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From the Private Secretary

28 November 1988

PRESIDENT GORBACHEV'S VISIT

Thank you for your letter of ²⁷5 November recording the further dealings you have had with the Soviet Embassy about the programme for President Gorbachev's visit. I have discussed the programme again with the Prime Minister over the weekend and can therefore deal with quite a number of detailed points, including all those mentioned in your letter. As I told you this morning The Queen has graciously agreed to receive President and Mrs. Gorbachev at 1130 on 14 December to be followed by lunch from 1200-1300.

My detailed points are as follows:

- Arrival. The Prime Minister and Mr. Thatcher will meet the President and Mrs. Gorbachev at Heathrow. The Prime Minister will travel with President Gorbachev to the Soviet Embassy in his car. Mr. Thatcher will travel with Mrs. Gorbachev in hers, with one interpreter in each car. The Prime Minister and Mr. Thatcher will go into the Embassy for a short talk over tea or coffee. I will join them together with somebody from the Soviet side to take a record. We envisage the meeting lasting about 20 minutes or so.
- Talks on 13 December. The Prime Minister wishes these to be in very restricted session starting at 1000. There will be a photo-call before the talks start. The talks themselves are likely to be in the White Room. There will be note-takers and interpreters present. The working lunch will be held in the Small Dining Room and the Prime Minister and President Gorbachev will be joined by Mr. Thatcher and Mrs. Gorbachev, the two Ambassadors (without wives), the two note-takers and the two interpreters.
- Afternoon programme. The Prime Minister would be ready to accompany President Gorbachev on his visits during the afternoon, in which case she would ride in the same car as him. She is inclined to think however that she should not attend the Mansion House reception but rather be at No. 10 to welcome President Gorbachev when he arrives for the dinner.

- Dinner. We are inviting British guests to arrive by 1915 and the Soviet party at 1930. There will then be a receiving line with scope for a small television and camera pool. We are unlikely in practice to sit down to dinner much before 2000 and the evening will probably finish not later than 2200. But I see no need to give the Russians a finishing time. The toasts can be televised.

- Talks on 14 December. The Prime Minister would prefer these once again to be in restricted session with note-takers and interpreters only. She will hold them in her study.

- The Palace. Assuming that the Prime Minister is invited to the lunch, I think she would follow President Gorbachev down there rather than be present for the Guard of Honour ceremony. She would then travel with President Gorbachev in his car from the Palace to Heathrow. I remain uncertain as to whether Mr. Thatcher would escort Mrs. Gorbachev to Heathrow. It would seem natural if he were at the lunch but I imagine it is not the intention to invite spouses. We shall have to leave this to be resolved later.

One final small point: whenever the Prime Minister is travelling with Mr. Gorbachev in his car, her own car must be part of the procession and I will travel with it. I suggest that it be immediately ahead of President Gorbachev's car so that the Prime Minister could transfer to it rapidly if the need arose.

I have also talked to the Prime Minister about briefing for the visit. She would like a thorough discussion and at the moment the best time for this seems to be the whole of the afternoon of Monday 12 December from 1430 onwards. The Prime Minister would like the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary, Sir Percy Cradock and HM Ambassador in Moscow to attend. We will arrange for the Defence Secretary and Sir Percy Cradock to be invited. I should be grateful if you could ascertain whether the Foreign Secretary is free then and arrange also for Sir Rodric Braithwaite to be present. The Prime Minister does not on this occasion intend to have a session with academics.

(C. D. POWELL)

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