



PM/85/24

PRIME MINISTERVE Day: Representation in Moscow

1. We have received informal soundings from the Russians about our likely response should they (as happened in 1975) issue a formal invitation to us to be officially represented as one of their three Western wartime allies at the commemorative celebrations which are being organised in Moscow on 8/9 May. They have also enquired about our willingness to exchange messages in connection with the anniversary.

2. The question has been discussed by FCO and MOD officials in the light of our own decision to hold a commemorative service on 8 May and invite accredited Ambassadors and High Commissioners in London, including the Soviet Ambassador. Account has also been taken of the 1975 precedent when Lord Mountbatten and a delegation of four represented us officially in Moscow and of the political and national importance which the Russians themselves, and many people in this country, attach to their sacrifices and role in the last war. We need to weigh against that the deterioration in East/West relations including the invasion and continued occupation of Afghanistan and the current Soviet propaganda campaign against alleged revanchist and militarist tendencies in the FRG.

3. We have sounded out the French and Americans about the possibility of being officially represented in Moscow by our Ambassadors accompanied by one or two wartime figures

/(retired officers)

010
 Prime Minister
 Agree?
 COP
 CPC ①



(retired officers) who had connections with the Eastern front. The French expressed strong reservations about any military representation on the grounds that there is likely to be a major military parade in Moscow. Attendance at that by a senior Western military figure would be at odds with the agreed Western policy of not attending Soviet parades at a senior diplomatic or military level since the invasion of Afghanistan. The Germans have made the same point vigorously. The Americans are generally in agreement with the line we propose to take with the Russians. A decision on whether in addition to their Ambassador, a wartime figure should also represent them, is being held for the time being.

4. I have discussed this with the Defence Secretary and would propose that during the course of this week we should inform the Soviet Charge d'Affaires in London that:

- (a) we agree in principle to an exchange of messages;
- (b) our approach to the 40th Anniversary is to emphasise the themes of reconstruction, reconciliation and peace;
- (c) if we were formally invited we would be prepared to be represented officially at the commemorations in Moscow, subject to confirmation from the Soviet side that their commemorations were being held in the same spirit as our own and were suitable;
- (d) we would appreciate an early response to our request for more detailed information about the events in Moscow.

5. I see advantage in an exchange of messages as that would enable us to put on public record before the events in Moscow

/our view



of the purpose of the commemoration. As far as the initial contact is concerned, we would ask the Russians to indicate what level they had in mind. On the basis of the 1975 precedent this should be between you and Mr Gorbachev. We would not, at this stage, give the Russians any indication of the possible level of our representation in Moscow.

6. It is possible that the Soviet response will turn out to be completely unsatisfactory and an unacceptable basis for official representation in Moscow. I think that is unlikely. The likelihood is that we will receive a reply which, while still indicating points of difference between our and the Soviet approaches to the Anniversary, would nevertheless enable us, the Americans and French to attend. If the Russians did confirm that they intended to hold a military parade we might have to make it clear to them that our representatives would not attend for that particular event although they would participate in the others, eg wreath-laying, receptions, etc.

It will be difficult if they do have a military parade for that

7. I should be grateful to know that you are content that we should act as proposed in paragraph 5.

8. I am sending copies of this minute to the Defence Secretary and Sir Robert Armstrong.

GEOFFREY HOWE

2 April, 1985

CONFIDENTIAL



JR(47)
bc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 April 1985

VE DAY: REPRESENTATION IN MOSCOW

The Prime Minister has considered the Foreign Secretary's minute of 2 April about the response we should make to a Russian invitation to be represented at VE Day celebrations in Moscow on 8/9 May.

The Prime Minister agrees with the recommendations in paragraphs 4 and 5. As regards what we should say if the Russians confirmed that they intended to hold a military parade, the Prime Minister has commented that it would be difficult in those circumstances for us to be represented at all. But we should consider this only when we know their intentions.

I am sending copies of this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

(C. D. POWELL)

L.V. Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.