

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

Dirk Clark

13/1



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 January 1984

1 Leave the decision
to the Foreign Secretary's
judgment etc.

Dear Sir,

Meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister

You recorded in your letter of 11 January to Roger Bone that the Prime Minister would prefer Sir Geoffrey to meet Mr Gromyko in London. Sir Geoffrey would like to have a word with the Prime Minister about this before his meeting with Mr Gromyko in Stockholm on 19 January. The Department have produced the following summary of the factors affecting the choice of venue, which you may find helpful as background. I am submitting it in parallel to the Foreign Secretary.

Factors affecting a meeting in London:

- (a) the last full meeting between the British and Soviet Foreign Minister was held in 1977 in Moscow. (Lord Carrington visited Moscow in 1982 for a day, but representing the Presidency of the Ten.) It would, in terms of strict protocol, be the Russians' turn to come to London;
- (b) there would be no implication that we were running after the Russians;
- (c) the meeting would be on our home ground, and thus more under our control.

As against this:

- (d) the timing of the next move would be left very much in Gromyko's hands, and the Russians might seek to extract a price or impose conditions which would be difficult to fulfil;
- (e) Gromyko would want an assurance that he would be received by the Prime Minister (in 1973 Sir A Douglas-Home called on President Podgorny and Deputy Prime Minister Lesechko. In 1977 Dr Owen called on Mr Brezhnev);

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- (f) the first bilateral visit since 1977 will attract wide public attention, including human rights activists, who will certainly stage demonstrations. The Government would be obliged to provide hospitality and entertainment against this background.

Factors affecting a meeting in Moscow:

- (a) there may be a slight impression of beating a path to the Russians' door (like Mr Callaghan and Mr Steel);
- (b) Gromyko would have to be induced to extend an invitation. _____

As against this:

- (c) Gromyko might more readily extend an invitation for a working visit to Moscow than face the known difficulties of a visit to London;
- (d) it would allow a wider range of contacts among senior Russians, and a chance to identify some of these as possible future visitors to the UK;
- (e) it might offer an opportunity of meeting Andropov;
- (f) the process of bilateral visits would have been re-started in a relatively uncontentious manner.

Yours ever,

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

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FILE 54



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 January, 1984

Meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 13 January setting out the factors affecting a meeting in London or Moscow between Sir Geoffrey Howe and the Soviet Foreign Minister.

The Prime Minister has commented that she leaves the decision as to where the meeting should take place to the Foreign Secretary's judgement.

RT DOLES

B. Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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