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Bob

cc to P.C.



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

15 February 1984

Visit by the Prime Minister to the Soviet Union

As you know, no Private Secretary from No. 10 was present at the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr. Chernenko in Moscow on 14 February. The usual record will therefore not be issued.

We propose to regard the draft record contained in Moscow telegram No. 217 as the authentic account of the meeting.

I enclose a copy of that telegram with this letter and am copying both to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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DESKBY 150630Z FEBRUARY

FM MOSCOW 142245Z FEB 84  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 217 OF 14 FEB

MIPT PERSONAL FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY AND P.S. TO PRIME MINISTER.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR CHERNENKO 14 FEBRUARY.

FOLLOWING IS DRAFT RECORD:

1. CHERNENKO, READING RAPIDLY FROM A PREPARED TEXT, EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TO THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE RESPECT WHICH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND SHE PERSONALLY HAD SHOWN BY COMING TO MOSCOW TO HONOUR MR ANDROPOV'S MEMORY. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MEETING AND ITS NECESSARY BREVITY MADE A SUBSTANTIAL DISCUSSION IMPOSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH IN PRINCIPLE THE SOVIET SIDE FAVOURED SUCH A DISCUSSION. NEVERTHELESS, HE COULD NOT FAIL TO REFER TO MATTERS OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO BOTH COUNTRIES, IE, THE DANGEROUS TURN OF EVENTS IN EUROPE AND IN THE WORLD GENERALLY. HE DID NOT PROPOSE TO GO INTO THE REASONS FOR THESE DEVELOPMENTS. THE SOVIET ASSESSMENT WAS WELL KNOWN. BUT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HIM TO SAY THAT THE SOVIET SIDE WAS READY TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PREVENT THE WORST HAPPENING, TO ARREST THE ARMS RACE, AND TO BRING ABOUT A MOVEMENT TOWARDS RELAXATION OF TENSION AND DETENTE. THE SOVIET UNION HAD REPEATEDLY CONFIRMED THIS READINESS BY A NUMBER OF PRACTICAL STEPS AND PROPOSALS. IT WAS SUFFICIENT TO RECALL, FOR EXAMPLE, THE OBLIGATION WHICH IT HAD UNILATERALLY ASSUMED NOT TO BE THE FIRST TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IF THE WESTERN NUCLEAR POWERS HAD RESPONDED IN KIND, AND IF NATO HAD REACTED APPROPRIATELY TO THE WARSAW PACT PROPOSALS FOR AN AGREEMENT NOT TO USE MILITARY FORCE AT ALL AGAINST EACH OTHER, THAT WOULD GREATLY HELP TO STRENGTHEN MUTUAL CONFIDENCE AND IMPROVE THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD.

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2. THE SOVIET PROPOSALS AND VARIOUS OTHERS REMAINED IN FORCE. THE SOVIET UNION WAS AWAITING A POSITIVE RESPONSE, INCLUDING FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM. THE SOVIET UNION, AS BEFORE, WISHED THE QUESTION OF MEDIUM-RANGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE AND OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS GENERALLY TO BE RESOLVED ON A CONSTRUCTIVE BASIS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES AND IN STRICT CONFORMITY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY AND EQUAL SECURITY. THEY WERE PREPARED FOR AGREEMENT ON THIS BASIS. BUT THEY COULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS WHICH WERE USED BY THE OTHER SIDE TO COVER UP ACTIONS DESIGNED TO BOOST THE ARMS RACE AND IN THE HOPE OF ACHIEVING MILITARY SUPERIORITY.

3. THE SOVIET UNION WAS IN FAVOUR OF 'ACTIVE AND SERIOUS POLITICAL DIALOGUE'. THEY NEEDED NO CONVINCING OF THE NEED FOR THIS. BUT THE DIALOGUE SHOULD BE BETWEEN EQUALS AND SHOULD BE CONDUCTED NOT FROM A 'POSITION OF STRENGTH'. ITS AIM SHOULD BE TO ARRIVE AT MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE UNDERSTANDINGS. IN RECENT DAYS THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP HAD ONCE AGAIN DECLARED QUITE CLEARLY THAT IT WAS IN FAVOUR OF RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES WITH DIFFERENT SOCIAL SYSTEMS DEVELOPING ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLE OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE. THE SOVIET UNION WISHED TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH ALL COUNTRIES AND ACTIVELY TO CO-OPERATE WITH THOSE GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS WHICH WERE READY HONESTLY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY TO WORK FOR PEACE.

4. AS REGARDS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN, THESE COULD BECOME MORE SUBSTANTIVE AND MEANINGFUL IN VARIOUS FIELDS INCLUDING THOSE OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. OVER SIXTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP DEMONSTRATED THAT CO-OPERATION AND NOT CONFRONTATION WAS IN THE INTERESTS OF BOTH THE BRITISH AND SOVIET PEOPLES.

5. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SHE WISHED ONCE AGAIN TO CONVEY

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CONDOLENCES TO THE PEOPLE OF THE SOVIET UNION ON THE GREAT SORROW OF THIS OCCASION. SHE WAS GLAD TO BE IN MOSCOW IN ORDER TO PAY TRIBUTE TO MR ANDROPOV. SHE WAS GRATEFUL TO MR CHERNENKO FOR THIS BRIEF INTERVIEW ON A DAY WHICH MUST HAVE BEEN PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY TAXING.

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6. SHE SHARED SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT THE VARIOUS DANGEROUS EVENTS IN THE WORLD AND BELIEVED THAT THE PEOPLES OF BOTH COUNTRIES FELT MUCH DISQUIET ON ACCOUNT OF THOSE EVENTS. IN RESPONSE TO THE POINTS RAISED BY MR CHERNENKO, SHE SAID IT WAS NECESSARY TO TACKLE THE PROBLEMS ON THREE FRONTS. FIRSTLY, SHE AGREED THAT ACTION MUST CONTINUE TO TRY TO BRING ABOUT AGREEMENT IN ALL THE DIFFERENT DISARMAMENT FORA, WHETHER ON CONVENTIONAL OR NUCLEAR WEAPONS, ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES IN STOCKHOLM, OR ON CHEMICAL WEAPONS. THESE WERE ALL SEPARATE AND HIGHLY TECHNICAL NEGOTIATIONS. IT WOULD PERHAPS BE HELPFUL IF SHE INDICATED THE BRITISH APPROACH. SHE AND MR CHERNENKO WERE WELL AWARE THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD DIFFERENT POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND BELIEFS. THE APPROACH IN DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE SUCH THAT EACH GROUP OF COUNTRIES SHOULD RETAIN ITS SELF-RESPECT AND PRIDE, SHOULD NEGOTIATE ON THE BASIS OF EQUALITY, AND SHOULD SEEK TO REDUCE ARMAMENTS IN A BALANCED WAY. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT EACH GROUP OF COUNTRIES SHOULD BE MADE CONFIDENT OF ITS OWN SECURITY AT EACH STAGE. SHE RECALLED THE UNDERTAKING OF THE NATO COUNTRIES IN THE BONN DECLARATION THAT NONE OF NATO'S WEAPONS OF ANY SORT WOULD EVER BE USED EXCEPT IN RESPONSE TO ATTACK.

7. IF DISARMAMENT WAS THE FIRST FRONT ON WHICH PROGRESS WAS NEEDED, THE SECOND - AND ONE WHICH WOULD MAKE DISARMAMENT AGREEMENTS MORE LIKELY - WAS THAT OF ENSURING A BETTER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S PROBLEMS, ATTITUDES, AND CONCERNS. SHE HAD READ MR CHERNENKO'S SPEECH AT A RECENT PLENUM. IT HAD BEEN OF GREAT INTEREST TO HER, BOTH AS A POLITICIAN AND A SCIENTIST. MR CHERNENKO WOULD OF COURSE NOT EXPECT HER TO AGREE WITH ITS EVERY WORD. BUT A COLLECTION OF HIS SPEECHES HAD RECENTLY BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THIS TOO SHOULD MAKE FOR BETTER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. DESPITE THE GREAT POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, A BROADER UNDERSTANDING AND PROSPECTS OF AGREEMENT IN DISARMAMENT TALKS WERE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE WHICH BOTH OF THEM REPRESENTED. THE MATTER WAS ONE OF URGENCY BECAUSE THE GENERATION OF THOSE SEATED AROUND THE TABLE HAD EXPERIENCED THE LAST WAR, WITH ITS VIVID, BITTER AND DESOLATE MEMORIES. THIS MADE THEM LEAST LIKELY TO WANT TO REPEAT THE EXPERIENCE. THEY HAD A CHANCE, PERHAPS EVEN THE LAST CHANCE, OF SECURING FUNDAMENTAL DISARMAMENT AGREEMENTS ENHANCING SECURITY.

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8. THE THIRD FRONT FOR DESIRED PROGRESS WAS THAT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, INCLUDING TRADE RELATIONS. THE UK CERTAINLY WANTED IMPROVED TRADE WITH THE SOVIET UNION. THEY ALSO WANTED MORE CONTACTS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, EITHER IN MOSCOW OR LONDON. PROGRESS ON ANY OF THESE FRONTS WOULD DOUBTLESS ASSIST PROGRESS IN THE OTHERS.

9. IN CONCLUSION THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SHE WISHED TO INFORM MR CHERNENKO THAT A SMALL GROUP OF JOURNALISTS, ALL OF THEM ACCREDITED IN MOSCOW, WOULD BE AWAITING HER ON HER RETURN TO THE EMBASSY. IN RESPONSE TO THEIR INEVITABLE QUESTIONS, SHE WOULD SAY THAT HER DISCUSSION WITH MR CHERNENKO HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL. IT SHOULD REMAIN SO, SINCE THIS WAS THE ONLY BASIS CONDUCTIVE TO IMPROVING TRUST. SHE WOULD ADD THAT THE MAIN SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION HAD BEEN EAST/WEST RELATIONS, BUT WOULD NOT ELABORATE FURTHER. SHE WOULD SAY ALSO THAT SHE HAD EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THIS FIRST MEETING WOULD LEAD TO OTHER CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. SHE WOULD OF COURSE OUTLINE HER OWN APPROACH TO THE FUTURE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. MR CHERNENKO SAID HE FOUND THIS PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE.

10. MR GROMYKO INTERJECTED THAT IN STOCKHOLM HE AND THE FOREIGN

SECRETARY HAD AGREED TO BE IN CONTACT ABOUT A MEETING AT THEIR LEVEL. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SHE THOUGHT THAT IT HAD ALSO BEEN

AGREED THAT MR KORNIENKO WOULD BE VISITING LONDON FIRST.

MR GROMYKO SAID THAT FOR SOME REASON THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD

REACTED TO MR KORNIENKO'S READINESS TO VISIT LONDON BY SAYING THAT HIS TRIP WAS UNTIMELY AND INAPPROPRIATE. THE SOVIET SIDE HAD THEREFORE POSTPONED IT INDEFINITELY. THE SECRETARY OF STATE

REMINDED MR GROMYKO THAT AT STOCKHOLM HE HAD AGREED TO GIVE IT CONSIDERATION. MR GROMYKO INDICATED THAT HE HAD NO MORE TO ADD.

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11. THE PRIME MINISTER, SUMMING UP, CALLED FOR MOVEMENT ON ALL

THREE FRONTS WHICH SHE HAD MENTIONED. ONE PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED WITH PUBLIC OPINION HAD BEEN THAT DISARMAMENT WAS BECOMING FAR TOO TECHNICAL. PEOPLE WANTED TO FEEL THAT THERE WAS A BASIS OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN BRITAIN AND USSR SO THAT, IF EVENTS IN THE WORLD TOOK A BAD TURN, THE TWO SIDES WOULD IMMEDIATELY MAKE CONTACT AND SEEK TO PREVENT CATASTROPHE.

12. MR CHERNENKO THANKED THE PRIME MINISTER FOR FINDING THE TIME

TO COME TO MOSCOW ON THE PRESENT SAD DAY FOR THE SOVIET UNION. THE SHORT DISCUSSION THEY HAD HAD MIGHT PROVE TO BE QUITE SIGNIFICANT IF WHAT BOTH SIDES APPEARED TO WANT ACTUALLY CAME ABOUT. HE FAVOURED MOVEMENT ON ALL FRONTS. THERE WAS MUCH UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR REAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES AND FOR CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. HE FELT THAT A FRESH NEW CONTRIBUTION COULD INDEED BE MADE.

13. THE MEETING LASTED SOME FORTY MINUTES.

14. ADVANCE COPY TO RESIDENT CLERK NO 10 DOWNING STREET.

SUTHERLAND

[ADVANCED AS REQUESTED]

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