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Prime Minister.



I am very conscious of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sentaste you will feel for this proposal. But the arguments at A

London SW1A 2AH

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I am very unhappy indeed. We should have consulted with U.S. before not keep contacts of meetings in the way of Jora.

seem to me powerful & on balance I would have thought it made sense for Lord Carrington to see Mr Gromyko. Are you prepared to form a view on the basis of this letter or would you prefer to discuss with Lord Carrington?

Anglo-Soviet Contacts

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The Prime Minister is aware of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's view that it is important for us not to cut ourselves off from all dealings with the Russians at Ministerial level or to allow our contacts with Moscow to become visibly inferior to those of our major allies. Were we to do so, our friends would be less inclined to give weight to our views on East/West relations, and our ability to promote British and wider Western interests would be diminished. Our close ties with the Reagan Administration, and our impending assumption of the Presidency of the Community, make it important to ensure that our judgement of the Soviet scene at this stage is well founded and seen to be well founded. The Russians will have noted the impact made on American thinking by the Prime Minister's visit to Washington (eg on TINF negotiations; the Mexico Summit; and Central America). The Americans, for their part, would no doubt prefer not to leave European contacts with the Russians entirely in German (Herr Genscher goes to Moscow on 4 April) and French hands.

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Lord Carrington therefore feels that the time is approaching when he should himself re-establish contact with Moscow and explore at first hand what substance there may be behind the conciliatory facade set up by Brezhnev in his speech to the CPSU Congress and his subsequent messages to Western leaders.

As the Prime Minister knows, Julian Bullard is going to Moscow on 25 March for talks with the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister. This is part of an established though erratic pattern of consultation between the two Foreign Ministries and provides the occasion for a review of points of current interest in international and bilateral relations; but it is not a substitute for access to the Russians at policy-making level. Lord Carrington believes that it would be useful to take the opportunity of Bullard's visit to indicate to the Russians that he would welcome a businesslike meeting with Mr Gromyko in the near future.

Formally it is Gromyko's turn to come to London on an official visit. This would however involve more protocol and publicity than Lord Carrington thinks appropriate in

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present circumstances, and his idea would be to go instead for a short working visit to Moscow. We think that the Russians would be prepared to accept a meeting on this basis, and that the programme could be so organised as to emphasise business and exlude frills.

There are reasons of substance why such a visit would be particularly useful before we take over the Presidency and while the US Administration is still in the process of formulating its policies towards the Soviet Union. These factors could also be used in public to explain the limited but important purpose of the visit and to rebut any criticism that we were changing the policies which we and our allies have followed since the invasion of Afghanistan.

*For me
GGH*

(G G H Walden)

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16 APR 1981



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17 March 1981

Anglo/Soviet Contacts

As I mentioned to you on the telephone, the Prime Minister would prefer to discuss the proposal in your letter to me of 16 March with Lord Carrington before taking a decision as to whether or not Mr. Bullard should say anything to the Soviet authorities during his visit to Moscow next week.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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