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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 December 1988

PRESIDENT GORBACHEV'S VISIT

The Soviet Ambassador came to see me this afternoon in a great hurry, immediately on his return from Moscow, to raise two matters about President Gorbachev's visit, which he described as very important.

In general President and Mrs. Gorbachev are very happy with the programme. But on the first afternoon they would like the sightseeing tour to be very unofficial and informal. They would be delighted if the Prime Minister would accompany them to Westminster Abbey. Thereafter they would like to go off virtually on their own with just the Soviet Ambassador and a "protocol official", to do the remainder of the tour. No other members of the Soviet party would accompany them. They made it clear that Mrs. Gorbachev would stay with her husband throughout the tour and would not want to go off and do anything separate such as Covent Garden.

The second matter concerned the morning of 14 December. To cut a long story short, Mrs. Gorbachev was insisting that her husband go back to the Soviet Embassy from his meeting with the Prime Minister to accompany her to the Palace. This would involve three journeys and might cut into the time allowed for the second meeting with the Prime Minister. In discussion we identified two possible options: the Prime Minister would go to the Soviet Embassy for the second meeting from 10.00 until 11.00 a.m.: or Mr. Gorbachev would come to No.10 for the second meeting from 09.45 to 10.45 a.m. I will rapidly consult the Prime Minister on which she prefers and let you know. In the event that she goes to the Soviet Embassy, the encounter with the press in Downing Street would be after the working lunch on 13 December.

I am copying this letter to Tom Jeffery (Department of Education and Science).

(C.D. POWELL)

Stephen Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.