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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15 October 1979

*L.S. Punt 15/10*  
Dear Michael,

Call on the Prime Minister by the Soviet Ambassador

I enclose a brief on President Brezhnev's recent speech in Berlin for the Prime Minister when she sees the Soviet Ambassador at 4pm today.

This sets out a number of questions of clarification which the Prime Minister may wish to ask. As the Alliance is still considering the details of what President Brezhnev said and as there is general agreement that any reaction should be made by the Alliance as a whole in the appropriate fora, the questions we suggest are mainly factual. In particular we have avoided questions of substance on the reduction of medium range nuclear weapons and SALT III. These are still very much live issues in the Alliance and it may suit our purpose not to clarify the Soviet position on them. On these points, and indeed on the speech as a whole, we judge it right to avoid appearing to be too interested in what President Brezhnev had to say.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Brian Norbury (MOD) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*Tom ever*  
*GGH*

(G G H Walden)

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PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR:  
BREZHNEV'S BERLIN SPEECH

POINTS TO MAKE

1. The NATO Alliance is currently studying the Brezhnev speech. Any response will be made by the Alliance as a whole in the appropriate fora.

TNF

[or "Western"]

2. What is meant by "the European/part of the Soviet Union"? Why did President Brezhnev not mention medium range systems east of the Urals which can be targeted on Western Europe?

3. Why did President Brezhnev not discuss the increasing Soviet medium range nuclear capabilities (i.e. SS 20 has 3 warheads, is mobile and is much more accurate than earlier systems)?

4. What is meant by the section in the speech where President Brezhnev says, "It is clear that [if TNF modernisation goes ahead] the position of the FRG itself would considerably worsen"? How does this threatening language relate to the rest of the message??

Force reductions

5. How does the reduction of 20 thousand troops and a thousand tanks relate to the MBFR negotiations and in particular to the resolution of the data question?

6. What does "up to 20,000 Soviet servicemen" mean?

7. Where will the troops and tanks be withdrawn to? Will the troops be in formed units, and what kind of tanks will be withdrawn?

8. Will the post-reduction level of troops be taken as a ceiling for the future?



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Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

9. President Brezhnev stated that a European conference on military detente is "a very pressing task". How would this relate to the Madrid CSCE Review Conference next year at which CBMs are bound to be discussed?

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CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR

BACKGROUND

1. A copy of the speech is attached.
2. Mr Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union had decided to reduce unilaterally the number of Soviet troops in Central Europe. Up to "20,000 Soviet servicemen and 1,000 tanks" and a certain amount of other military hardware would be withdrawn from the GDR in the next 12 months.
3. On TNF, Brezhnev said "We are prepared to reduce the number of medium range nuclear weapons deployed in Western areas of the Soviet Union as compared to the present level but, of course, only if no additional medium range nuclear weapons are deployed in Western Europe". Later in the speech Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union agreed to discuss possibilities of limiting not only ICBMs but also other types of armaments in the framework of SALT III.
4. The speech was cleverly timed both to complicate NATO's decisions on TNF modernisation and to present a peaceful Soviet image at a crucial stage of the SALT II ratification debate in the United States. The Russians clearly hope to strengthen opposition to the basing of US-owned TNF in the Netherlands, Belgium, the FRG, Italy and the UK by offering the prospect of arms control negotiations as an alternative. The proposed troop and tank reductions seem intended to counter Western anxiety about the Soviet military build-up and to strengthen the impression that TNF modernisation will be contrary to the spirit of detente.
4. Mr Brezhnev claimed that the number of long range theatre missiles and aircraft stationed in the Western part of the Soviet Union had been reduced in the last 10 years. But Soviet capabilities in terms of accuracy, mobility, penetration and target coverage have increased substantially. Moreover, a number of Soviet missiles is now targeted on Western Europe from points east of the Urals. As Soviet systems have been modernised and up-graded, Western



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systems have become increasingly obsolescent and vulnerable.

5. The Soviet troop reductions are not numerically significant. We are convinced that the Warsaw Pact has a superiority of about 160,000 ground troops in the MBFR area. (The discrepancy between the Western assessment of Warsaw Pact force levels in the area and the levels admitted by the Warsaw Pact is 155,000.)

6. There are 7,670 Soviet tanks in East Germany, 9,840 Soviet tanks in the MBFR reduction zone and 16,800 Warsaw Pact tanks in that zone. NATO has 6,500 tanks in that zone.

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