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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

28 November 1988

Dear Lord Marshall

Thank you for your letter of 15 November which I have read with interest.

It was kind of you to offer to brief me on the Russian civil nuclear scene. I should be most interested if you could let me have a short note on the subject before President Gorbachev's visit on 13 December.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Raymond Shafter

The Lord Marshall of Goring, C.B.E., F.R.S.

SA

SW2AOI

PRIME MINISTER

LORD MARSHALL'S LETTER

Lord Marshall wrote to you on 15 November suggesting that a conversation which you had had with President Gorbachev may have been instrumental in drawing the President's attention to the realities of the shortcomings of the Soviet nuclear power industry.

We cannot recall any record of your raising the subject of Chernobyl with President Gorbachev at either of your two previous meetings, though you may have touched upon the subject at a meal and it may not have been recorded.

In fact, many countries, besides ourselves, have had contacts with the Soviet Union to encourage them to improve their nuclear safety performance. Any of these could have been the foreign source which President Gorbachev had in mind and which Dr. Abagyan had told Lord Marshall about. In view of the uncertainty about the origin of the report it seems best not to refer to it in your reply to Lord Marshall, a draft of which is attached.

Lord Marshall is on the suggested guestlist for the dinner for President Gorbachev.

Letter attached for your signature, please.

N.L.W.

(N. L. WICKS)

25 November 1988



10 DOWNING STREET

C.P.

Reply is not
strictly necessary.

Can you recall
the conversation? ?

N C W



CP.
[Handwritten signature]

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL London SW1A 2AH

R 24/4

24 November 1988

Dear Nigel,

Lord Marshall's letter to the Prime Minister

As requested in your letter of 17 November, I attach a draft reply from the Prime Minister to Lord Marshall of Goring.

Neither our Soviet Department, nor the Department of Energy have any record of the Prime Minister raising the subject of Chernobyl with Mr Gorbachev at either of their two previous meetings. There is, though, an outside chance that the subject was touched on and not recorded and I therefore submit two alternative middle paragraphs for the draft reply.

It is well known to us that apart from our own efforts (negotiation of a bilateral agreement on nuclear safety, and contacts between the NII, the CEGB and the UKAEA on the one hand and their Soviet counterparts on the other) other Western countries (particularly the FRG, but also including the United States and France) have contacts with the Soviet Union and are encouraging them to improve their nuclear safety performance. Any of these could have been the foreign source Gorbachev had in mind.

X The new international organisation to which Lord Marshall refers in his second paragraph is the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) which was in fact his own brainchild. It has proved to be a successful concept and the inaugural meeting is scheduled to take place in Moscow in the first half of next year. *X*

The draft has been cleared with Atomic Energy Division of the Department of Energy.

Yours sincerely
[Handwritten signature]
(L Parker)
Private Secretary

N L Wicks Esq
PS/No 10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: ~~min~~/letter/~~tele~~/~~dispatch~~/~~no~~XXXXX

TYPE: Draft/FinalXXXX

FROM: Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

Your Reference

BUILDING:

ROOM NO:

MEIAAA

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

TO: Lord Marshall of Goring Kt CBE FRS

Copies to:

Chairman

CEGB

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

SUBJECT: Sudbury House

SWRAOJ

15 Newgate Street

London EC1A 7AU

CAVEAT

1. Thank you for suggesting in your letter of 15 November ^{*which I have read with interest.*} that ~~a conversation I had with President Gorbachev may have been instrumental in drawing his attention to the realities of the shortcomings of the Soviet nuclear power industry.~~

[2. It is always encouraging to know that hints are followed up.]

[2. Although I would like to think that I had had the effect you attribute to me, as I do not recall having raised the subject with Mr Gorbachev, the foreign source referred must have been somebody else.]

Enclosures flag(s)

3. It was kind of you to offer to brief me on the Russian civil nuclear scene. I should be glad to receive a short note on the subject.

if you could let me have

before President Gorbachev's visit on 13 Dec.

CONFIDENTIAL

Lord MARSHALL

24/11



via EAM
orig letter in
box

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

17 November 1988

I attach a copy of a letter which Lord Marshall of Goring, Chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, has sent the Prime Minister about the Soviet Union's civil nuclear power programme.

Strictly speaking, Lord Marshall's letter does not require a reply. But I think that the Prime Minister would wish to send him one. Could you therefore let me have a suitable draft, by Thursday, 24 November. You will wish, no doubt, to consult the Department of Energy about the terms of the reply and I am therefore sending them a copy of this letter.

Finally, you will note that Lord Marshall has marked his letter 'Personal'. I should be grateful therefore if knowledge of it could be kept within the two departments; it should not, under any circumstances, be mentioned to the CEGB.

N. L. WICKS

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

15 November 1988

I am writing to acknowledge your letter of 15 November to the Prime Minister about the Russian nuclear power programme. Your letter arrived just after the Prime Minister had departed for the USA. But I will make sure she sees it as soon as she returns.

N.L. Wicks

The Lord Marshall of Goring, CBE, FRS.

RJ

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY GENERATING BOARD

Sudbury House, 15 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AU. Telephone 01-634 5111

*From the Chairman
The Lord Marshall of Goring Kt, CBE, FRS*

15 November 1988

PERSONAL

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Dear Prime Minister

I write this letter, partly from its intrinsic interest, but mostly because it may be relevant to your general discussions with Mr Gorbachev.

The American, French and Russian nuclear utilities have invited me to take the lead in setting up a new international organisation which will maximise nuclear safety by bringing about direct contact and emulation between all organisations operating nuclear power reactors. This represents our collective response to the dreadful Chernobyl accident. The Russians have been positive and cooperative and I have been impressed with the Ministers concerned - Shcherbina, Loukonin, and Lapshin. But I have a special admiration for Dr Abagyan, one of the heroes of the Chernobyl rescue operation and the new Director of their new safety institute.

Abagyan tells me that sometime ago he was summoned to meet Mr Gorbachev for the first time and he was given a thorough grilling. Mr Gorbachev said that he had previously been briefed that the Chernobyl accident came about as the result of an operational error but he now understood that not to be the case. He understood, from a foreign source, that Chernobyl had a fundamental design flaw.

Apparently, Mr Gorbachev revealed an understanding of the accident which reminded Abagyan of the presentations 'which Lord Marshall had given'. Of course, Abagyan confirmed in his own words the broad sense of what I had said and went on to stress to Mr Gorbachev that all the Russian reactors had now been modified so that they could never have a positive power coefficient. Mr Gorbachev took note that his briefing from a foreign source was more accurate than that from the old nuclear establishment.

Since that time, the new Russian nuclear establishment have consulted amongst themselves and decided that Mr Gorbachev's knowledge and interest in this particular matter must have stemmed from his conversations with you. If this is true, you may take some satisfaction in the knowledge that Gorbachev acted so positively to whatever it is you said to him: furthermore he found your advice to be correct although it contradicted what his previous advisors had told him. Whatever the truth of the story, my Russian nuclear colleagues now have a high respect for the 'Thatcher' effect.

Their guess, that you are the foreign source, may be incorrect and if so I apologise for bothering you. I have marked this letter 'Personal' and have copied it to no-one.

If you would like a briefing on the Russian civil nuclear scene following Chernobyl I would, of course, be happy to supply one.

Yours sincerely

Walter Marshall

Marshall of Goring