



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

A.F.C. 16/4

16 April 1984

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Ministerial Contacts with the Soviet Union

Following Ministerial discussion earlier this year of the future conduct of our policy on East/West relations and our bilateral relations with the Soviet Union, we have been re-examining some aspects of our post-Afghanistan guidelines. As regards social and business contacts between Ministers and the Russians in London, the Foreign Secretary hopes that colleagues will observe the following modified guidelines (this supersedes Paul Lever's letter to Michael Alexander of 8 January 1980, copied to Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet):

- (i) purely social contacts should continue to be avoided, but where in Ministers' views such contacts serve British interests, no obstacles should be placed in their way. In practice this means that Ministers may accept invitations to meals or receptions from the Soviet Embassy provided the occasion could reasonably, and if necessary publicly, be described as an occasion on which serious business was discussed or which was directly concerned with important British commercial or other interests. The same criteria would apply to any invitation to a senior Soviet official to a British function. Except in doubtful cases, the Foreign Secretary hopes that colleagues will take their own decisions, but would be grateful if the FCO could invariably be informed of any invitation received or extended and of the response to it;
- (ii) Soviet National Day (beginning of November): we will seek to equate the level of senior representation in London to that at our Queen's Birthday Party in Moscow, judged against the background of the prevailing state of Anglo/Soviet relations. Similar considerations would apply to other Soviet anniversaries celebrated in London (except Soviet Armed Forces Day - see below). In all such cases the Foreign Secretary would be grateful if colleagues would consult the FCO before any response is given.

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- (iii) Soviet Armed Forces Day: so long as the current level of Soviet military activity in Afghanistan is maintained, the Foreign Secretary believes that our practice should remain in line with that of our major allies, ie token representation only (we are also in contact separately with the MOD about other military contacts in London);
- (iv) Soviet Cultural Events in London: on the rare occasions when these occur, the Foreign Secretary would be content that Ministers with responsibilities relating to the Arts should attend if they see advantage in doing so. However, for the present, the general rule should be that such events should be avoided. The Foreign Secretary would be grateful if the FCO could be notified of all invitations received. A case in point is a number of invitations received by Ministers from a British impresario, Mr Brightman, to a season of ballet given by the Moscow Classical Ballet in May. Although this is an entirely British commercially sponsored event, it will be seen as a Soviet manifestation, and the Foreign Secretary therefore believes that the above criteria should apply.

As regards Ministerial visits to the Soviet Union, there is already a practice by which the concurrence of the Foreign Secretary is sought before any commitment is entered into. We should be grateful to be told as early as possible of any invitations which are extended, by the Soviet Ambassador or by visiting Soviet Ministers.

We shall be sending instructions to our Posts abroad setting out guidelines for contacts with Soviet Embassies and representatives in third countries.

I am copying this letter to Private Secretaries to all Ministers in charge of Departments with the request that they circulate it as necessary.

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(R B Bone)
 Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
 10 Downing Street



16 APR 1984

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cc: S. P. Crook



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 April, 1984

UK/Soviet Relations and Ministerial
Contacts with the Soviet Union

The Prime Minister saw over the Easter weekend your letter of 16 April to John Coles about UK/Soviet relations, together with your letter of the same date about Ministerial contacts with the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister has noted with approval what is proposed.

DAVID BARCLAY

R. B. Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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