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Prime Minister
You may be interested to see

From the Private Secretary

5 August 1987 *thin.*

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MEETING WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR

The Soviet Ambassador came to see me today at his own request. He raised a number of subjects.

Arms Control

The Ambassador said that Mr. Shevardnadze would be making a speech on arms control in Geneva tomorrow. Although he did not have the final text, he did know what Shevardnadze's main points would be. On INF, he would dismiss speculation that the Soviet Union might be ready for a compromise over the Pershing IAs. It was the firm Soviet view that the double zero option must be exactly that. If the West Germans were allowed to keep the Pershing IAs, then the GDR would want to retain a similar number of equivalent Soviet missiles. I set out our view on standard terms. The Ambassador said that the matter would no doubt be discussed between Shevardnadze and Shultz in September.

On chemical weapons, Shevardnadze would express Soviet support for the United Kingdom's ideas including our proposals on inspection and the creation of an international inspectorate. He would also deal with nuclear testing, holding out the prospect of agreement on a step by step approach and suggesting a system of permanent controls on recognised test sites.

The Gulf

The Ambassador said that he had received a report of Vorontsov's visit to Teheran. Vorontsov had told the Iranians that they should calm down their emotional approach and avoid any provocation. If tension could be reduced, it might make it possible for the United States to decrease the number of its warships in the Gulf. Vorontsov's assessment was that, on balance, the Iranians were unlikely to launch ~~against Gulf states~~ *(an attack)* or to provoke aggression. But the situation was unpredictable. I said that the Prime Minister would shortly be sending a message to Mr. Gorbachev setting out her views.

JK

The Ambassador added that it might be helpful in calming the situation if President Reagan were to make a public statement of the United States' position confirming that the United States had no intention of mounting an attack on Iran. The Iranians tended to believe reports in the press of American preparations to launch assaults against Iranian installations. I said that I hoped that no-one was feeding Iranian delusions about this.

The Ambassador added that he would be meeting the Saudi Chargé d'Affaires later today to enquire about the fate of Soviet pilgrims in Mecca. The Soviet authorities had no news of them.

Afghanistan

The Ambassador said that he wished to say an informal word about the Soviet position on Afghanistan. He did not want to go over all the history. Many in the Soviet Union had been opposed to sending in troops. Gorbachev himself tended to blame those who had taken the decision. His clear objective now was to settle the issue and withdraw Soviet forces. But he needed to be sure that Soviet withdrawal would not result in further bloodshed against those who had worked with the Soviet Union. There would also have to be guarantees that, following withdrawal, there would not be incursions into Afghanistan by right-wing extremist groups from Pakistan. The Soviet view was that the situation would be helped by excluding both left and right wing extremists.

provided → The Ambassador continued that a number of interesting proposals had been made. For instance the Afghan Government could be enlarged to include representatives of exile groups. The Prime Minister himself might be drawn from among them. The new constitution did not envisage single party government but for a multiparty system. There had been contacts with the former King in Italy, to establish whether he could contribute to reconciliation. The King had said that he would only be prepared to play a part with the agreement of all the parties concerned. A proposal would shortly be made to allow opposition forces who were in de facto control of certain parts of the country to exercise legal authority and the functions of local administration there. All these were intended as steps towards Gorbachev's aim of being able to withdraw troops and leave a neutral and non-aligned Afghanistan.

Unfortunately there were some negative factors. For instance it was quite clear that the United Kingdom had been supplying Blowpipe to the Afghan resistance. This was admitted by sources in Pakistan. There seemed to be those in the United Kingdom who were opposed to any peaceful solution. It was also suggested in some quarters that the Soviet leaders were under such pressure from public opinion at home that they would soon have no option but to withdraw Soviet troops. It was true that there was some criticism in the Soviet Union of policy on Afghanistan. People wrote to Gorbachev and pointed out that the Nicaraguans were able to defend themselves

without Soviet troops. Why could Afghanistan not do so too? But there was no question of a precipitate withdrawal without certain basic conditions being satisfied.

I said that the Ambassador's account had a number of interesting points. But it overlooked some key facts, such as that the withdrawal of Soviet troops was necessary to establish the conditions in which there could be a peaceful settlement. Our impression of the new Constitution was that it attempted to impose the nature of the government which would follow a Soviet withdrawal. That was not acceptable. It was for the Afghans themselves to determine freely the sort of government they wanted. There could be guarantees about the international status and role of Afghanistan but not about its internal system of government. It was certainly not the case that the United Kingdom was opposed to a peaceful settlement. If the Soviet Union was really willing to withdraw, they would find us ready to help them achieve that. But had they yet faced up to the basic decisions? The Prime Minister had drawn some encouragement from her talk with Mr. Gorbachev on this issue; and there appeared to have been some evolution in the Soviet position since then, which was welcome. But there was still a way to go.

The Ambassador said that he would like to remain in touch on this issue. You may want to arm me with some further points to make.

Bilateral

There were a number of miscellaneous bilateral points.

I conveyed the Prime Minister's thanks for the paper on Soviet economic reforms and said that she would like to meet Abangyan in the autumn. I also thanked him for the film of the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union.

The Ambassador said that he had seen the Prime Minister's message to Mr. Gorbachev following her visit to Washington and thought it a good one. He wished to thank the Prime Minister for having received the delegation of Soviet schoolteachers.

I am copying this letter to Ian Andrews (Ministry of Defence) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.