



Prime Minister
Do you wish to send the
message?
A.F.C. 17/12

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 December 1981

Dear John

President Brezhnev's 75th Birthday

President Brezhnev will be 75 on 19 December. We have been considering whether the Prime Minister should be advised to send a brief formal message of congratulation, as Mr Callaghan did for Brezhnev's 70th birthday.

The international climate is, of course, very different from what it was in 1976, not least because of the continuing presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. If the Prime Minister sends a message she will be participating, albeit in a minor way, in the fêting of the Head of the state whose failure to exercise restraint in international affairs has been responsible for the present strain in East-West relations.

Against this, Brezhnev has recently been received by Chancellor Schmidt and we, together with other Western governments have recognised the value of that meeting. The Federal German President and Chancellor have decided to send messages of congratulation. And although President Mitterrand will not do so, a message to be delivered in Moscow this week addressed to the Soviet leadership will contain an allusion to the birthday and will express suitable sentiments. Our other partners in the Ten have yet to take decisions. President Reagan has been advised to send a short message but we do not yet know whether he will do so.

On balance, and assuming that there is no Soviet intervention in Poland in the next 48 hours, Lord Carrington believes that it would be churlish not to send a short formal message. I enclose a draft.

Lord Carrington sees no reason to advise that HM The Queen send a message, even though Brezhnev is Head of State.

AJ Hamilton?

I really don't.

Young ones

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

think we should send a message.

DRAFT MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BREZHNEV FROM THE PRIME
MINISTER

I offer my congratulations on the occasion of
your 75th birthday.

Servis Honor

CONFIDENTIAL

JWP



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 December 1981

PRESIDENT BREZHNEV'S 75TH BIRTHDAY

Following further discussion of your letter of 17 December we agreed that, in the light of the developing international situation, a message from the Prime Minister on the occasion of Brezhnev's 75th birthday would be inappropriate.

It may be helpful to you to know that the Prime Minister was inclined to think that the situation in Afghanistan was itself sufficient reason not to send a message.

A. J. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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