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21 November 1987

*From the Private Secretary*

**UNITED STATES/SOVIET SUMMIT:  
POSSIBLE VISIT TO THE UNITED KINGDOM BY MR. GORBACHEV**

The Soviet Embassy got in touch with me early today to inform me that Mr. Gorbachev accepted in principle the Prime Minister's invitation to visit the United Kingdom briefly on his way to the United States/Soviet Summit in Washington. However, a formal decision would have to wait until after the meeting between Secretary Shultz and Mr. Shevardnadze in Geneva on Monday 23 and Tuesday 24 November (presumably in case there should be any hitch in the arrangements from the Summit itself). The Soviet Ambassador would like to call briefly on the Prime Minister later in the week, once he received final confirmation from Moscow, to convey Mr. Gorbachev's acceptance. It was important that there should be no announcement of the proposed visit until the formal decision had been taken.

I asked Mr. Kossov whether his instructions from Moscow led him to assume agreement that the meeting would take place at Brize Norton. Mr. Kossov said that the point was not specifically covered, but he had no doubt that this would be accepted. The Embassy's contacts with Moscow had all been on the assumption that the meeting would take place at Brize Norton. I said that I took the point about avoiding premature publicity, but once the formal decision was taken we would need to begin straightaway to make detailed arrangements. It would not be possible to hold the news for long. We should aim for a joint announcement in London and Moscow as soon as possible after the Ambassador's call. Mr. Kossov agreed that this seemed sensible.

Assuming that the formal decision is indeed taken in the next few days, we shall need to move very rapidly on the preparations for the meeting. The Prime Minister wishes these to be meticulous. Mr. Gorbachev must be accorded full honours. The Foreign Office will no doubt wish to appoint someone to co-ordinate all the arrangements in liaison with the Ministry of Defence. But, in the first instance it might be helpful if I were to convene a small meeting of those principally concerned to explain what the Prime Minister wants done.

SECRET

I should be grateful if you could arrange for this letter to be seen by the Foreign Secretary before his departure to Brussels.

I am copying this letter to John Howe (Ministry of Defence).

C. D. POWELL

The Resident Clerk,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office