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Prime Minister.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

To be aware.

London SW1A 2AH

AR 1/5.

10 May 1984

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Dear John,

Contacts with the Soviet Union

In your letter of 10 April you recorded a brief discussion between Ministers about our forward programme of contacts with the Soviet Union. It might be helpful if I set out our current plans.

At the Ministerial level, in addition to the Foreign Secretary's meeting with Gromyko in Stockholm in January and the Prime Minister's with Mr Chernenko in Moscow in February, we have recently had a two-day visit by Mr Kornienko, the Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister, for discussions in London. The next Ministerial event on the political calendar will be Sir Geoffrey Howe's visit to Moscow for talks with Mr Gromyko on 2/3 July. We have also proposed to the Russians that there should be a series of meetings at senior official level to discuss a number of regional and other questions.

On the technical side, Mr Channon will be visiting Moscow at the end of May for the annual meeting of the Joint Anglo/Soviet Economic Commission chaired on the Soviet side by Mr Brezhnev. Mr Walker may also be visiting the Soviet Union in the autumn. In addition, Sir Campbell Fraser, President of the CBI, visited Moscow in April and LORD Jellicoe, President of the British Overseas Trade Board, will be visiting Moscow in November for talks with a number of Soviet Ministers. Mr Bratchenko, the Soviet Minister for Coal, has been invited to visit the UK and we also hope that ICI's plan to invite Deputy Prime Minister Nuriev (who has general responsibility for the agricultural sector) will bear fruit. Deputy Prime Minister Nuriev would call on a number of senior British Ministers.

The range of Anglo/Soviet contacts set out above is considerably wider than anything that has taken place since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. It is as well developed as anything our major allies are contemplating, and a good deal more so than for some of them.

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It is against this background that we have looked at the question of inviting a senior member of the Politburo to visit the UK later in the year. Sir Geoffrey Howe will in any case invite Mr Gromyko to pay a return visit to the UK but that visit would probably take place next spring or summer. As to other possible names, Gorbachev visited Canada in 1983 as Head of a Parliamentary Delegation. He has now been elected to be Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of one of the Chambers of the Supreme Soviet. It might therefore be best to extend an invitation on a Parliamentary basis, and we are looking at how this might best be done, perhaps as part of the follow-up to the Foreign Secretary's visit to Moscow in July. Others from the new generation of Soviet leaders with whom it would be useful to have contact are Romanov, Vorotnikov and Aliev, all full members of the Politburo. Romanov would be the most difficult to invite since he holds no Government post and it would be difficult to find a British counterpart. Although Vorotnikov has a Government hat as Prime Minister of the Russian Federated Republic, the most important of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union, it would again be difficult to find a British equivalent. Aliev, as a First Deputy Prime Minister of the USSR with economic responsibilities, would perhaps be more easily matched to a Minister in our own administration, although we could not exclude the possibility that the Russians would accept the invitation in principle but in place of Aliev seek to send Arkhipov, another First Deputy Prime Minister who normally deals with trade with capitalist countries.

On the East European side, Sir Geoffrey Howe hopes to visit Romania and Bulgaria during the autumn, possibly in September. We have a regular programme of annual political consultations at Deputy Foreign Minister level with the East Europeans: the Romanians will be here in May and the Czechoslovaks in the autumn. In 1985 we shall invite the Hungarian Foreign Minister to Britain, and Mr Lazar already has an invitation from the Prime Minister. The East Europeans do not, of course, carry the same weight as the Russians. But, as the Prime Minister's visit to Budapest demonstrated, they are sometimes of interest in their own right, they provide an indirect channel to Moscow and they can have valuable things to say about Soviet policy and concerns. We shall be considering further the right sequence for the Russians and will keep you posted.

Yours ever,

Le. Appleyard

(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 May, 1984

Contacts with the Soviet Union

Thank you for your letter of 10 May, the contents of which the Prime Minister has noted.

I take it that you will be in touch with us again when you are in a position to recommend whether and how an invitation to visit this country might be extended to Mr. Gorbachev or to other full members of the Politburo.

A. J. COLES

Len Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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