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CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

PRESIDENT GORBACHEV'S VISIT: POSSIBLE INVITATION TO THE QUEEN

Sir Percy Cradock's note attached puts the case against The Queen accepting an invitation to the Soviet Union. Personally I doubt whether Gorbachev will now issue one. But if he does, I think The Queen should be advised to accept but point out that her programme of foreign visits would preclude her from taking up the invitation for some considerable period ahead. [24.11.88]

I think Gorbachev is more likely to invite you to pay another visit. I imagine that you will want to accept. We shall need to think carefully about presentation and how to handle the inevitable allegations that you are trying to elbow The Queen out of the way. It is of course complete and utter nonsense but it will be said all the same. The answer is that yours would be a working visit and should therefore be welcome to all those in the United Kingdom who want to see us make progress towards the sort of relations with the Soviet Union which would make a Royal visit in due course more feasible.

C.D.P.

C. D. POWELL

4 December 1988

SLHBCM

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PRIME MINISTER

24 November 1988

See 4/12

GORBACHEV VISIT: A POSSIBLE INVITATION
TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

As you have made clear, the press comment to date on this subject is entirely speculative. Nevertheless it would be natural for the issue to arise in a real sense during Gorbachev's visit and in prudence we should consider what advice you would give in that event.

A variety of arguments are advanced in favour of accepting an invitation

- a) we are in friendly relations with the Soviet Union and Gorbachev, now the Soviet Head of State, is warmly welcome in this country. Reciprocity should apply.
- b) We have no illusions about Soviet internal or external policies. But Her Majesty has visited other countries we do not entirely approve of. She has visited China, a communist state, highly authoritarian and with a bad human rights record.
- c) The argument of encouragement and reward. Gorbachev is transforming the internal Soviet scene. We wish his reforms well. You yourself have spoken of reaching out across the divide. What better way of expressing these sentiments and encouraging further reform than for The Queen to go to the Soviet Union? This argument pops up in surprising quarters - witness Ronald Butt in the Times today.

I am not impressed by these arguments. On a) we must look at a visit by the Queen, not in the narrow context of reciprocity but in the wider context of our general relations with the country concerned and British interests. On b), China presents no threat to us, indeed confers a strategic benefit by distracting Soviet attention. But even here we were careful to avoid a visit by the Queen until the Hong Kong issue had been amicably settled, leaving no real outstanding problems between ourselves and China. We have a very long way to go before we reach a similar point in our relations with the Soviet Union. As to c), as you have repeatedly made clear, while wishing Gorbachev's reforms well, we must keep up our guard on Soviet military activities and their longer term foreign policy objectives.

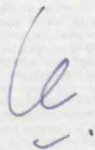
The nub of the matter is that the Soviet Union remains the principal external threat to this country and Western Europe. Gorbachev's internal reforms, limited in any case in that their objective is only a more efficient communist system, have so far not diminished that threat. In some respects they have made it more acute, since they have made it harder for some Western statesmen, let alone Western public opinion, to recognise the continuing danger and to make appropriate political and military provision to meet it. A common view in this country is that the talk about the Soviet threat was all right in the days of Krushchev and Brezhnev, but now under Gorbachev everything has changed. A visit by the Queen to the Soviet Union would be seen as confirmation of this view; it would be interpreted as a laying on of hands; and it would have a profoundly misleading effect on public opinion, making sensible foreign and defence policies very much harder to pursue.

As you know, I have put this view in our talks on several occasions. I would rest my case on it, not on any reservations relating to the murder of the Romanovs in 1917. This may be a factor in Her Majesty's thinking, though I

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would suspect not a potent one now.

I have not attempted to consider tactical or presentational questions in this minute. And the Russians may not make a bid after the recent press comment. But if they do, on the question of substance I would strongly recommend your advice should be that a visit would not be appropriate at this time.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. Cradock', with a small flourish at the end.

PERCY CRADOCK

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Mr Hemans, Soviet Dept

Invitation to The Queen to visit the Soviet Union

The following records the Secretary of State's account of his conversation with the Prime Minister on this subject this afternoon. It will not be minuted by Mr Powell. On the Secretary of State's instruction, this minute is being given only a limited circulation. It is personal to those to whom it is addressed. No 10 do not want any follow-up action at all at this stage.

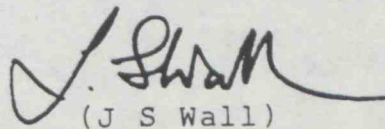
The Secretary of State told the Prime Minister that we were not operating on the assumption that Anglo/Soviet relations were irreversibly on an upward trend. We had envisaged a general warming, eg visits by Prince Edward as Patron of the National Youth Theatre in 1989 and by the Princess Royal for British Week in Kiev in 1990. By then, we should know whether the idea of a State Visit in 1992 or 1993 would be advisable.

If Mr Gorbachev did issue an invitation to The Queen to visit the Soviet Union, the Prime Minister would be asked about it at her press conference. She might speak on the following lines:

"The Queen thanked President Gorbachev for his invitation for which She was most grateful. She told him that Her programme was decided upon a long time in advance but that She hoped it would be possible in due course for Her to visit the Soviet Union."

We would not need to say whether this constituted acceptance in principle or not. It might be necessary to make clear that The Queen would of course look to advice from Her Ministers as to when a visit to the Soviet Union should be made. There were already half a dozen outstanding invitations from other Heads of State.

The Prime Minister indicated her assent to the kind of formulation proposed by the Secretary of State. I expect to revert to this subject with Mr Powell in due course.


(J S Wall)

23 November 1988