as well I am not in politics proper.

We then set off for the British Embassy in the bus. As ever, Michael Kaser was extremely useful in identifying the buildings which we passed. We saw a statue to Zinoviev. There was a new "Central Committee hotel" - and their families. There was the French Embassy and its fine garden. Arrived at our embassy. Three guards outside ineffectively asked for our passports. They summarily allowed us in, over the large courtyard and into the great mysterious cocoon of the embassy, the onetime private house of a sugar baron pre-1917. Dark, cool, rich and heavy, but plenty of air from the river. Beyond, the Kremlin glimmered.

We then went into the upstairs drawing room. We had been greeted downstairs by Ian Sutherland who is now ambassador. He offered us drinks and we had a short seminar with the long french windows open on to the balcony to the Moscow River. Ian spoke sense but in so low a voice that it was impossible to hear what he was saying without craning forward. The most interesting thing was said by Harlech, who argued that we had no knowledge what the real leaders of the USSR were thinking, and none as to whether the people whom we had been seeing were in touch with the real leaders. The admiral had nothing much to say. We left, I looked into a huge dressing room, and we all set off for the Bolshoi Theatre. On the way we passed the KGB building covered by scaffolding in Dzerzhinsky Square. A statue of Dzerzhinsky himself stands in the middle of the Square looking unthinkingly resolute in an overcoat.

At the Bolshoi we were to see, on the invitation of our hosts, a ballet recently written on the theme of Chekov's Seagull for MaiiaPlisetskaya by her husband I Shernin. We were met at the theatre by Alexei, worried, as he was to be throughout the rest of the evening, because of the burden of looking after such a large number of difficult people. He gave out double tickets for seats fairly near each other - and added "Please give me back the tickets so I can claim for them". I sat with Michael Kaser. In the foyer, we were approached by a good-looking blonde in a creamy coloured dress who wondered if we had a spare ticket to sell her. She said that she had been to the 46 occasions on which this ballet had been performed, because she was a great admirer of Plisetskaya. She was an architect. Some of us thought she may have had other professions including, but not confined to, the oldest. (She appeared again at the interval and expressed great satisfaction in meeting three lords).

We went to the auditorium - no coats or briefcases allowed inside. Michael Kaser tried to ensure that Alexei would leave early just before the end of the first act, to secure "snacks" and Soviet champagne in the interval. The theatre has recently been redone. Full, except for two boxes on left. The vast majority seemed Russians except for us, the Indians who are staying in the hotel and Joe Kennedy junior, whom Harlech found sitting next to him.

The ballet was extremely pretty, with delightful impressions of the long exhausting summers of 1895 or so. The scene outside the theatre, top-hats and long dresses, was very gaily done, while Plisetskaya danced beautifully, even though she is 56. Even I, ignorant and indifferent though I really am to ballet could recognise that she is very good . The music was soothing though not very impressive and the plot most confusingly involved. The male lead (can't remember his name) was much younger and danced beautifully with that no nonsense masculine unselfconscious superiority which it seems to me the British male ballet dancers rarely manage.

The impression in Act I of long, summer nights on which the sun scarcely set was well conveyed. That side of XIX th century Russian literature - the white nights - was something which I had not quite realised. I suppose that the labour camps in the Arctic Circle must all have had that eerie quality in summer.

In the interval we had desultory conversation over bad champagne. No "snacks". Reappearance of the "architect". Joe Kennedy Jr was observed pushing towards the buffet. Alexei, whose first visit to the Bolshoi it was, was not very good at managing all this, and he really needed a guide himself.

After the theatre we waited for a long time on the steps of the Bolshoi. Still broad daylight at 9.30 pm. Alexei wanted us to go back to the hotel to dine, but I suggested a restaurant near at hand. This proved an adventure. The obvious choice was the Moscow restaurant just across the square. Alexei thought he'd get us in if a friend of his who works there was on duty. He went away to ring up, returned to say he was not there, because he worked on alternate days. Even so, I managed to persuade him and the team (I think it was I) to go across and try it out. Harlech, Chalfont and I walked - with some difficulty across two broad streets (Okhotni Ryada Place and Bolshaya Dimitrovka in my 1914 map) past the old green and white "Club of the Nobility", and the Little Theatre. The Moscow restaurant was not a bistro (When is a restaurant not a restaurant? When it is like a railway station). We found there were two restaurants. With some trepidation we took the lift to the one on the third floor. Deafening music and dancing. Alexei suddenly reappeared but not the rest of the team. "Stay here please", he said and vanished up to the top floor. Harlech and I sat in huge armchairs and talked again about Kennedy. Chalfont wandered off. Eventually we went up to the seventh floor and sat down in a musical restaurant next to the balcony. Very hot. Dinner delayed, scrappy, enjoyable jokes. We ordered fish soup. This was off. We ordered chicken - it eventually came - very scraggy bones - and it was said there were no vegetables, though Alexei had some. A slightly ribald patriotism took over. After about one hour, vodka and Moldavian wine appeared. Most people drank both without evident harm. Alexei provided

constant themes for entertainment - as he went to telephone his wife, and asked our plump and complacent secretary, Caroline Adams, to dance. George Robinson told numerous jokes, others recited travel experiences in other continents. Clamour for more wine rang through the restaurant, to no effect, since the waitress had to pay the bar with her own money to buy the wine and then be paid back. Alexei paid the bill.

Afterwards, we walked on the balcony. The balcony looked directly over the new square made by Stalin by knocking down many old houses near the Kremlin, along with the Iberian Gate. But on the left Red Square could be entirely seen. A fine night, good floodlights and red stars on the towers of the Kremlin. A red flag too, and I think a fan has been installed to ensure that it floats our bravely. We then walked down, and onto the square. The queue to enter Lenin's tomb which one sees in the day had vanished. We stood in the square and surveyed Russian history. Lenin's tomb was guarded by soldiers, who seemed frozen into a dummy-like immobility.

We walked to the metro; passed the famous stone Lobnoye Mesto on which the Streltsy were killed. The huge statue of Russia saving Moscow against Poland commanded by Prince Sapieha in 1612, St Basil's cathedral and then passed the hideous new Rossiya hotel. I told John Roper that Sapieha's defeat was one of the great tragedies of history. "Are you sure Polish power would have been easier to manage than Russian?" he asked. Michael Kaser pointed out the Headquarters of the Communist Party up a side street lined with chestnuts. We got into the underground at Vavarsk Gate and, changing once, returned to the Dynamo Stadium station. The train was fast, clean, light, large (broad guage) and grand: the marble at the stations was impressive. Clean and well dressed people. We returned at about 12.30, the patient Alexei accompanying us.

May 17

Awoke to another bright, warm, sunny morning. Outside as yesterday a priest with a beard was walking with his assistants. On the landing a group of Afghans seemed to be conferring eagerly. Breakfast, in another room to that of yesterday but at the same deathly slow pace. Alun tells the news heard on his radio that Skinner's death in Moscow was attributed by the coroner to "unnatural killing". Alexei very worried that we might again be late: "Please in the bus by 9.30 latest please!" John Roper and Andrew Knight persist in their endeavour to go by underground though Alexei grandly "prohibits". They go, however. At the table when asked "how many eggs?", everyone says two. Three arrive. Still raw. The admiral needing to go to the lavatory, rather oddly quotes Admiral Beatty to justify such eccentricity. Nervous discussion about changing money, which does not occur. No direct word from the admiral as to what to do today: "gently admiral cast your fly ... over the slow deep hover ..."

Through the middle of Moscow. Another guide, another Alexei, tells us information through a loudspeaker: "on the right there is a new hotel for Central Committee guests". Gagarin Square. A gold roof over the new academy of sciences. Long straight streets heavily tree lined - chestnuts, larches. Brezhnev Square, still small, but it will be the centre of an entire Brezhnev neighbourhood.

We arrived at five past ten, John Roper and Andrew Knight having, much to their satisfaction, arrived first. Fairly warm greetings from Yakovlev, Bykov, Mikhailov, Martynov etc. Menshikov had not arrived and the promised arrival of the fat journalist Bovin had not materialised. Nor was Falin there.

Michael Kaser began at the meeting to discuss human rights, recalling that Helsinki meant free movement of peoples - because people who were cooped up would not be able to understand detente. He then embarked on a long discussion of modern economic problems and described the working of the Common Market, the purpose of which baffled everyone. Yakovlev's eyes gently closed.

Mr Martynov made a most friendly beginning to his speech. He agreed with Kaser about human rights (?) but, of course, people sometimes dwell on this subject with "the dirty intention of whipping up anti-Soviet rhetoric." He described how future difficulties would develop in the capitalist economy in 1985-86, perhaps because of "US internal contradictions." He described the present Soviet economic mechanism. (Mr Mordinov openly read PRAVDA). He thought the arms race embarked on by the US was aimed at undermining the Soviet economy.

Mr Skorov spoke next - a very pleasant faced man. He talked about the present state of the Soviet economy, the Cockburn-Douglas formula, and the ratio between intensive and extensive factors. No one understood. Andrew Knight asked to explain. Skorov with great good manners explained in perfect English. But in the end we were no closer to understanding. Mr Skorov continued at great length, charmingly though quite incomprehensively.

Madam Maximova followed with a good impression of European problems: she was interested, she said, because, "After all, we are all Europeans here". (I had not heard Russians say this before. She was it must be said very white in physique). Are there any limits in NATO to spending on armaments? How will you resolve the need to get rid of non-tariff barriers?"

Then there was coffee break in the course of which a newcomer, Professor Peregudov, showed himself uncannily well informed about the structure of the Conservative party. He knew all about Alfred, the Research Department, the Policy Unit, and even, I expect, Hoskyns and Strauss. He had also read my recent article about Conservatism in New Society.

After coffee Alun asked about trade. He is after all a banker and had been concerned in the building in Moscow of Cosmos hotel, which brought in all its materials from the West.

At this stage, Mr Yakovlev had vanished and Mr Mordinov came in, quoting Shaw, and talked about planning. If a plan once conceived is not carried out, it leads to imbalances. For a long time, five year plans have characterised our economic management, directed by GOSPLAN which is the General Staff of the Soviet economy. It is often thought in the West that these targets are handed down from above. But planning in the initial level comes up from the enterprise as well as goes down. Then: "we all hope to return to trade with the West. We desire no hesitations in any trade." The British had showed themselves 'realistic' in relation to President Reagan's desire for a boycott over the pipeline. I asked about Soviet nuclear energy programmes and had the following answer (from clever Mr ...): "in respect of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, we have 23 atomic plants in our country. Our aim is to have 90 m KWH, of which 12-14 of them will be nuclear. We are pioneers in heat producers, especially Odessa, and we've seen they are ecologically safe. We're already involved in environmental matters. We're concerned about pollution, acid rain, pollution of the sea. We've a consistent policy here."

Mr Shenyev - he repeated the usual accusations against the US which he thought was gradually moving towards its goals, whereas Western Europe has distanced herself a bit. Maybe Western Europe will have to make a quantitive change. Take COCOM! Will Europe be bold enough to defend its interests there? Do you think it's a bad thing that we've refused to take part in the Olympic Games? I think Western Europe should stick up for itself and do the same.

Chalfont asked:
You've said Soviet debts are small: but what about East European?

Khesin
I fully agree that we can agree between us, even though we have different systems. We have both three per cent or so growth rate. Labour productivity increased in Britain 5% last year, exports 11%. The British economy has grown. The competetive prospects of British firms are what matter.

Madame Maximova
We take a broad view of the opportunities of unity in Western Europe. Your summit meetings and talks however could be made more useful. I'm not bold enough to suggest how you should behave. If all events, you shouldn't let the US act without consulting you. Can the Ten speak with one voice? Western Europe should be responsible for its own destinies. We see the EEC as an economic organisation. Margaret Thatcher showed a lot of character when she put her foot down and said Britain would decide for herself what to sell to the Soviet Union. But there are still some problems there. For example,

the US export control bill, which would ban the export of all high technology tous. Anything that could be described as having military value! Suppose a US computer has been bought by Britain! To take that from one country to another, does one have to ask the US? One does. Ridiculous! Our point is that there is too rigid control over US technology. By 1990 anyway the USSR will have produced 10,000 robots - even if you don't sell them to us. So relations between COMECOM could be eventually established with the EEC.

Lunch was at the same Tchereymutshki restaurant where we went yesterday. Unwisely I sat down in the middle of the table in front of Bykov who was again rather withdrawn and gloomy, perhaps thinking of the speech he would deliver later. On my left was Harlech and on the right Mr Skorov, whose tolerant intelligence seemed untested by the Admiral sitting opposite. As usual lunch was very drawn out, and the room airless.

Walking back, I talked briefly with Skorov and Andrew Knight about the personality of Reagan about which I had spoken in public yesterday.

To begin with, in the afternoon, we had Bykov, who spoke primarily about the first use and first strike of nuclear weapons, rather as if he had meant to speak the previous day. This speech describing the dangers of a "global explosion and nuclear war" was repititious if clear. The first speech after lunch is anyway virtually impossible to listen to. Bykov is the only person to have mentioned "star wars". He hopes the West will consider seriously and completely the recent Helsinki proposals.

"Speaking as a British Socialist, I'd like to say," now said George Robertson, "that I don't think there's any chance of the US launching an attack on the USSR or entering willingly into a conflict." He thought there was "a danger of a mirror image". He complained that both the US and the USSR were supplying weapons to both Iraq and Iran.

C A Trifomenko then sailed into battle, and said he agreed with Robertson; the Middle East was dangerous - especially for the USSR, on whose frontiers the North East is: "The Europeans once tried to be broker and with the Venice Declaration they did something with which I agree. But they have now withdrawn from that and are now following an anti-European line, if I may so call it, it is not just an anti-Soviet line." He praised the Queen for her remarks made in Jordan. Then he said "the British should, as we do, support the principle of the open sea and should denounce the mining of Nicaragua."

Harlech Are the Straits of Hormuz the open seas? Couldn't the USSR agree to give support if we kept them open by force? Harlech also asked whether the USSR couldn't agree not to give weapons to any nation in "danger areas" as the West had tried to do in the Tripartite Declaration in 1950.

Menshikov, speaking in a rather arrogant, throw-away manner, occasionally very loudly, said "Any property which doesn't belong to national territory belongs to everyone, to civilisation. Talks on that matter could be explored. Didn't the British Government complain about the mining of waters in Nicaragua? As to whether we would use force to keep the Straits of Hormuz open, I couldn't say exactly what we would do. I am sure we would be against the blocking of it.

"As to the Middle East in general - it's obvious that Kissinger sought to expel the USSR from there. You can see that from Kissinger's memoirs. I don't blame him. I'd do the same in his place. But we don't think the Middle East can be solved without us. Now the Iranian revolution you know has some advantages for us - it enabled the expulsion of the US citizens who were sitting there watching some of our secret missile activities. No one would like to go back to the Shah's regime, except a few conservatives. Bad conservatives, I mean, for there are bad conservatives and good conservatives. I support real conservatism unlike the Labour Party which I do not support, being a communist. [these words were shouted]. How do you like a speech like that? Now, we must take into account the strong pro-Israeli lobby in the US. We have a problem there. We have to try and solve the Palestinian problem. Even the Saudi foreign minister (with whom we have no diplomatic relations, incidentally) said he was grateful to the USSR for 'accentuating' the Palestinian problem.

"Of course we have some dealings with the US. In the 'sixties, whenever I went to the United States, I used to get requests from Americans to help them get out of Vietnam. Mr Bykov used to get such requests too. I used to say that's not in the Soviet interest. That made them quite angry. In the end, we did help them, Mr Kissinger got his Nobel prize, and the US got out of Vietnam.

"About the danger of nuclear war, there is this idea sold to the US by well or ill-meaning emigrés from this country that by hotting up the arms race they may ruin us. Mr Casey - you know who he is - President of the Central Institute of Intelligence - said in Silicone Valley recently that the Soviet Union has stolen technology from the US. If that were so those who did it would deserve to get many Lenin prizes. But we have our own scientists. They can do what we need. This psychological and technological warfare against us is just silly. Sorry, I got onto the anti-American subject again, but it keeps cropping up.

Yakovlev: What do you think of the US proclaiming their interest in entire areas?

Chalfont: The US will always look on the Middle East and Central America as its areas. We must expect super powers to identify strategic areas and allow them to defend them.

Yakovlev Proclaiming half the world as 'areas of vital interest' leads to very sad thoughts. The Warsaw Pact countries could thus proclaim say Pánama, Gibraltar, the Suez Canal as well as the Hormuz Straits as 'areas of vital significance'.

We then had a fairly pointless discussion about international waterways in which I fear it was I that allowed Menshikov to get into the discussion again. He said: "We understand, I must say, de facto US interests in Central America. They know we also have de facto interests in supporting our allies including Cuba. This has nothing to do with international law.

Chalfont said "there are strategic interests and we seek to preserve them". He added "There is no such thing as a first strike capability. Only in science fiction is there such a thing. If either side is contemplating such, to knock out all enemies, they're insane". No first use of nuclear weapons? But in the event of war, everyone knows that Western deterrent strategy has been based on first use of nuclear weapons since 1945. So declarations about that are pointless. Elimination of all use of nuclear weapons? It is fantasy to suppose these weapons will not be used if war breaks out. Nuclear free zones? Geographical areas in which such weapons won't be used. I don't think it matters what is so declared. The GLC has declared London to be such, so has Milton Keynes. But in practice? No, let's get down to discuss practical, fairly low level proposals, such as proposed by Geoffrey Howe. Confidence building measures should begin on the central front. Let me clarify: the search for the abandonment of a first strike capacity will not lead to peace."

Mikhailov then repeated that the US is seeking world dominance, and had begun by declaring certain areas of the world as her vital interest. But our Russian borders are in close vicinity to a big powder keg: the Middle East. One might ask, has the security of Europe and Britain been consolidated by the possession of nuclear weapons? Of course not. Our anxieties were not born in the fevered minds of academics. Yesterday we heard there were many appeals for talks. Let's not kid ourselves, gentlemen; we must realise there's only one way to begin talks and that is to return to the status quo before the beginning of deployment of the new US missiles. I recall a meeting with Gene Rostow in Edinburgh who asked for a meeting with the USSR - but that won't happen (if it ever will) until those things go away: "Incidentally, I took part in the drafting of Helsinki's final act and was at the Madrid conference. So I disagree specially with Lord Chalfont when he said that the large scale measures are militarily essential.

Chalfont Would the USSR feel more secure if NATO said that it would not use nuclear weapons first? ("Order, order", said Mr Mordinov, to make a joke.)

Mikhailov Yes, if that were to be backed up by corresponding actions. (We never heard what these were). There might then be notification of major military activities etc.

Roper Britain was worried over the deployment of so many SS20s over and above Brezhnev's reckoning of what constituted stability in 1979.

Mordinov Excuse me for butting in at such a late stage but as an economic planner I want to put this question: the British side have tried to defend the US position vis à vis the USSR; but the answer I want is this: suppose we in the USSR said we were concerned to organise a crusade against capitalism?

The Admiral ended the British contribution to the meeting with a measured statement, his voice falling away in courteous sympathy with his "military colleague, the General". I'm struck by the mirror images which echo between us, between West and East ... (Harlech here studied a guidebook) ... We here speak as individuals ... of influence ... I'm sure we'll go away and use that influence and have indeed shown during the past few days ... My fellow Chairman, my final point is in the form of a question: Is it adequate that we should meet only for two days every year? We are all truly internationally minded ... We want to increase the general means of contact between us ..."

Mr Yakovlev then wound up at great length - "Let me give a half answer to your half question ... you have your ambassador here in Moscow. So before you made that proposal you probably took his counsel. I haven't consulted my colleagues. I agree something should be done towards deepening our contacts and hopefully to understand each other better ... I'd like to thank the whole delegation of Great Britain for being here. I particularly thank Sir Eberle ... For him and for me this is a first experience and whatever else it is, a first experience is romantic and interesting. During the war I was a lieutenant of marines. He is an admiral. I had to have some time to fight my inferiority complex. Over two days we have engaged in hostilities in words. God permitting we'll so engage till the end of our lives.

"There exists in the West an error in the strategic analysis. We have counted rifles etc on both sides. Both sides have spoken the language of birds. (?) From 1905 till 1945 we in the USSR lost 45 million in war. The inability of the West to see that entails strategic errors. That is also true of political mythology - the thesis of the "strategic military threat", invented by propagandists. We should be guided by realities, not by political war games. If we were to judge the position of Britain today by her strength in the Crimean War say or in 1919 you would laugh .. we don't think Britain is a military threat and we have no reason to attack Great Britain. These myths are ones for which Western Europe is paying dearly.

"Your philosopher Francis Bacon said we should keep our memory ready not only to recall actions by but also words. Late last century Senator Beveridge wrote 'Our fate has prescribed our policies. World trade shall be ours ... the American civilisation and her flag shall be established on coasts still in quagmire and ignorance ... they shall be made bright and beautiful.'

In 1945 Truman said: 'Whether we like it or not, our victory had given us the responsibility for leading the world.' Reagan has said: ' We have inherited the mission which is one of hope for all the world ... it is with us that guarantees of freedom of peace' ... we would not go to Reagan to guarantee our peace.

"To understand one's opponents one must put oneself into their shoes. The current policies of the US have been compared with an unguided missile. I want you to know my fears. The immigrants into the US divided their spoils as they entered. That can't go on. In this respect, we shall pay special attention to Soviet-Polish relations. We must use our influence to improve our bilateral relations. I thank you all for your sincere efforts to understand one another."

After this, the bus set off once again for the hotel, this time passing by the Intourist money exchange where we all raced to change our £s into roubles, now not so necessary, it seemed, as even during the prescribed "shopping" era tomorrow, English money or American Express cards can (must?) be used.

I have tried to telephone to London: the line was unavailable. On other occasions I could not get through to the exchange.

In the salon of my suite: birds in the trees outside, people walk by to work carrying shopping bags.

The drawing room has elaborate stucco mouldings on the ceiling, cloth representing artichokes on the walls, mahogany doors with window panels covered by tightly drawn lace curtains, a square table in the centre with glasses, a desk with large reading lights and a telephone, a chair there, three large pictures, one of flowers, two of apples against a curtain (much as my mother might have done them) two Russian landscapes, the piano, and a jar on top of it, two vents for air and a Turkey carpet on parquet. There is a balcony onto the street from the two french windows. My bedroon, separated by large mahogany doors, has two beds in heavy brown pine wood, a desk, two empire style chairs, another large turkey carpet and two small ones, parquet, a window on the street and a continuation of the mouldings. The cloth on the wall is green, on which are embroidered white and red roses, all fairly pale, surrounded by wreaths of leaves.

In the night, the telephone in the next room rang. Urgent conversation in what seemed to be Arabic. Palestinians talking to Beirut?

After a bath we went out to an exceptionally well organised dinner at the British Embassy. The Russian guests - all our interlocuters - were already in the courtyard and waited for us to go into the Embassy. Upstairs, into the same drawing room we met in yesterday and then onto the large balcony overlooking the river and Kremlin. Conversation with Skorov, who seemed very western and experienced, as being the Vice President of the US and Canada society he should be. He knows Anthony Sampson and asked to be remembered to him. (Anthony, when I asked about him on my return, said that David Astor had had a long correspondence with him). We discussed Khrushchev's memoirs which accepted as genuine. A "relation of Khrushchev" had told him that, in the memoirs, genuine stories often told by Khrushchev kept cropping up.

At dinner I was well placed between Yakovlev and Menshikov. The first told me how painful it had been for him to be Ambassador in Canada and to be separated from his children for so long. He did have his son and grand daughters for a time, separately, but it was not enough. Ian Sutherland, sitting on his other side, made a graceful speech before dinner. On my other side, Menshikov talked about his time in New York, his father's negative view of Dulles and his judgement that Dulles was the real maker of Ike's policy. We discussed the "new view" of Eisenhower, as expressed in recent books. He said he would have to read them. I reported to him as an illustration of the much easier manners of Allen Dulles, the latter's tale (told to me as to others, I assume) of how in Zurich in 1916 he had preferred to play tennis than meet a group of Russian exiles - among them Lenin, whom, therefore, he failed to meet. Menskikov said that he would hope to leave after lunch for the weekend and work there where he could telephone, but not be telephoned. After dinner I talked with the nuclear physicist and environmentalist and promised to send Menshikov some impressions of this Presidency. Menshikov said his father had written memoirs and parts had been published.

In the course of dinner I remembered Isaiah Berlin's injunction to ask the Russians about their support for terrorism which was such a contrast with normal marxist theory. Menshikov brushed this aside and talked about Reagan, the CIA, Nicaragua etc, and would not be shifted from this unpromising line.

The bus took us all home in a merry mood. Alexei had waited doggedly. He'd asked how long he should wait. I said till 10. It was eleven.

Friday May 18th

At breakfast repeated representations had worked and we were able to have two rather than three fried eggs. They were still very lightly fried, however. Sir F Bolton seemed really upset about this. We were to have a morning's sight seeing in the Kremlin and "shopping". There was actually a

lot of waiting around for the bus at first, the desperate Alexei trying to find some way of deciding on how to satisfy John Roper's desire for tickets for the theatre for the unplanned evening ahead before we took the train to Leningrad. I went into the store next to the hotel and looked at the fairly high prices for indifferent clothes. On the store's musak "Alexander's Rag Time Band" gave a curious illusion of unreality.

We left the bus before the National Hotel, waited at the Manège (since we passed it before I realised that this was the building where in 1962 Khrushchev had a fit about the exhibition of modern art) and walked in to the Kremlin through the Troitskaya Gate. We had a rendevous with everyone including Harlech and Eberle, who had been giving a press conference at the Embassy, at the Great Bell. (The Kremlin has been open to the public since the end of 1953; though not all of it).

We then decided to separate and meet again at noon, and follow our own devices in the Kremlin. This suggestion was made by me, largely to avoid hearing the fatuous comments of Sir F Bolton, and seeing the complacent features of Caroline Adams, while seeing the historic treasures in the Church of the Archangel, the Uspensky cathedral and elsewhere. However, there were other frustrations. The crowds were large, tourists from every country in the world. To get into the cathedral even, you needed tickets. To get tickets you had to queue. Certain buildings were closed at noon, an hour perilously close. Other buildings including the entire palace, were closed completely. The area behind the reredos in the churches was closed, so, though the coffins of forty tsars or princes were visible in the Church of the Archangel, that of Ivan the Terrible was not. The women who sold tickets or allowed one in (or not) were harsh and unsmiling. Still, I walked round, leaving the others, meeting Alun on going into the Archangel, Harlech and Eberle in the Uspensky, and Roper and Knight on failing to get into the palace itself. Alexei came up from time to time urging activity: "Lord Thomas, Please. Go in the Uspensky cathedral now. Here is a ticket". "No," I replied "I want to go to the Palace". "Please go to the Uspensky now. It will close in five minutes". I duly went. Extraordinary wall paintings and ikons, a fine seat, but curiously difficult to picture the historical importance of the place. Andrew, John Roper and I met, tried to go into the palace, failed, failed also to cross the road leading to the gardens by the walls, being restrained by a very sharp whistle from an officious policeman: one has to cross at the crossing or not at all. In the gardens some gardeners were digging in wallflowers into a little round circle. At noon we met again by the Bell and, while the others went off to the shop for official buying, "for presents for your family", I elected to walk back to where we would lunch. A few Russians were sitting about on wooden benches. Tourists pass and pass, Italians, French, Spaniards. The only English tourists were a British doctor and his wife who were part of "Bristol Doctors Against the Bomb". Earlier Admiral Eberle had dealt with them courteously.

After the team had gone, I was alone in Moscow for the first time. I sat in the gardens, the scent of lilac and the chestnut trees in flower giving the Kremlin almost a pastoral character. I watched black cars being driven up to the yellow palace of the Kremlin on the other side of the Senate Square into the yellow stucco palaces where I suppose all those famous "conversations with Stalin" occurred with Churchill, Djilas, Harriman etc. I identified the place where Lenin's statue (seated) now is with that where once there was a statue of Alexander II. I then set off on a walk around this part of Moscow. No one seemed in the slightest bit interested. No Russian so much as looked at me.

I went out of the Kremlin via the Troitskaya Gate (no others are open) observed the goose-stepping Red Army drilling in the gardens, and turned down along Alexander Gardens and the Kremlin wall to the point where, at the sacred flame to the unknown warrior, bridal couples were being brought to be photographed. There were also some jolly young pioneers (all girls). Then up into Red Square by the historical museum, past Lenin's tomb (presumably closed because there was no queue), where gardeners were hosing the flowers near the graves set into the Kremlin wall. I think I saw the gloomy head of Suslov over his grave. Then to St Basil's cathedral with its rag bag of old rooms, then down along the street which used to be called Varvarka to the House of the Boyar Romanov (as I believe it to be), now not a very interesting museum. The ghastly hotel Rossiya lay behind (or was this museum the old Znamenski monastry and is the house of Romanov gone?) I then walked up Per Ruibinc, joined the Ilinka by the site of the old Exchange, and then down to Novaya Place. I walked along this tree-laden avenue as far as the Lubianka, and had a good look at that huge brown building, the Rossiya Insurance Company before 1917, protected by a steel gate, with scaffolding up. I thought of Solhzenitsyn being there on the fifth floor, in another May, in 1945, hearing the 40 gun salute, seeing the fireworks, and so learning the war was at an end: "that victory was not for us." There was another newish, hideous grey building (archives ?) behind, on what was once the site of the old St Sophia's Church. Down the Teatralini Proyezd into Bolshoi Square past the old Trinity Church. In this square, very hot, I went into the Metropolitan Hotel, and made my way up to the dingy bar on the first floor (past a concierge who should have prevented me) where two sad, displaced figures sat alone and glowering, one interested, one reading last week's Morning Star. I had a beer for 90 pence. I gave £1 and received change of 1 franc. I crossed the square and turned up the Bolshaya Dmitraka Square, past the club of nobility again (now a workers' club, left down St George's Street past St George's church (deconsecrated) and then into Gorki Street. I turned up in the mews behind this, dirty, sludgy, but quite human with waiters sitting, smirking after their lunch. I soon reached Yuri Dulurov Square, where we were to lunch. The rest arrived just as I did.

We lunched in a private room of a well-known Armenian restaurant, the Aragvi. A good deal of sturgeon shashlik, vodka and short toasts and speeches. I sat between Martynov and Khesin. The former asked me to come to Russian for a time

next year for a two-week tour. "And you could go to Samarkand". "Or Kiev", I said. "Or Kiev", he readily agreed. Khesin asked me some questions about the British economy. Yakovlev made a short speech and so did Eberle (well).

After lunch, we said goodbye to the Russians except for Perenosov and Khesin, who were to accompany us to Leningrad. Bykov said "Give my love to the lady, and I mean it". I suppose he meant the Prime Minister. I also said goodbye to Alun and Harlech who, with Bolton, were returning to London. I decided to continue my walks alone, and undertook to meet them all at the ballet at 7.30 in the Senate Square in the Kremlin, and set off for the Tretyakov Gallery and the Spanish Embassy. I walked down Gorki Street, past the Red Square again, into the GUM stores, very pretty arcades, down into the huge square cleared of old houses by Khrushchev and Bulganin for Stalin in the 30's and walked across the river by the Moscow Bridge. I made for the British Embassy and reached the guards who allowed me in after looking hard at my passport. The Ambassador's secretary kindly got me a car and I drove in it to Tretyakov, where I spent about one hour looking at Russian XIX century paintings.

At 5.30 or so I set off for the Spanish Embassy, where I'd arranged to see the ambassador. In the area around the Tretyakov - the Zamoskvarétchye, once the Tartar Quarter - one has a good sense of late XIXth Russia - wooden houses, yellow and green stucco houses with courtyards behind almost everywhere. It looks as if the horse, much less the bourgeoisie, has only left the afternoon before. More chestnut and lilac. Up across the river past the Menège, once again and up the Znamenka to the pretty quarter (Arbatskaya) where the Spanish Ambassador has his residence, near a small theatre. One guard, very perfunctory, in comparison with the British one.

The ambassador, Xifre de Ocerín and his German wife, received me in a little library filled with English books. The ambassadress went out to walk their dog. Xifre was relaxing after the departure of the King, whose visit had dominated the life of the Embassy, of course, for a long time. We moved into a large salon looking over the square. Still Spanish atmostphere, clocks, tapestries. Xifre's house is not very large but very agreable. He described to me how much it meant to him to go from Franco's Spain to Oxford to learn English in 1950; what an opening up to humour, to understatement and to law-abidingness! He didn't say much of the King's visit to Moscow save to say that he had been staying in the Kremlin in severe functional rooms, in which, in a wardrobe, he found the 1951 Soviet Encyclopaedia. Xifre had looked up the name of Beria and found the article had two columns in it. As to the Russians: however agreable they are "there is always a line which one can never cross".

Xifre had several calls on the telephone from Germany, and soon I went off back to the centre of town leaving behind the ambassador to a quiet evening. Photographs of Alfonso XIII and Juan Carlos. His father was killed in the Carcel Modelo in the Civil War, he as a child had been in a Cheka and then the Mexican Emabassy, exchanged etc.

I reached the Troitskaya gate in good time and walked in to the Kremlin with Andrew Knight. He explained that he'd been lunching with the American ambassador, Hartmann. Hartmann had said that Ustinov and Gromyko were in fact in control and that all this war scare and apprehension derived from the complete uncertainty among the Russians as to what would happen in the future. They are all nervous: hence the facade of international anxiety to keep people quiet.

Our now depleted party of Eberle, Kaser, Knight and Roper* (and the secretary) to a charming version of what turned out as La Fille Mal Gardée in a huge theatre in the Kremlin which is sometimes used for meetings of the Supreme Soviet. We didn't know what we were seeing till the performance began. It was excused on the programme as being "Rosseuesque". Wonderful leaps by the male lead. Very funny too. My chief memory of this occasion, however, was the surge of the vast audience up the moving staircases in the interval to the top floor where, in a scene reminiscent of an airport, we were offered caviar and sweet champagne. Michael Kaser got upstairs first and made the arrangements. Vast multitudes at dome level. Mass culture.

After this, we went by bus to the hotel, packed, ate caviar and beer in my room and set off for the train to Leningrad from the "Square of the Three Stations". Chilly atmosphere with our hosts, Roper cross that we were not in The Red Star. Goodbye to Alexei. Accompanied by Khesin and Perenosov we set off at 23.59. I shared a sleeper with Michael Kaser. Some engaging drinking of vodka in Admiral Eberle's sleeper, in which we discussed the future of the Foreign Service and who might succeed Anthony Acland. I'm not sure why this came up because Anthony is still only about 53 or 54. Despite endless accounts in Solhzenitsyn and elsewhere about the brutal use of trains in Russia to convey prisoners to camps it is still impossible quite to put Anna Karenina and other train tales in Russian literature out of the mind when travelling thus in Russia.

Saturday May 19th

Awoken by the sound of artificial cockcrow and bird song on Moscow Radio's loudspeaker. Early morning on the Leningrad train. Out of the window, birch trees and pine alongside the straight line constructed by Nicholas I. Occasional wooden houses, one or two towns (Tosco). Kopina still elegant, before the iron works. Michael Kaser got up first and then he and I jointly looked at the landscape. Through Leningrad surburban stations - fishermen mend tools.

At 8.30 we arrived at Leningrad, and were met by Olga, in purple, a tall dark girl with large spectacles. It turned out later that her grandmother, half Russian, half Polish, had been of the minor nobility (so she said). She began in

---

* Chalfont, Harlech, Bolton and Robertson had left.

rather a maddening manner but, as the long day wore on, we all appreciated her intelligence, persistence and capacity to adapt herself to our - including my - extra demands. She arranged for porters to carry our suitcases and other luggage into a familiar Intourist bus, identical to the one we had had at Moscow. We clambered in, accompanied by the ubiquitous Perenosov and Khesin. Khesin is nice, good on the British economy and his real knowledge of English is perhaps better than Perenosov's but he is less fluent. A more straightforward personality and once or twice in the course of the day one could get through to him. Thus he told Andrew and myself that he was sorry Andropov had died and that things were much less clear now and therefore less easy for people such as he. But this of course could be disinformation.

Olga guided us through Leningrad which unfolded in a marvellous summer haze of great avenues, palaces, churches, ships, towers and domes. The surprise, apart from the beauty of the place, were the canals, though I remembered afterwards that Peter the Great had at first hoped to have his street "the sea there", as Venice has, but later decided to fill them in. John Roper wondered whther the continuing ineffiency of the Russians didn't mean that we should be less worried about the SS20s than we were. I wondered whether the contrary might not be true.

We progressedrather fast through these marvellous <u>prospekts</u> with Olga gabbling a bit - eg <u>that</u> "used to be the church of Saint So and So (? Catherine), it is now a swimming pool." But most of her reflections dwelt lovingly on the remote past and, although there were visible frequent pictures of Lenin, and though the centre of Leningrad was closed to traffic because of "National Pioneers Day", the dominant impression was Tsarist. This was most expressly symbolised by the colossal statue of Nicholas I. I found this statue of that narrow, cruel, bigot in a place of honour more shocking than anything else in Russia. Did the revolutions of 1917 occur on another planet. It seemed improbable actually that the events of either 1905 or 1917 could have been played out in those beautiful if melancholy surroundings.

We drove towards the Admiralty, down Nevsky Prospekt, past the Kazan cathedral and the Stroganov palace, with the spire of the Admiralty glittering in the sun. We turned left into Dvortzovaya Square, where the Alexander Column still stands and then past the green and white Winter Palace, now part of the Hermitage, a fine classical building where again it was difficult to imagine that any pre-revolutionary mob could assemble to rush up stairs - and even more difficult to imagine that a crowd headed by Father Gapon could be shot down there by the imperial artillery, as occurred in 1905. We swished across the Dvortzovi bridge and Micheal Kaser pointed our the whereabouts of the old British Embassy and church. On the right there was the low fortress of St Peter and St Paul, where so many people in the XIXth century served so many long sentences. We stopped for a few minutes on Stryelka to admire the view and then drove down on past many more attractive buildings, almost all XIXth century,

green and white, and bourgeois. Gathering speed, the bus took us at great pace to what must be one of the ugliest groups of buildings in the world, much less Leningrad, and dumped us at the Pribaltyskaia Hotel, which was built by the Swedes for Intourist in the hope, no doubt, of coping with Swedish and Finnish tourism. Vast arrays of buses stood outside, people debouched in hundreds, Germans, Americans, Finns, Swedes marched about in columns clutching cameras, plastic bags, unnecessary raincoats and inadequate guidebooks. The fact that this monstrosity faced the Baltic was no comfort since the sea looked a perfect uniform blue tedium, unruffled by waves, swimmers or ships.

We were checked in by Mr Perenosov, and shot up to the 13th floor where I had a suite in brown which did not seem to have been used before. The Admiral was next door. Mild agrophobia. I did not unpack but swiftly went down to have a coffee and a slice of salami at a bar with Andrew Knight. In a few minutes we were back in the bus and off again, to see first Pavlovsk and Pushkin (Tsarkoye Selo) before going to the Hermitage in the afternoon. This arrangement was undoubtedly the wrong way round but we did nevertheless have a very good, if long day. Olga explained that we were going to these two places rather than to Peterhof because the fountains were not playing at the latter, and one only saw the beauties of Peterhof if they were.

We made our way out of Leningrad which by now seemed more Petersburg than anything and which I imagine will one day return to that: Lenin is well and truly dethroned there, as much as Stalin. On the way, we passed St Nicholas's cathedral and stopped there 15 minutes. It is blue and white in a pretty little park with children playing. The church was open and in what was in fact the crypt (though at ground level), a service was under way, probably a funeral service since there were three bodies well dolled up, but open, in their coffins, in the Russian style. A fourth coffin was brought in as we were there. About a hundred people. The priest was most elaborately dressed and the singing and music were rich and well done. Mostly elderly women, but one soldier, in an open shirt. After finding out the time of the service the next day, we set off again. On the way out of the city we passed the site, according to my old map, of the racecourse where Vronsky presumably supposedly rode in the famous horse race in Anna Karenina. John Roper asked Olga whether it is true that the race course was once there and she replied "Yes, many years ago it was the race course but now it is a milk factory."

On the way out of the city and into the country: some harsh suburbs with huge buildings of the Stalin era, institutes of this and that, war memorials, the observatory and the road to the airport. Much of this was gloomy but it was a fine day. Trees were in leaf and we went along in good spirits. We passed the road to the airport. John Roper observed some effective low level radar, whose efficiency the admiral accepted. Once out in the country one could see signs of agricultural activity but this seemed imagined. There was a lot of activity in allotments on which there was usually

a hut, but even they looked primitive and very ill-weeded. Lots of dandelions on every side. John Roper and I carried on a literary conversation about the benefits which would have ensued to the world had, in 1812, Napoleon conquered Russia, and Britain the USA. I quoted Victor Hugo which just came to my mind on 1812.

About eleven we arrived, via the outskirts of "Pushkin" (clearly now a large town and will be bigger), at Pavlosk, the palace built for the emperor Paul by his mother Catherine. The architect was Cameron who apparently never learned a word of Russian, though he lived here forty years. After a glass of juice etc we moved in to the palace. It is a large yellow building in English palladian style, though bigger, with flying wings, as in Ronnie Tree's house in Barbados. We were required to put on overshoes as if in a mosque. Much of the palace had been destroyed in the war but it had been restored lovingly, if often not very finely (perhaps it was always rough and ready).

Olga guided us through these rooms well, showing the most interesting things and one could always supplement her by looking at the texts written in English. There were many other tourists but she manipulated her way around them - they were mostly Scandinavian. (It appears to be the view of everyone to whom I talk here, that, from the beginning of the Russian Revolution, palaces like this were well kept by the Bolsheviks but I cannot believe it). Anyway, Pavlovsk is <u>now</u> well kept, most rooms having ruched lace curtains in different colours, the rooms in the curved wings being specially pretty. Afterwards, Andrew and I walked round the outside on the lake side. Capability Brown there in spirit - actually Gonzaga. Avenues, lakes, temples of Grace and temples of Apollo.

We drove back to Pushkin or Tsarkoye Selo (village of the Tsar). The palace is a building of colossal size - 326 yards long, built in blue and white and gold. Very successful but on an extraordinary scale. Bigger than the Palace of Westminster? I should think so. Here we had a little time but we did see the Amber room (from which the Germans had robbed the amber), the silver room, the Palace Church, also a bit delapidated because of the war, and the Ball room - 52 feet x 140 feet which seemed bigger because of the mirrors. Windows open on both sides. The interior seemed less interesting than Pavlosk but that doubtless is because we saw so little of it. Andrew and I had some discussion before a picture depicting the battle of Poltava.

The colours of the main building were bright and the park pretty and full of children (Mr Bykov incidentally told me that the Russians had no population policy and hoped for more people, not less). Outside the curved stable buildings we bought beer and buns and ate these in the bus, much to the irritation of Perenosov who desired a good lunch: why else

should one go to the trouble of escorting difficult visitors such as us? I see his point, though there were many things which they had not seen before. I think the Russians never cease to be amazed at the interest we foreigners genuinely have in the details of what we were seeing: they are used only to show interest in things as a matter of party policy.

We drove back to Leningrad by the same way we'd come. Several members of the team dozed. We stopped in the Michael Square in front of the Michael Theatre for Olga to buy tickets for the ballet that night. Khesin pointed out the Church built on the spot where Alexander II had been killed - the Church of the Blood, he described it. Then we went on to the Hermitage, stopping at the director's door.

Here we were received by a certain Sergei, an engineer but an expert in the Scythian Gold. I left the letter I had to the Director with his secretary and above all the guide to Romanesque art which the Haskells had given me. I was very glad to hand over this valuable but weighty jewel.

We were shown the Scythian gold most expertly and interestingly. Afterwards, I left the others and spent one and a half hours in the Hermitage and Winter Palace and apart from picturing Antonov Ovseenko leading the Red Guards up the staircase, saw a great many paintings of distinction and interest. But though the "coverage" was complete, I did not think that the work on anyone was quite of the top level - except perhaps the Murillos and the Van Dycks perhaps - which were on the same scale as those exhibited in the recent London exhibition. Regrettably I did not have time for the Picassos and other modern paintings on the third floor.

Afterwards at 5.20 I walked round the outside of the building into the main square in front of the Palace where large cardboard portraits of the Politburo hung sombrely (and temporarily), having presided over the pioneers do in the morning. No one paid any attention to them. Indeed there was practically no one there. I rejoined the team and managed to persuade Olga to take us to the Smolny Convent - another blue and white Rastrelli building - and the Tauride Palace (Duma). We raced along and Olga managed as fluently with them as she had with Catherine the Great and with as great good humour. I did not think, however, it was quite what she enjoyed doing. Still, she agreed it would have been a mistake to omit from our itinerary the places where the Revolution began.

We returned to our hideous hotel for about forty-five minutes - an entire waste of time - I should have followed my better judgement and walked in Leningrad - but having travelled all night I had desired a bath. This was not to be, since I took the wrong key to the room, an event which led to very great confusion and having to go up and down the appalling lifts unnecessarily, as well as to having to visit the management and identify myself. Innumerable apologies. There was not time for the bath before we set off for the Michael Theatre where we arrived at 7.20.

We had no exact idea as to what we were to see. We thus went into the small, charming theatre (c. 1835) with interest. There are chairs, not seats. Full. It turned out to be a rock opera based on the idea of Orpheus and Euridice. An English-speaking Russian in front turned and explained the plot. The music and the singing was delivered by loud, electric means, while the participants danced badly and vulgarly. It was most disagreable and crude. The theatre was too hot as well. No one seemed to be enjoying it very much.

At the interval, John Roper, I and Andrew Knight determined not to go back - but in the event only Andrew and I remained outside. Khesin observed us in Michael Square but thought that he could not join us. Feeling a little that we were letting down the team, but that we were showing all how, on another occasion, they could do the same, Andrew and I walked to the Church of the Blood (under repair), hesitated at the Mikailovska Gardens and made our way towards a café which Andrew had seen on the corner of Nevsky Prospekt and Sadovaya. However, the rain which had been hovering for some time began to fall heavily while we were on the south side of the square. We sheltered for a time in a doorway. Before us in the pouring torrent, a man was working with a jack on his car (both sides) - under a dirty old raincoat such as had been seen in the scene of hell in the rock opera. In the rain Andrew confided to me that he believed that if he were running the Round Table we would all be much happier. Lack of leadership by Jim Eberle had upset him as it had me.

After a bit, the rain lifted and we got to the café where we had vodka. Andrew said how much he admired Grandma, who had told him about bran. We observed television with a character looking rather like Norman St John Stevas. We returned, well warmed up, Andrew insisting on paying, with dollars. On our return we met, it being only ten to ten, the hordes who had been to the Rock Opera returning to their buses and hotels. Since we had particularly not wished to be late this set us off at a good pace and we found the others in the bus. I do not think Perenosov was very pleased.

I remember that in May 1953 a lot of attention was paid in the US press to the fact that Beria had not gone to the Ballet. One paper stuffily said "surely Beria may not like Ballet".

Perenosov had his own back with a terrible dinner in the hotel. At a large "international" restaurant, we sat round an inhospitable table and waited the usual half hour to order and another half hour till the dishes came. Roper seemed in good spirits, Michael Kaser his usual equable self. Fortunately we were too late for pudding. Some discussion as to how Andrew could get to church in the morning. Perenosov, scenting power, was quite rough, Eberle apologetic.

After dinner, I went briefly to the first floor with John Roper and Caroline. Full of drunken Finnish tourists clumping about to loud music. A bent Charon, elderly, white-haired, checked to see one had one's key. Much the same as hell in the rock opera. I then went to bed without difficulty in the unused room.

Sunday May 20th

Awoke after a reasonable night, packed, breakfast in café and we were off by 9 in the bus, picking up John Roper, Andrew Knight and the secretary who had been to the mass in the orthodox cathedral of St Nicholas we'd seen yesterday. They stood solemn in coats exactly at the rendevous point - a reproach to Perenosov's expectations of their unpunctuality. They had got up at 6 and silently put their suitcases into Micheal Kaser's room. People taking dogs for a walk. Misty day. No sign of the Baltic from the hotel windows. John Roper says the mass was full, 500 people, including officers. Apparently the archbishop is on very good terms with the Communist Party. Olga saya his predecessor was poisoned.

Arrived at the airport and Olga and Perenosov carefully but fairly brusquely shepherded us through the hoi poloi, back and forward, money changed all right, and into the departure lounge. I was specially glad to be a special guest on this occasion. I stamped on the foot of an elderly German and apologised: "we understand" she replied patiently. The rest all went off at 11.25 for London, I at 11.53 for Helsinki. One final hiccup - crowds in the final departure lounge - and then I was onto the aircraft. Punctual. Some frantic Americans, scientists here for a conference, who had been held up in customs and lost their flight to Paris clapped as we took off - I expect they thought they'd never do it.

Finland

Arrived at 11.45, Sunday May 20th. I was first off and quickly walked through customs to find Alan and Hazel Brook Turner waiting. They drove me to their particularly agreable embassy. I celebrated this swift transition to the West with a telephone call to London and a gin and tonic in the garden.

I had four nights in Helsinki, the best part of five days. There was the pretty outlook through trees only just in leaf, the sparkle of the sea from Brundtspark and the clean efficiency of the Finns. The Brook Turners were extremely friendly, efficient and easy-going and he is particularly interested in Russia where he had served twice, once in the sixties, once as Minister until appointed here a year or so ago. He is a reflective sort of man who doesn't know Finnish - he tried hard - couldn't learn at fifty-eight. Normally I'd say this was against him but he plainly is very good at his job and his Russian experience evidently a great asset.

We had two lovely maritime trips, one round weekend islands on Sunday afternoon; one on Monday after Vanessa had arrived, in their new sailing boat. If he hasn't learned Finnish, Alan has learned to sail. Hazel, though heavy, is quite good at the tying on of ropes etc which is necessary as crew and she on both occasions had a little champagne on board. On Monday I lunched at the embassy with a deputy inspector of the British Counsul, and the local British Council man. On Tuesday I lunched with Max Jakobsen, my host who had invited me to talk about the philosphical and historical background to Mrs Thatcher's economic policy" in a seminar in a house which bears a distinct similarity to a Scottish country house (and was built as such!)

On Tuesday night an excellent dinner was given in our honour at which several very interesting people were (eg Suommien, the head of the conservative party; ex PM J Virolainen of the Centre party; Dr van Wright who was Wittgenstein's successor at Trinity and biographer; Harry Hekovi of the Bank of Finland who, had been leader of the Conservatives and ran in the recent London marathon; and Professor Pensonen who had been at the seminar. I talked to more or less everyone at one time or another except unfortunately Virolainen's powerful looking wife. Von Wright was the most engaging. There were also a couple from the embassy, Peter Harbord and an intelligent girl, Meta Ramsey.

On Wednesday we went off on a boat to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Wartila, the shipping company, and met the President, the Soviet ambassador, Mr Sobolev and his fat wife (he resembled K S Karol) and the head of the KGB Mr Maximov who had the short moustache of Reg Hibbert. Champagne, splendid lunch, music (too much), and not enough air but a pretty bizarre occasion and a very grand one.

In the evening we dined at the yacht club with bankers, a very long drawn out evening which I did not enjoy since I wanted to go to the Café Mante in the grand boulevard. Very agreable in art noveau style. In the afternoon I looked at the clean Lutheran cathedral.

To-day Vanessa was feeling sick from too much lobster. I lunched with V Suomminen and afterwards saw the parliament with him, the Finlandia Palace, the underground church and Sibeliuss monument in a fine park on the edge on a lake looking like a smaller version of the Winter Palace at Peking.

Specially nice was the embassy itself set in a park by the promontary overlooking the sea, once part of a park and very neatly laid out thus:

The windows were very nice too, thus:

Or something like it. We had a very nice room overlooking the garden.

Tranquil days somewhat disturbed by excessive social life and too much drink; by my desire to escape the dinner at the Yacht Club; and finally by a telephone call late at night which caused Alan to have to see a man who'd arrived at an embassy and "who spoke a language which only he knew". A Russian, who wasn't very important. Over breakfast Alan whispered - and implied he'd been handed back - à la Brimelow. Anxiety over being heard over the bugging. But presumably he'd not be killed. Or perhaps he was just being refused entry.

The journey in the Finlandia was I suppose the really high point of this. To commemorate a 150 year old company anywhere is fairly reasonable. The idea of all this champagne, lobster, duck, etc being sent out with so many hundred people into the Gulf of Finland with the President was extraordinary. The Chairman spoke fast and in English, and the speculation was that the President had danced not once but four times - a record.

We were both very much impressed by Alan Brook Turner as ambassador - efficient, intelligent, friendly and still with a speculative mind.