



## 10 DOWNING STREET

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*From the Private Secretary*

21 November 1988

## VISIT OF PRESIDENT GORBACHEV

I saw Mr. Kossov of the Soviet Embassy this morning at the Soviet Ambassador's request.

Mr. Kossov said that the Ambassador had been surprised and rather troubled by the comments in the press at the weekend about the likely response to an invitation to The Queen from President Gorbachev to visit the Soviet Union. As far as he knew, the matter had not been considered in Moscow. Unfortunately, the British press stories were being repeated by Tass in Moscow and he was concerned about the impact on Mr. Gorbachev, who was engaged in considering our proposals for his programme.

I said that Mr. Kossov should assure his Ambassador and the Soviet authorities that the press reports were entirely speculative. I had consulted the Prime Minister this morning and she had authorised me to say that so far as she knew any question of an invitation was entirely hypothetical. She had not even considered the matter let alone expressed an opinion on it. The reports in the press were no more than speculation.

Mr. Kossov seemed much relieved by this which he wrote down carefully and said he would report straightaway to the Soviet Ambassador. At no stage did he ask what our reaction to an invitation would be, nor did I volunteer any comment on this.

Mr. Kossov went on to say that the Soviet side had been considering how it could give some special significance to the visit. They wanted to invite us to consider the possibility of agreeing a joint document on a chemical weapons ban. They were concerned that a number of initiatives were or would shortly be associated with Soviet/American, Soviet/German and Soviet/French relations but not with the UK. An agreed document might become known as the London initiative. He knew that we were not in general keen on statements or communiqués at the conclusion of official visits. But he understood this was not an absolute rule. He recalled, for instance, the Camp David Four Points. He wished to hand over on an entirely informal basis the enclosed text. It might not be adequate. In the

end perhaps the idea would not work at all. But he would be very grateful for a personal reaction. The Soviet side did not intend to give the document to the Foreign Office at this stage although they fully recognised that any discussion would have to be with them.

I said that Mr. Kossov was quite right in his view that we did not like formal declarations or statements at the end of visits and it was not our normal practice to have them. We would also be very hesitant about publishing bilateral statements on a matter which was the subject of a multilateral negotiation. But I would take delivery of his document and let him know what I thought in a couple of days time.

I should be grateful if you could not tell the Soviet Embassy that I have passed the document on to you. It would be helpful to have advice on how we should respond.

I asked Mr. Kossov if he was satisfied with the discussions on the programme so far. He confirmed that he was. The Embassy hoped to have Mr. Gorbachev's reactions to our proposals very shortly.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Bill Heseltine at Buckingham Palace.

(C. D. POWELL)

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