

From : D J E Ratford
Date : 4 December 1987

Copied to :
Private Secretary
PS/Mr Mellor
Sir J Fretwell
Soviet Section,
Research Department

Mr Hemans, Soviet Department

GORBACHEV : DISCUSSIONS WITH AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

1. The Australian Deputy High Commissioner called this afternoon to give an account of Mr Hawke's recent visit to Moscow. He based himself on a telegram recording a briefing given to the US Ambassador in Canberra.
2. The Soviet leadership had been very generous with their time: Mr Hawke had spent more than three hours with Gorbachev, of which two were tete-a-tete. He had also had six and a half hours with Ryzhkov. Mr Hawke characterised his reception as "friendly and cordial" and the discussions as "frank and warm". Gorbachev did not bridle when he raised human rights questions. He found Gorbachev engaging and intelligent.
3. On glasnost and perestroika, Mr Hawke's conclusion was that there was no doubt about the strength of the leadership's commitment. They had spoken of the economy as being in "a pre-crisis condition". Ryzhkov had dropped the remark that "he and Gorbachev had been thinking about the need for reform for years before coming into power". Mr Hawke had concluded that the leadership had decided that the "system must be changed". Gorbachev clearly understood the dimensions of his problems. Ryzhkov said that "it was not a question of groups of opponents mobilising against perestroika but the general reluctance of some groups to accept new ideas". Mr Hawke felt that opposition both from the bureaucracy and from consumers might well build up before the benefits of economic reform came through. The leadership had perhaps not understood what market forces might bring about. Ryzhkov had spoken of the Soviet Union's wish "to become and organic part of the international division of labour". That prompted Mr Hawke to doubt whether the Soviet leadership fully understood the implications of what they were saying.

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4. All in all, Mr Hawke believed that it was in the West's interest to encourage perestroika, while showing the proper degree of caution.

5. On global issues, particularly arms control, Mr Hawke believed Gorbachev to be committed to a process in which the INF agreement was only a first step. He wanted President Reagan to visit Moscow in 1988 but was also prepared, if necessary, to wait until after the Reagan Presidency. Gorbachev had expressed concern about the extreme right in the West: Mr Hawke had said that there were indeed those who wanted continued confrontation, but they were only a minority and they would not expect decisions. Part of the problem arose because the US electoral cycle gave them a constituency at which to preach. But the West was sincere and committed to the negotiating process.

Regional Issues

6. Gorbachev insisted that he wanted to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan, but first required an assurance of an independent, non-aligned Afghanistan which would not be a threat to the Soviet Union. It was the American responsibility not to try to create a regime hostile to the Soviet Union. If those conditions were fulfilled, the Soviet Union would be ready to withdraw its troops. In Mr Hawke's view these words were "not just rhetoric".

7. Mr Hawke was given a standard presentation on Vietnam. Nor was any new ground broken on specific questions, Middle East and Southern Africa.

Human Rights

8. Some considerable time had been spent on this topic and Gorbachev's attitude had been "quite good". He had evidently expected Mr Hawke to raise these questions but had not bridled and had expressed understanding when Mr Hawke had put the case for improved human rights behaviour on the basis both of general moral arguments and Soviet self-interest: it was most important from the Soviet point of view to be seen to be receptive to such arguments. If so, the Soviet Union would enjoy better understanding in the West.

9. Mr Hawke had put forward a list of five specific cases, two of which had been solved at once. As regards Jewish emigration, Gorbachev's first line of defence had been the need to protect security sensitive information but had not pursued the argument when Mr Hawke challenged it. The other strand in his argument was that the Soviet Union could not (or would not) afford the brain-drain. In Mr Hawke's view this showed Soviet awareness that free movement of persons would, in the Soviet case, be a one-way street.

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COCOM

10. Ryzhkov had made a strong pitch on COCOM, arguing that it was disruptive of Soviet economic plans and contradicted Western statements about our desire for a more open economic relationship.

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1. ~~cc~~ with attachments
to Mr Powell, No 10

From : D J E Ratford
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2. Summary of State

Copied to :
Mr Hemans, Soviet Department

Prime Minister

Private Secretary

DDP 6/12.

GORBACHEV : STOPOVER

1. I attach a copy of an account of the Australian Prime Minister's recent meetings with Gorbachev and Ryzhkov. The Australians, whom we had briefed in detail before Mr Hawke's visit, specially expedited this account so that it should be on hand before the Gorbachev stopover. It does not tell us anything about the Soviet leadership which we do not already know. But out of courtesy to the Australians you may perhaps like to pass the copy to Mr Powell before Monday.

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