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FM MOSCOW

TO DESKBY 152130Z FCO

TELNO 1504

OF 151930Z DECEMBER 86

AND TO DESKBY 152130Z WASHINGTON

INFO IMMEDIATE BONN, PARIS, UKDEL NATO

YOUR TELS NOS 994 AND 995: PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE:
CALL ON GORBACHEV

SUMMARY

1. CALL ON GORBACHEV ON 15 DECEMBER TO CONVEY PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE. STRONG AND AT TIMES ANGRY CRITICISM FROM GORBACHEV OF BRITISH POSITIONS POST-REYKJAVIK. NO CHANGE OR EVIDENCE OF GIVE IN SOVIET SUBSTANTIVE POSITIONS ON ARMS CONTROL. NO RESPONSE ON AFGHANISTAN OR HUMAN RIGHTS EXCEPT GENERAL REFERENCE TO NON-INTERFERENCE. STRONG WISH TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE WITH MRS THATCHER. HER VISIT NEXT YEAR ESPECIALLY TIMELY. THE CALL TO BE COVERED BY THE SOVIET PRESS. GORBACHEV'S MAIN AIM APPEARS TO BE PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF DISPLEASURE WITH EUROPE. DESPITE STAGE-MANAGED ANGER, DISCUSSION RELATIVELY AMIABLE.

DETAIL

2. I CALLED ON GORBACHEV ON THE AFTERNOON OF 15 DECEMBER. HE OPENED BY SAYING THAT HE HAD RECEIVED GARY HART IN THE MORNING AND THAT THIS WAS THEREFORE FOR HIM ''NATO DAY''. THE MEETING LASTED ONE AND A HALF HOURS. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY HIS ASSISTANT CHERNYAEV AND BY HEAD OF SECOND EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT, MFA USPENSKY, AS INTERPRETER. FULL RECORD FOLLOWS BY BAG. PHOTOGRAPHERS RECORDED THE START OF THE MEETING WHICH, I WAS TOLD AFTERWARDS WOULD BE REPORTED IN THE SOVIET PRESS. TONIGHT'S TV NEWS CARRIED A BRIEF ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CALL. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS REASONABLY RELAXED BUT AT TIMES GORBACHEV WAS ANIMATED, EVEN HEATED: HE INTERRUPTED FREQUENTLY.

3. I HAD EXPECTED TO BE INVITED TO OPEN THE MEETING BY CONVEYING THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE. INSTEAD GORBACHEV OPENED WITH A LONG DISSERTATION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE, HIS HIGH REGARD FOR THE PRIME MINISTER AS AN ''INTERESTING'' INTERLOCUTOR, AND THE TIMELINESS OF HER FORTHCOMING VISIT. HE WANTED, HE SAID, TO FIND OUT WHETHER SHE LOOKED TO THE FUTURE WITH A RIFLE IN HER HAND

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OR, AS HE BELIEVED, READY TO REACH OUT WITH A HANDSHAKE. IF SO, BRITISH MOTIVES IN REACTING AS WE HAD DONE TO REYKJAVIK WERE NOT CLEAR. AT REYKJAVIK, A PACKAGE HAD BEEN PROPOSED WHICH LEFT BRITISH AND FRENCH WEAPONS ASIDE AT STAGE 1, AS WE HAD INSISTED. NOW AN ANGLO/FRENCH AXIS WAS DEVELOPING WHICH INSISTED ON THE MAINTENANCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. AS SOON AS A REAL POSSIBILITY OF ELIMINATING NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAD APPEARED, THERE WAS 'PANIC' IN LONDON AND PARIS. BRITISH HOSTILITY TO SOCIALISM WAS SUCH THAT WE COULD NOT ACCEPT SOVIET IDEAS EVEN WHEN THEY WERE IN OUR INTEREST. THE WORLD WAS CHANGING. THE BRITISH CONSERVATIVES, HOWEVER, WERE NOT. THEY WISHED TO CONSIGN SOCIALISM 'TO THE ASH-CAN OF HISTORY'. THOSE ACCUSED OF 'EXPORTING REVOLUTION' ACCEPTED THE RIGHT OF OTHERS TO THEIR OWN POLITICAL SYSTEM. THOSE WHO SHOUTED ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS DID NOT. THIS ATTITUDE HAD THE 'DAMP STAGNANT SMELL OF THE PREHISTORIC CAVE'.

4. ONLY AFTER THIS PROLOGUE WAS I ABLE TO READ OUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE, NOTING THAT MRS THATCHER WOULD APPRECIATE MR GORBACHEV HAVING RECEIVED ME AS CONFIRMING THAT HE ATTACHED AS MUCH IMPORTANCE TO THE DIALOGUE AS MRS THATCHER DID. HE AGREED. HAVING READ THE MESSAGE I ADDED THAT IT HAD BEEN WRITTEN BEFORE THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL DECLARATION ISSUED IN BRUSSELS ON 11 DECEMBER WHICH CONFIRMED NATO MEMBERS' ATTACHMENT TO VERIFIABLE CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT AND A STABLE BALANCE AT LOWER LEVELS. THIS WOULD BECOME EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT IF THE NUCLEAR REDUCTIONS WHICH WE DESIRED WENT AHEAD. NEW PROPOSALS WOULD BE PUT FORWARD AT VIENNA. GORBACHEV INTERRUPTED TO EXPRESS SURPRISE THAT WE SHOULD TALK OF FAVOURING NUCLEAR REDUCTIONS AND YET CONVEY SUCH A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER.

5. I ALSO SAID THAT MRS THATCHER RECALLED WITH PLEASURE HER TALKS WITH GORBACHEV AT CHEQUERS AND HER HOPE THAT DATES FOR HER VISIT WOULD SOON BE AGREED. GORBACHEV PROMISED A REPLY WITHIN DAYS.

6. COMMENTING ON WHAT GORBACHEV HAD SAID AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING, I SAID THAT THE BEST SUMMARY WHICH I COULD GIVE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S POSITION WAS THAT THE BEST SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BECOME THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD. WE FAVOURED A STEP BY STEP APPROACH SO THAT AT EACH STAGE THE PARTIES CONCERNED COULD BE ASSURED THAT THEIR SECURITY WAS UNIMPAIRED. WE WELCOMED SOME OF THE KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AT REYKJAVIK. OUR PRIME MINISTER WAS NOT, AS I KNEW FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, PRONE TO 'PANIC' AND THERE WAS NOTHING IN HER MESSAGE WHICH CARRIED A WHIFF OF IT. THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS AGREEMENTS COULD QUICKLY BE TAKEN IF THE SOVIET UNION WOULD REVERSE ITS DECISION TO RELINK INF WITH THE SDI

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RESEARCH PROGRAMME. GORBACHEV SAID THAT, IF WE WISHED, WE COULD GO BACK TO THE PREVIOUS POSITION OF NO INF LINKAGE TO STRATEGIC WEAPONS OR SDI, BUT INSISTENCE ON A FREEZE AND NO MODERNISATION OF BRITISH AND FRENCH SYSTEMS. ASIA WOULD BE LEFT OUT OF THE EQUATION, AS WOULD SOVIET MISSILES IN THE GDR AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA WHICH WERE A RESPONSE TO PERSHING. MRS THATCHER HAD SAID THAT THE WARSAW PACT WOULD HAVE TO RECKON WITH A MODERNISED BRITISH DETERRENT. SHE COULD NOT OBJECT WHEN HE DID TAKE ACCOUNT OF IT. I REPLIED BY QUOTING GENERAL GASHKOV ON SOVIET TV ON 26 OCTOBER, AS SAYING THAT, EVEN IF THE TWO SUPER-POWERS REDUCED THEIR NUCLEAR ARSENALS BY 50%, THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS OF THIRD COUNTRIES WOULD STILL POSE NO THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE US OR SOVIET PEOPLES. WITH CONSIDERABLE HEAT, GORBACHEV ATTACKED THE UK FOR TRYING TO DICTATE TO THE WORLD, AS SHE HAD DONE UNDER PALMERSTON. THE BRITISH THOUGHT THAT ONLY THEY WERE IN STEP, WHEREAS THE REVERSE WAS TRUE.

7. GORBACHEV DID NOT RESPOND ON AFGHANISTAN, AND ON HUMAN RIGHTS HE ONLY RECALLED THAT HE HAD TOLD MRS THATCHER AT CHEQUERS THAT HE DID NOT TRY TO DICTATE HOW BRITAIN SHOULD BE GOVERNED AND WOULD NOT ACCEPT INTERFERENCE IN THE SOVIET UNION'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. BRITAIN COOPERATED WITH SOUTH AFRICA. WHY COULD WE NOT HAVE BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH HAD NO ULTERIOR DESIGNS ON US? I REPLIED THAT WE WERE NOT TRYING TO DICTATE TO ANYONE BUT RATHER TO EXPRESS OUR VIEWS ON THE MOST HOPEFUL WAY AHEAD ON DISARMAMENT. HE WAS BEING TOO PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE STATE OF OUR RELATIONS. HE ANSWERED WITH A SMILE THAT THE WORSE THE SITUATION, THE MORE NECESSARY IT WAS TO RENEW HIS DIALOGUE WITH MRS THATCHER.

8. IN CONCLUSION GORBACHEV SAID THAT MRS THATCHER HAD GIVEN HIM AND PRESIDENT REAGAN AN 'ORAL WHIPPING' FOR GETTING CARRIED AWAY, 'LIKE SMALL BOYS', IN REYKJAVIK. BUT THE SOVIET UNION WAS NOT DEALING IN ILLUSIONS. NO-ONE POSSESSED A MONOPOLY OF TRUTH. JOINT EFFORTS WERE REQUIRED. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SHOULD REFLECT THE WISH OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE FOR A NON-NUCLEAR WORLD. THE DIALOGUE SHOULD GO ON BUT THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT THE SOVIET UNION 'SHOULD BE TREATED LIKE THIS'. THE REYKJAVIK PACKAGE, AS SUCH, DERIVED FROM THE NEW APPROACH TAKEN BY THE SOVIET UNION AND BY THE SIZEABLE CONCESSIONS IT WAS PREPARED TO MAKE. THE RENEWED LINKAGE BETWEEN THE SDI AND AND INF AGREEMENT WAS A NATURAL COROLLARY OF THE SOVIET CONCESSIONS IN SETTING TO ONE SIDE, IN THIS CONTEXT, THE MAINTAINENCE AND INCREASE OF UK AND FRENCH SYSTEMS. I SAID THAT TWO ILLOGICAL POSITIONS DID NOT MAKE ONE LOGICAL POSITION. GORBACHEV DISMISSED THIS ANGRILY AS A PLAY ON WORDS: WE SHOULD NOT CRITICISE SOVIET POSITIONS FROM 'YESTERDAY'S STANDPOINT'. THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WAS

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REPRESENTING HER VISIT TO WASHINGTON AS A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT; BUT AS A RESULT KAMPELMANN HAD RETURNED TO GENEVA WITH 'PRE-REYKJAVIK' INSTRUCTIONS. MAYBE MRS THATCHER HAD ACTUALLY WANTED THE CURRENT IMPASSE AT GENEVA. HER GREAT POTENTIAL INFLUENCE SHOULD BE USED TO BETTER EFFECT THAN TO READ A SERMON TO THE SOVIET UNION.

COMMENT

9. GORBACHEV'S ANIMATED BUT FREQUENTLY REPETITIOUS EXPOSITION BOILED DOWN TO TWO THEMES:

I) THE PRIME MINISTER, FOR WHOM HE HAD AND HAS GREAT RESPECT, HAD, FOR REASONS WHICH WERE UNCLEAR BUT WHICH HAD MUCH TO DO WITH CONSERVATIVE GENES, HAD BEEN TRYING TO UNPICK WHAT HAD NEARLY BEEN ACHIEVED AT REYKJAVIK: AND

II) WHILE CRITICISING THE SOVIET 'PACKAGE', THE PRIME MINISTER WAS SUBSTITUTING AN EVEN BIGGER PACKAGE OF HER OWN, LINKING NOT ONLY CONVENTIONAL ARMS REDUCTIONS BUT ALSO THE ALLEGED NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE SOVIET POLITICAL SYSTEM WITH THE PROSPECTS FOR NUCLEAR ARMS REDUCTIONS.

DESPITE THE OCCASIONALLY HARSH TONE OF MUCH OF HIS CONTRIBUTION GORBACHEV SPOKE SEVERAL TIMES OF HIS HIGH REGARD FOR THE PRIME MINISTER AND OF HIS WISH TO RESUME THE DIALOGUE WITH HER. IT WAS NOT A STILTED MEETING, AND HE WAS NOT UNFRIENDLY. HE READILY AGREED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO MY REQUEST THAT WE SHOULD NOW ESTABLISH REGULAR CONTACT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. I HAD ALREADY REPORTED MY VIEW (MY TELNO 1481) THAT IF GORBACHEV RECEIVED ME ONE OF HIS MAIN PURPOSES COULD BE TO EXPRESS HIS DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE BRITISH ROLE IN POST-REYKJAVIK ARMS CONTROL DISCUSSIONS AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO PUBLICISE THIS. THAT HAS BEEN BORNE OUT, AT LEAST IN PRIVATE: IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW HARD A LINE THE SOVIET PRESS WILL TAKE. GORBACHEV'S CONSTANT INTERRUPTIONS, EFFECTIVELY PREVENTING ME FROM GETTING BRITISH POSITIONS ACROSS TO HIM AND HIS (AT LEAST PARTIALLY) CONTRIVED ANGER, GAVE ME A CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT THE MEETING WAS INTENDED TO CONVEY SOVIET DISPLEASURE TO (SOME) WESTERN EUROPEAN LEADERS BUT IN A MANNER MODERATED SUFFICIENTLY SO AS NOT TO PUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT AT RISK, AND INDEED TO ASCRIBE GREATER IMPORTANCE TO IT. SIGNIFICANTLY GORBACHEV'S LAST WORDS WERE OF WARM PERSONAL GREETINGS TO MRS THATCHER.

10. IN ADDITION TO GIVING MY AMERICAN, FRENCH AND GERMAN COLLEAGUES THE MAIN POINTS OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE I PROPOSE TO GIVE THEM THE GIST OF WHAT GORBACHEV SAID AND MY OWN CONCLUSIONS FROM THE MEETING, ADDING THAT THESE ARE PERSONAL.

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11. WITH LOCAL BRITISH CORRESPONDENTS, WE ARE SPEAKING AS INSTRUCTED BUT ADDING THAT WHILST GORBACHEV EXPRESSED SOME DISAPPOINTMENT WITH BRITISH ATTITUDES IN THE AFTERMATH OF REYKJAVIK (THIS WILL BECOME APPARENT FROM SOVIET PRESS HANDLING OF THE CALL) HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHED TO CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE WITH MRS THATCHER, AND THE FACT THAT HE IS LOOKING FORWARD TO HER VISIT NEXT YEAR.

CARTLEDGE

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MR SLATER

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From the Private Secretary

16 December 1986

**SIR BRYAN CARTLEDGE'S CALL
ON MR. GORBACHEV**

The Prime Minister has read with great interest (and some merriment) Moscow tel. no. 1504 recording Sir Bryan Cartledge's talk with Mr. Gorbachev. I should be grateful if you would convey to Sir Bryan her congratulations for the firm and skilful manner in which he dealt with Mr. Gorbachev and her thanks for the excellent report. She is most grateful to him.

(Charles Powell)

A. C. Galsworthy, Esq., C.M.G.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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TO DESKBY 191500Z F C O

TELNO 1530

OF 191300Z DECEMBER 86

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO

MY TELNO 1508: MY CALL ON GORBACHEV

1. I UNDERTOOK TO SEND SOME FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON MY MEETING WITH GORBACHEV.
2. THE SOVIET PRESS HAS NOT USED THE FACT OF MY CALL OR THE REVELATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S FORTHCOMING VISIT AS A PEG FOR CRITICAL COMMENT ON UK POLICIES OR ON THE WESTERN EUROPEAN ROLE POST-REYKJAVIK. THE PUBLIC CRITICISM REMAINS FOCUSSED ON THE AMERICANS. PRAVDA OF 13 DECEMBER, FOR EXAMPLE, CARRIED A LONG REPORT CRITICAL OF THE US ATTITUDE AT THE INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING IN GENEVA, REFERRING TO THE EUROPEANS ONLY IN PASSING. IT MAY BE THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE STILL WORKING SOMETHING UP BUT IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THE MOMENT FOR GOING PUBLIC HAS PASSED. IT FOLLOWS THAT THE CONTENT OF THE CALL CAN BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, IN THE SENSE THAT GORBACHEV'S PURPOSE IN RECEIVING ME WAS TO CONVEY TO THE PRIME MINISTER AS DIRECTLY AS POSSIBLE HIS VIEWS AND - AS A SOVIET INTERMEDIARY COULD NOT DO - HIS (FOLLOWING WORD UNDERLINED) FEELINGS ABOUT CURRENT UK POSITIONS.
3. ALTHOUGH GORBACHEV LISTENED ATTENTIVELY (WHEN HE WAS NOT INTERRUPTING) TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE AND TOOK NOTES, VIGOROUSLY UNDERLINING MANY, HE OBVIOUSLY HAD A GOOD IDEA IN ADVANCE OF WHAT IT CONTAINED. THE FACT THAT HE LED OFF WITH A HALF-HOUR LECTURE BEFORE ALLOWING ME TO READ THE MESSAGE WAS FURTHER CONFIRMATION THAT HE SAW THE CALL PRIMARILY AS AN OCCASION FOR GETTING HIS OWN VIEWS ACROSS.
4. AS YOU KNOW (MY TELS NOS 1195 AND 1209) I BELIEVE THAT GORBACHEV WENT TO REYKJAVIK WITH A FAINT HOPE THAT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO BOUNCE REAGAN INTO THE KIND OF PACKAGE OF ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS (INCLUDING CONSTRAINTS ON BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE EXTINCTION OF THE SDI) WHICH WOULD ENSURE THAT A WASHINGTON SUMMIT WOULD BE A SUCCESS IN SOVIET TERMS. THE MORE PROBABLE OUTCOME, HE KNEW, WAS DEADLOCK AND, CONSEQUENTLY, CONFIRMATION THAT HE COULD NOT YET RISK A SUMMIT ON AMERICAN SOIL. BUT IN THAT CASE HE COULD BLAME US OBSESSION WITH SDI AS THE SOLE, OR MAIN, OBSTACLE TO ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS: HE COULD SEEK TO MOBILISE WESTERN EUROPEAN SUPPORT FOR THIS VIEW AND COULD EXPECT TO DIVIDE THE ALLIANCE OR, AT LEAST, BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON WASHINGTON VIA EUROPEAN OPINION. IN THE EVENT, NOT ONLY WAS EUROPEAN OPINION RELATIVELY UNMOVED BY THE REYKJAVIK BREAKDOWN AND AT LEAST AS INCLINED TO BLAME SOVIET-IMPOSED LINKAGE AS TO ATTACK THE SDI: BUT SUCH AUTHORITATIVE REPROACHES AS WERE ADDRESSED TO WASHINGTON CONCERNED APPARENTLY INADEQUATE US APPRECIATION OF THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF EUROPE AS A WHOLE AND OF THE TWO EUROPEAN NUCLEAR POWERS IN PARTICULAR.

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5. GORBACHEV WILL HAVE CONCLUDED FROM THIS THAT THE AMERICANS WILL, IN FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA AND VIENNA, HAVE EUROPEAN INTERESTS MORE CLEARLY IN MIND, TO THE SOVIET DISADVANTAGE; AND THAT THIS UNWELCOME OUTCOME IS VERY LARGELY DUE TO THE PRIME-MINISTER'S INFLUENCE AND ADVOCACY. HIS EXASPERATION WITH THIS UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS FOUND EXPRESSION IN EMOTIONAL AND IRRITABLE RHETORIC ABOUT THE INNATE ANTI-SOVIETISM OF BRITISH CONSERVATIVES AND BRITISH DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR: HOW DARE THE UK TELL THE TWO SUPERPOWERS WHAT THEY OUGHT TO DO? THIS DISPLAY OF TEMPER WAS PROBABLY EXAGGERATED, AT LEAST IN PART, IN ORDER TO CAMOUFLAGE REAL DISCOMFITURE AT A DEEPER LEVEL. FOR BENEATH THE RHETORIC LAY RELUCTANT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT IF HE IS TO MAKE ANY HEADWAY WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN, HE CANNOT IGNORE THE UK OR ITS PRIME MINISTER. BY OVERREACTING TO CHANCELLOR KOHL'S CLUMSY NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW, GORBACHEV HAS TEMPORARILY DEPRIVED HIMSELF OF LEVERAGE ON WASHINGTON VIA BONN. THE PROBLEMS OF 'COHABITATION' HAVE MADE THE FRENCH, FOR THE TIME BEING, UNPREDICTABLE INTERLOCUTORS. IRANGATE HAS PUT THE DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH WASHINGTON INTO LONGER SUSPENSE THAN THE REYKJAVIK BREAKDOWN WOULD IN ITSELF JUSTIFY. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT IN GORBACHEV'S EYES HIS DIALOGUE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER HAS ACQUIRED ADDED SIGNIFICANCE AND THAT HER FORTHCOMING VISIT IS 'NEEDED MORE THAN EVER'.

6. FOR THE REASONS SUMMARIZED IN MY TELNO 1334, I BELIEVE THAT GORBACHEV NEEDS AND WANTS ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS. HE IS NOW MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE CHANCES OF CONCLUDING THEM WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN, WHOM HE REGARDS AS INTELLECTUALLY INADEQUATE AND CONSEQUENTLY DEPENDENT ON ADVISERS WHO ARE (HE THINKS) MOSTLY HARD-LINERS. BUT HE HAS NOT YET GIVEN UP ON THE PRESENT US ADMINISTRATION. GARY HART HAD URGED HIM, A FEW HOURS BEFORE MY CALL, NOT TO DO SO, POINTING OUT THAT, IF HE DID, THIS WOULD EFFECTIVELY POSTPONE THE CONCLUSION OF AGREEMENTS FOR THREE YEARS (ALLOWING FOR A NEW PRESIDENT'S SETTLE-IN YEAR) AND POSSIBLY LONGER. I DOUBT WHETHER GORBACHEV COULD CONTEMPLATE A DELAY OF THIS ORDER WITH EQUANIMITY. HE SO FAR HAS VIRTUALLY NOTHING TO SHOW FOR THE IMMENSE AMOUNT OF TIME AND EFFORT WHICH HE HAS INVESTED IN FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE LAST TWENTY MONTHS; ALTHOUGH HIS AUTHORITY IS NOT, SO FAR AS WE KNOW, UNDER CHALLENGE IT WOULD BE SURPRISING IF THE POLITBURO WERE UNANIMOUS ABOUT THE PACE AND EXTENT OF ECONOMIC REFORM OR ABOUT THAT OF CADRE CHANGES. THE ALMA ATA RIOTS WILL HAVE HAD A SOBERING EFFECT AND IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT IT WAS THOUGHT NECESSARY FOR PRAVDA TO MARK THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF BREZHNEV'S BIRTH (19 DECEMBER) WITH A SWINGING ATTACK ON THE BREZHNEV ERA AND HENCE, BY IMPLICATION, ON THOSE MOST CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH IT AND CLINGING TO OFFICE. ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT UNDER PRESSURE (IF HE IS, HE CONCEALS IT REMARKABLY WELL), GORBACHEV CANNOT AFFORD TO GIVE HIS CRITICS EASY TRICKS.

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7. ALL THIS, AND FURTHER REFLECTION ON MY CONVERSATION WITH HIM, LEADS ME TO CONCLUDE THAT GORBACHEV'S MIND IS BY NO MEANS CLOSED TO RATIONAL ARGUMENT, DESPITE HIS HANG-UPS ('MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX' ETC) AND HIS TOUCHY RUSSIAN (NEXT TWO WORDS UNDERLINED) AMOUR PROPRE: AND THAT HE WILL LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY TO WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS TO SAY TO HIM WHEN SHE COMES TO MOSCOW, ESPECIALLY IF SHE IS CLEARLY SPEAKING FOR BRITAIN RATHER THAN BEARING MESSAGES FROM THE UNITED STATES (WHICH GORBACHEV WOULD INSTINCTIVELY REGARD AS A POISONED CHALICE). IF THE INTERNATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE TIMING ARE RIGHT, THE VISIT COULD BE A SEMINAL MOMENT IN PROGRESS TOWARDS EAST-WEST AGREEMENTS AND I RECOMMEND THAT IT SHOULD BE PREPARED WITH THIS IN MIND.

CARTLEDGE

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Worth close look.

① cc. with record of talks to

- Private Secretary

PS/Mr Renton

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Mr Derek Thomas

Mr Ratford

Mr Fall

BRITISH EMBASSY

MOSCOW

17 December 1986



Dr M J Llewellyn-Smith
Soviet Department
FCO

Mr Pakenham

Mr Lever

Mr Beel

② Mr Longngg
Mr Bunkley
Mr Butt

MJL:js

18/XII

Dear Michael,

CALL ON GORBACHEV, 15 DECEMBER 1986

1. I enclose a copy of Simon Hemans' record of my call on Gorbachev, in his office in the Kremlin, on 15 December. It is deliberately full - almost verbatim, in fact. This was only the third substantial 'one to one' discussion which we have had with Gorbachev (the first two being the Prime Minister's meetings with him in December, 1984, and March 1985) and I thought it important to convey the style as well as the content.

2. The Prime Minister may have found it easier than I did to maintain a structured and coherent dialogue with Gorbachev; for one thing, he would obviously be much more attentive to her words than he was to mine. I find his habit of frequent interruption disconcerting; it was often difficult or impossible to complete a line of argument, short of shouting him down. He has a rich and sometimes esoteric vocabulary, remarkably free from the familiar political jargon even when he is expounding familiar propaganda themes. This, combined with a rather indistinct delivery and a curiously jerky, throw-away style makes his Russian hard to follow. He has an odd trick of smiling amiably while making sharp and serious observations; but, equally, of making a comment with a serious or even minatory facial expression and tone of voice and then immediately adding - 'but of course, that's a joke'. Despite all these awkwardnesses, I nevertheless found the discussion stimulating and enjoyable. The question which remained in Simon Hemans' and my minds when it was over - as, according to my US colleague, it did in Gary Hart's - was that of the extent to which Gorbachev believes in what he says as opposed to putting on a skilful and convincing act.

3. I shall attempt to come to a tentative conclusion on this and other questions arising from the call when I telegraph further comments which will, as I explained in my telegram No 1508, have to be delayed until 19 December.

Yours ever,
Bryan.

Bryan Cartledge

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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

This is the full
record of Bryan
Cartledge's meeting
with Mr. Gorbachev.

It is essential -
but not urgent -
reading.

CDP

RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR
SIR BRYAN CARTLEDGE AND THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE
CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION
MR M S GORBACHEV, 15 DECEMBER 1986 AT 3.00PM

PRESENT:

HE Sir Bryan Cartledge

Mr M S Gorbachev

Mr S N P Hemans

Mr A S Chernyayev (Assistant to
Gorbachev)

Mr N N Uspensky (Interpreter)

1. Mr Gorbachev welcomed the Ambassador. In the morning he had received Senator Hart. It was clearly his day for receiving NATO representatives. He welcomed the opportunity to move forward arrangements for Mrs Thatcher's visit. Relations with Britain had always been very important both bilaterally and in a wider sphere, despite all their ups and downs. Not everything went as he would like but that applied to other relationships too; but at least there was mutual understanding that the relationship should be developed. When bilateral relations were tense, neither side nor the world in general benefitted. He understood the word 'conservative' to mean not a reactionary government but one which adhered to tradition. His experience of talking to Mrs Thatcher was not great but he had found her an interesting interlocutor and was interested in continuing his talks during her visit. The state of international relations was such as to make a more active dialogue imperative. He needed to find out whether Mrs Thatcher faced the future with a rifle in her hand or with her hand held out to shake his. He thought the latter was true. If this was so, then the motives for British Government statements and actions on the outcome of the Reykjavik summit were not clear.

2. Mr Gorbachev said that at Chequers he had produced a map marked in squares representing the yield of all nuclear weapons world wide. One square alone was enough to destroy or irreparably damage the other three, namely the whole world. At Reykjavik a real possibility had at last emerged of eliminating nuclear weapons, leaving British and French weapons aside at the first stage just as Britain and France had wanted. But since Reykjavik a London/Paris axis had developed, expressing concern about how the world could live without nuclear weapons. This might not be an entirely accurate description of the situation but there was an element of this in the British and French reaction to Reykjavik. The Soviet proposals of 15 January had demonstrated the connecting links between the elements of disarmament including strategic weapons, INF, SRINF, conventional weapons and chemical weapons. The Soviet Union had laid out the stages in which disarmament could be achieved. Both sides had their views on what these stages might be. This allowed both sides to know where they stood. In this case he could not understand why certain British statements had been made. He had never thought of Mrs Thatcher as a lightweight politician. Because of this he could not understand her actions. It seemed that what the British Government had said earlier about its desire for nuclear disarmament was merely public relations to prevent public opinion from being aroused by the installation of new missiles. The Government spoke of nuclear disarmament as its goal but reacted in panic when a real prospect of such disarmament appeared. Here was Conservative adherence to tradition: inability to accept the fact of socialism, and distrust of it even when its leaders offered sound ideas

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in the interests both of Britain and the Soviet Union, suggested that Conservatives too should learn 'new thinking'. The world was changing. The Conservatives apparently were not.

Was the Soviet Union really so frightening that Britain could not accept its proposals? The situation was paradoxical.

Those who were accused of 'exporting revolution' had accepted the right of others to their own systems of government and ideology. Those who shouted about human rights refused to accept that the Soviet Union had a right to its own choice and to develop as it wished. This development was not easy, and there were difficulties. But progress was being made and a lot had been done to benefit the Soviet Union and, he hoped, the world. Some politicians did not wish to admit the fact of socialism and wanted to put it in the dustbin of history.

This was prehistoric thinking and gave off the stagnant damp smell of the prehistoric cave. The Soviet Union would not wish anyone to view it or its policies in such a light.

They had tried to promote cooperation and relations but there had been no serious move forward. Here in outline were the subjects for Mrs Thatcher's visit. Perhaps the dialogue so far had not been sufficient.

3. The Ambassador said that Mrs Thatcher's message contained replies to many of the points Mr Gorbachev had raised. On those points which were not covered he wished to comment after carrying out his instruction to deliver the message. He said that Mrs Thatcher would appreciate the fact that the General Secretary had received him, since this confirmed that he attached the same importance to the exchanges between them as she did herself (Mr Gorbachev nodded).

4. The Ambassador read out Mrs Thatcher's message.

5. When the Ambassador came to the paragraph about conventional and chemical weapons Mr Gorbachev interrupted to ask whether this was a part of some package proposed by Mrs Thatcher. Palmerston had been right. The British had their own interests and were not concerned with what the Americans or Russians thought.

Funny: Jaruzelski quoted him, too!

6. The Ambassador continued reading the message.

Mr Gorbachev shook his head vigorously during the reading of the paragraph about human rights.

7. At the end of the message, the Ambassador said that Mrs Thatcher had composed her message before NATO member governments had approved and issued the North Atlantic Council's Declaration on conventional arms control which was issued on 11 December. This Declaration confirmed the importance which Britain and her allies attached to effective and verifiable measures of conventional disarmament, to eliminate disparities and establish a stable balance at lower levels. This would become more important if, as we hoped, nuclear reductions went ahead. Mr Gorbachev interrupted to say that expressing a hope for nuclear reductions seemed out of keeping with the tone of the message. The Ambassador continued that the NATO countries would have concrete proposals to make in Vienna arising from the Declaration. The Ambassador then said that Mrs Thatcher had asked him to reaffirm the importance which she attached to her visit to the Soviet Union. She recalled with great pleasure her discussions with Mr Gorbachev in the informal setting of Chequers.

/As she ...

As she had said in her message, dates were under discussion. She hoped very much that the dates she had proposed, namely 30 March - 1 April, would be acceptable. Mr Gorbachev remarked that it was easy to reach agreement with the Soviet Union, since it was not Conservative.

8. The Ambassador commented on Mr Gorbachev's opening remarks. The British Government's position on arms control and nuclear weapons could best be summed up by saying that we should not allow the best to become the enemy of the good. The British Government, like other Western Governments, favoured a reduction in nuclear weapons (Mr Gorbachev laughed sarcastically and said 'yes indeed'). Britain welcomed progress made at Reykjavik towards reductions, notably a 50% reduction of strategic weapons in five years and the elimination of INF from Europe. It was simply not the case that Reykjavik had caused 'panic' in London or Paris. Mr Gorbachev interrupted to say that in his view Mrs Thatcher's message confirmed what he had said about panic. The Ambassador said that as he knew from personal experience, Mrs Thatcher was not given to panic; and there was no whiff of it in her message. Mr Gorbachev apologised for interrupting but said that if both he and the Ambassador had simply read prepared interventions it would not have been a conversation and not worthwhile.

9. The Ambassador continued that the British Government believed in reductions in arms levels but stressed the importance of all concerned being certain at all stages that their security was enhanced or at least not diminished. This was why Britain preferred a step by step approach.

/Mr Gorbachev ...

Mr Gorbachev commented that it was very hard to take the first step. So far, no single step had been taken. Even when, at last, the first outlines of agreement were apparent it was still so difficult to take the first step. The Ambassador that replied/a first step could be taken very quickly indeed if the Soviet Government would remove the linkage between an INF agreement and the SDI research programme. Mr Gorbachev said that he would happily go back to the previous situation, in which the Soviet Union had made INF agreement conditional on the freezing and non-modernisation of British and French weapons. Did Britain agree? The Ambassador said we did not. Mr Gorbachev said that going back to previous positions would also leave out the question of weapons in Asia and missiles in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, which were a response to Pershing. It would mean going back to a well known situation.

10. The Ambassador said that two illogical positions did not add up to one logical one. Mr Gorbachev retorted that plays on words were acceptable in diplomatic life but not in reality. Britain had learned that there would be no concessions on the Soviet side without parallel Western concessions.

Mrs Thatcher spoke of equal security. He recalled that at Chequers he had asked her whether it was true that she had written a letter to the American Chief of General Staff about the modernising of the British nuclear submarine fleet, saying that when modernised, the British deterrent would be sizeable and the Warsaw Pact would have to reckon with it. Mrs Thatcher had told him that she had written such a letter. So now the Soviet Union was doing what she had forecast and reckoning with the British deterrent. She should not complain.

11. The Ambassador replied that on 26 October General Gashkov had said on Soviet television that even if Soviet and American strategic nuclear arsenals were reduced by 50%, third country systems would still be no threat to the security of the US or Soviet peoples. Why was the Soviet Union, therefore, so concerned about British and French weapons? Mr Gorbachev asked whether Britain was saying that the Soviet Union should talk to the United States, but leave out third country systems as being irrelevant? The Ambassador said that Britain had welcomed progress towards an INF agreement and what Mr Gorbachev had said at his Reykjavik press conference about the maintenance and even increase of British and French weapons not being an obstacle. Mr Gorbachev replied that the British position was illogical. The Russians and Americans were not supposed to discuss British and French weapons but Britain could press its views on Soviet and American weapons. Britain still thought that all the world was in its power. The world had changed. Britain was trying to lay down the law in 'permitting' the Russians and Americans to agree on 50% strategic cuts and the elimination of INF in Europe but on nothing else. The Ambassador said that there was a difference between discussion and negotiation. All that Britain was doing was expressing a view on which areas appeared to offer most hope.

12. The Ambassador added that Mr Gorbachev's view of what Britain thought of socialism and the Soviet Union was too pessimistic. Britain had no ambition to change or to persuade the Soviet Union to change its political and social system (Mr Gorbachev nodded). There were features of the system which were not to our liking, just as there were doubtless

/features ...

features of the British system which were not to Soviet liking. Mr Gorbachev said that he had had a heated exchange on this with Mrs Thatcher at Chequers. He had told her that Britain should adopt whatever system or ideology it wanted and the Soviet Union should be granted the same right. On that basis dialogue could continue. She would not make a Conservative of him nor he a Communist of her. On that basis they had a good discussion. It puzzled him however why Britain could cooperate with South Africa and with all kinds of dictators but not with the Soviet Union, which had no evil intentions against the UK either now or in the future. It was up to Britain to decide who to talk to, but why were relations worse with the Soviet Union than with others.

13. The Ambassador said that British and Soviet views on apartheid were identical: Britain had a more active dialogue with the Soviet Union than with South Africa. UK-Soviet relations were not as bad as he had implied. Mrs Thatcher wanted dialogue to continue. Our differing views, including on arms control, were no reason for breaking off dialogue, nor was there any reason to suppose that the dialogue could not lead anywhere. Mr Gorbachev said that the worse the relationship, the more often he should meet Mrs Thatcher.

14. The Ambassador enquired whether Mr Gorbachev would agree to the British Embassy establishing greater contact with the organs of the Central Committee, particularly the International Department. This would add a new dimension to British understanding of the Soviet Union. Mr Gorbachev

/said that ...

said that if we knocked at the door it would be opened.

15. Mr Gorbachev speaking more formally, then summarised his reactions to the Prime Minister's message. The message would have to be considered more deeply: but it seemed to him that Mrs Thatcher had given him and President Reagan a verbal whipping for getting too carried away and losing their heads like small boys on nuclear weapons in Reykjavik. He had also had the impression that circles close to Mrs Thatcher had regarded his proposals of 15 January as an illusion. He did not intend to give lessons to the world on new thinking but he could and would appeal to the world to change its attitude. This was objective and timely. The Soviet Union did not deal in illusions. No-one should get himself into a state of mind where he thought that he possessed absolute truth. What was needed was a common effort to solve the key issues, of which the main one was nuclear weapons. The Ambassador agreed with the last point. Mr Gorbachev continued that he had been thinking what else he could say about Mrs Thatcher's message which would not put her visit in jeopardy (he added immediately that this was a joke). Britain should be interested in a non-nuclear world. The British people seemed to want to launch the process of eliminating nuclear weapons. The British Government should reflect this. How could one explain their emotional reaction to Reykjavik? The Soviet Union attached importance to the British Government's views and to exchanging views, even on delicate issues like this. But that did not mean that the Soviet Union should be treated in this way. The Soviet Union had gone to Reykjavik with a package of proposals involving equal security, and both sides at Reykjavik had gone further than the initial Soviet proposals. He did not agree with

/Mrs Thatcher ...

Mrs Thatcher if she did not regard this as an achievement. Nor did he agree with her that nuclear weapons were a basis of security for the future. It might be that some feared that if nuclear weapons were eliminated the roles of some states might change but he saw no such threat. As to the package, it arose from a new approach to nuclear disarmament and was inseparably linked to the enormous concessions made by the Soviet Union. It should not be criticised from the position of the day before yesterday. It was as if Britain had missed the train and was now shouting after it from the empty platform. It would be better to make use of what had been achieved. The Geneva negotiations had been in deadlock. After Mrs Thatcher's visit to the United States she had said that her talks there had been a major achievement. But in fact Kampelmann had come back with his team to Geneva only to repeat pre-Reykjavik positions. This was not an achievement: it was a great loss and showed what Conservatism involved. Perhaps Mrs Thatcher had wanted an impasse in Geneva. She would not admit it, but the Soviet Union nevertheless had to work out what the UK really wanted. Britain was putting spokes in the nuclear disarmament wheel. Mrs Thatcher's own package had everything in it, from strategic weapons to verification and human rights: the impression she created with her message was that Britain did everything right and that everyone else was wrong. No single soldier in a squad could be the only one in step. Mrs Thatcher's great potential and that of the UK should find a better use than this. The Soviet Union had never shown her or Britain any disrespect. He could not understand why she needed to read him a sermon. He concluded that more than ever a meeting between himself and Mrs Thatcher was needed. A reply on dates would be given in a few days.

The Ambassador said that it appeared that the General Secretary's misunderstanding of Mrs Thatcher's message and position was so deep that only she herself could put her views to him in a way which could remove this misunderstanding.

16. The meeting ended with Mr Gorbachev asking the Ambassador to convey his warm personal greetings to Mrs Thatcher.

17. The meeting lasted one and a half hours and ended at 4.30pm.