PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T186/88

Delivered by hand to Ambassador

File SA
CCPC
FCO
'T'.

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Subject cc Mast

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 December 1988

Dear Mr. Gorbachev,

I was very distressed by the news of the terrible earthquake in Armenia, with such heavy loss of life. It is indeed a calamity and I would ask you to convey my deepest sympathy to the families of the victims, and to all those who have suffered loss and injury. I hope you will let me know if there is any way at all in which the United Kingdom can help in the relief efforts. We shall also be encouraging the European Community to offer assistance.

Your Ambassador has delivered to me your message explaining that you will be returning direct to the Soviet Union from New York, and thus postponing your visit to the United Kingdom. I entirely understand this: your place must be at home at a time of such tragedy, and I know you would feel this very strongly. People in Britain will of course be disappointed not to see you and Mrs. Gorbachev, but they too will understand and will look forward to welcoming you as soon as fresh dates can be found.

May I take the opportunity to congratulate you on your speech at the United Nations. I have warmly welcomed your proposed reductions in Soviet conventional forces and armaments as an important step towards securing a better

balance of forces in Europe. It holds out new hope - and makes it all the more important that we should meet soon to discuss the way ahead.

Once more I send you my deepest sympathy for the victims of the earthquake.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely

Ronald Reagan

His Excellency Mr. M. S. Gorbachev

FILE EAM A12

CC FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1988

Dear Sir Peter,

As you will have heard, Mr Gorbachev's visit to London next week has had to be postponed because of the terrible earthquake in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the Soviet Union to direct the relief efforts. This is entirely understandable, but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare a good programme for his visit. I would like to say how much I appreciate all the hard work which you, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Meynell, Commander Vaness and Detective Chief Superintendent Parker and Detective Chief Inspector Blackmore and their staffs put into preparing for what would have been a particularly important and demanding visit. I am confident that it will not be wasted.
Mr Gorbachev has told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the United Kingdom as soon as he can. While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you for the same help and co-operation as you so kindly gave on this occasion.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

Sir Peter Imbert Q.P.M.

MRM

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
OF THE METROPOLIS

Sir Peter Imbert QPM

NEW SCOTLAND YARD
BROADWAY LONDON SW1H OBG

R29/12

21 December 1988

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

PAS 29/12

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for letting me know about the cancellation of Mr Gorbachev's visit to London.

I will certainly pass on to Deputy Assistant Commissioner Meynell, Commander Veness, Detective Chief Superintendent Parker and Detective Chief Inspector Blackmore and their staffs your kind words concerning their preparation for the visit. We look forward to providing every assistance to Mr Gorbachev for any future visit that may be envisaged.

Yours sincerely

Peter Imbert

P M Imbert

FILE EAM A12

CC FCO

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1988

Dear Mr. Proctor.

As you will have heard, Mr Gorbachev's visit to London next week has had to be postponed because of the terrible earthquake in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the Soviet Union to direct the relief efforts. This is entirely understandable, but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard preparing for the visit. I would like to say how much I appreciate all the work which you and the British Airport Authorities staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit. In particular, the assistance given by Mr Jerry Castle and Mr Robin Baxendale was invaluable. These visits tend to come up at very short notice and it is heartening to know that we have such willing and competent back-up. I am confident that your work will not be wasted. Mr Gorbachev has told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the United Kingdom as soon as he can. While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you for the same help and co-operation as you so kindly gave on this occasion.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

A. C. Proctor, Esq.

mm

File GAMAR

cc FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1988

Dear Mr. Kelly.

As you will have heard, Mr Gorbachev's visit to London next week has had to be postponed because of the terrible earthquake in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the Soviet Union to direct the relief efforts. This is entirely understandable, but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare a good programme for his visit. I would like to say how much I appreciate all the hard work which you and your staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit to your works. I am confident that it will not be wasted. Mr Gorbachev has told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the United Kingdom as soon as he can. While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you for the same help and co-operation as you so kindly gave on this occasion.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

M. Kelly, Esq.

Mem

FILE EA MAIR

CC FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1988

Dear Lord Mayor,

As you will have heard, Mr Gorbachev's visit to London next week has had to be postponed because of the terrible earthquake in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the Soviet Union to direct the relief efforts. This is entirely understandable, but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare a good programme for his visit. I would like to say how much I appreciate all the hard work which you, the Remembrancer and your staff put into preparing for Mr Gorbachev's Reception at the Mansion House. I am confident that it will not be wasted. Mr Gorbachev has told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the United Kingdom as soon as he can. While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you for the same help and co-operation as you so kindly gave on this occasion.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of London

MCM

FILE GAM A12

CC FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1988

My dear Dean,

As you will have heard, Mr Gorbachev's visit to London next week has had to be postponed because of the terrible earthquake in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the Soviet Union to direct the relief efforts. This is entirely understandable, but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare a good programme for his visit. I would like to say how much I appreciate all the hard work which you, Canon Routledge and your staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit to the Cathedral. I am also most grateful to you for having arranged for the children of Sir John Cass's school to be present at the Cathedral during the proposed visit. I am confident that it will not be wasted. Mr Gorbachev has told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the United Kingdom as soon as he can. While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you for the same help and co-operation as you so kindly gave on this occasion.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Very Reverend The Dean of St. Paul's

MRM

(2)

From: The Very Reverend ERIC EVANS, M.A.,

Dean of St Paul's

THE DEANERY
9 AMEN COURT
LONDON EC4M 7BU
Tel.: 01-236 2827

R 19/12

15 December 1988

Rt Minister

(enclosed with Xmas card)

CDP 19/xii

The Rt Hon the Prime Minister,
Mrs Margaret Thatcher, PC
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

It was extraordinarily kind of you, when you must be so busy at this time of year, to write me such a warm letter following the postponement of President Gorbachev's visit to St Paul's.

Although our staff and choir boys, and the children of Sir John Cass's School were naturally disappointed, everyone fully understood the reason, and I have personally written to President Gorbachev expressing our sympathy.

Now, we shall look forward to a visit next year, and it would be splendid if you also were able to accompany him.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you and Mr Thatcher a very Happy Christmas.

With sincere thanks, every good wish and Blessing,

Yours,

Eric Evans

FILE

EAM A12

cc FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1988

My dear Dean,

As you will have heard, Mr Gorbachev's visit to London next week has had to be postponed because of the terrible earthquake in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the Soviet Union to direct the relief efforts. This is entirely understandable, but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare a good programme for his visit. I would like to say how much I appreciate all the hard work which you, Stuart Holmes and your staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit to the Cathedral. I am confident that it will not be wasted. Mr Gorbachev has told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the United Kingdom as soon as he can. While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you for the same help and co-operation as you so kindly gave on this occasion.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Very Reverend Michael Mayne
Dean of Westminster

MRM

FILE

EAM A12

cc FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1988

Dear Mr Robbins,

As you will have heard, Mr Gorbachev's visit to London next week has had to be postponed because of the terrible earthquake in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the Soviet Union to direct the relief efforts. This is entirely understandable, but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare a good programme for his visit. I would like to say how much I appreciate all the hard work which you, Mr Hebditch, and your staff put into preparing for Mrs Gorbacheva's visit to the museum. I am confident that it will not be wasted. Mr Gorbachev has told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the United Kingdom as soon as he can. While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you for the same help and co-operation as you so kindly gave on this occasion.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

M. Robbins, Esq., C.B.E.

MRM

the Museum of London

PL 19/12 ②

CF PPS

Prime Minister

CDP 20 xii

16 December 1988

MT

Dear Prime Minister,

It was very kind of you, among all your preoccupations, to write as you did on 9 December about the postponement of Mr Gorbachev's visit to London and the proposed visit of Mrs Gorbacheva to the Museum of London. I am glad to read that they may be expected to visit London before too long.

A number, though a small number, of the staff at the Museum had to be involved in the preparations that we were making for Mrs Gorbacheva's visit, and they are naturally disappointed that it did not come off this week. We are all pleased to hear that the time spent may not have been wasted; and if it is decided to include a visit to the Museum in the postponed programme, you may be sure that we shall respond with great willingness.

Yours sincerely

Michael Robbins

(Michael Robbins,
Chairman of the Board of Governors.)

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP.

The Museum of London London Wall London EC2Y 5HN Telephone 01-600 3699

Soviet union: visit of
Gorbachev 92

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

8 December 1988

Dear Charles,

Mr Gorbachev's Visit

We had a word on the telephone about follow-up action in the light of the cancellation of Mr Gorbachev's visit.

We think it would be greatly appreciated by all concerned if the Prime Minister felt able to send letters of appreciation to the principals of those organisations that Mr Gorbachev was to have visited. I enclose drafts accordingly.

Yours ever,

(L Parker)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:
The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

Reference

Your Reference
EDMA12

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:

M Robbins Esq CBE
Chairman of the Board of Governors
Museum of London
London Wall
LONDON EC2

Copies to:

SUBJECT: Mr Gorbachev's

As you will have heard ~~the Soviet Secretary General's~~ visit to London next week has ~~unfortunately~~ had to be postponed, because of the terrible earthquake ~~tragedy~~ in Armenia. He quite naturally felt that he must return at once to the devastated area to direct the relief efforts.

I would like to ~~express my~~ say how much appreciation ~~for~~ all the hard work that you, Mr Hebditch and your staff put into preparing for Mrs Gorbacheva's visit to the Museum. I am confident that it will not be wasted.

Mr Gorbachev has ~~indicated his intention~~ told me that he hopes to take up the invitation to visit the UK as soon as his programme allows. ~~It is of course not possible at this stage to determine the precise content of Mrs Gorbacheva's programme in the UK on the next occasion, but should a visit to the Museum again prove appropriate, I hope that~~ While we cannot be sure that the programme would be exactly the same for a future visit, I hope very much that we can look to you ~~would feel able to offer~~ for the same ~~admirable~~ help & cooperation as you ~~did~~ gave on this occasion.

"This is entirely understandable but also, of course, disappointing for all those who had worked so hard to prepare ~~for~~ ~~this visit~~ a good programme for his visit."

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:

The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

Reference

Your Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret
Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

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CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:

Sir Peter Imbert QPM
Commissioner of the Metropolis
New Scotland Yard
Broadway
LONDON SW1H OBG

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

As you will have heard the Soviet Secretary General's visit to London next week has unfortunately had to be postponed, because of the earthquake tragedy in Armenia.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work you, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Meynell, Commander Vaness and Detective Chief Superintendent Parker and Detective Chief Inspector Blackmore and their staffs put into preparing for what would have been a particularly important and demanding visit.

Mr Gorbachev has indicated his intention to take up the invitation to visit the UK as soon as his programme allows. It is of course not possible at this stage to determine the precise content of his programme in the UK on the next occasion, but I hope that you will feel able to offer the same admirable cooperation as you did on this occasion.

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

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The Prime Minister

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

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Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:
A C Proctor Esq
Managing Director
Heathrow Airport Ltd
D'Albiac House
Hounslow
MIDDX TW6 1JN

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

As you will have heard the Soviet Secretary General's visit to London next week has unfortunately had to be postponed, because of the earthquake tragedy in Armenia.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work you and the British Airport Authorities staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit. In particular the assistance given by Mr Jerry Castle and Mr Robin Baxendale was invaluable. These visits tend to come up at very short notice and it is heartening to know that we have such willing and competent back-up.

Mr Gorbachev has indicated his intention to take up the invitation to visit the UK as soon as his programme allows. I hope that you and your staff will feel able to offer the same admirable cooperation as you did on this occasion.

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:
The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

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Your Reference

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Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:

M Kelly Esq
Managing Director
Sortex Ltd
Pudding Mill Lane
LONDON E15

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

As you will have heard the Soviet Secretary General's visit to London next week has unfortunately had to be postponed, because of the earthquake tragedy in Armenia.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work you and your staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit to your works.

Mr Gorbachev has indicated his intention to take up the invitation to visit the UK as soon as his programme allows. It is of course not possible at this stage to determine the precise content of his programme in the UK on the next occasion, but should a visit to Sortex Ltd again prove appropriate, I hope that you would feel able to offer the same admirable cooperation as you did on this occasion.

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:
The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

Reference

Your Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

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Secret
Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:

The Rt Hon the Lord Mayor of London
Alderman Sir Christopher Collett GBE
The Mansion House
LONDON EC4N 8BH

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

As you will have heard the Soviet Secretary General's visit to London next week has unfortunately had to be postponed, because of the earthquake tragedy in Armenia.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work you, the Remembrancer and your staff put into preparing for Mr Gorbachev's Reception at the Mansion House.

Mr Gorbachev has indicated his intention to take up the invitation to visit the UK as soon as his programme allows. It is of course not possible at this stage to determine the precise content of his programme in the UK on the next occasion, but should a Reception at the Mansion House again prove appropriate, I hope that you would feel able to offer the same admirable cooperation as you did on this occasion.

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:
The Prime Minister
DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

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Your Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

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Confidential
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Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:
The Very Reverend Michael Mayne
Dean of Westminster
The Deanery
WESTMINSTER
LONDON SW1

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

As you will have heard the Soviet Secretary General's visit to London next week has unfortunately had to be postponed, because of the earthquake tragedy in Armenia.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work you, Stuart Holmes and your staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit to the Cathedral.

Mr Gorbachev has indicated his intention to take up the invitation to visit the UK as soon as his programme allows. When we know the new dates I hope you would feel able to offer the same admirable cooperation as you did on this occasion.

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:

The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

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Your Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

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Restricted
Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

Enclosures flag(s) .....

TO:

The Very Rev. Eric Evans
Dean of St Pauls
St Pauls Churchyard
LONDON EC4

Copies to:

SUBJECT:

As you will have heard the Soviet Secretary General's visit to London next week has unfortunately had to be postponed, because of the earthquake tragedy in Armenia.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the hard work you, Canon Routledge and your staff put into preparing for Mr and Mrs Gorbachev's visit to the Cathedral. I am also most grateful to you for having arranged for the children of Sir John Cass's school to be present at the Cathedral during the proposed visit.

Mr Gorbachev has indicated his intention to take up the invitation to visit the UK as soon as his programme allows. It is of course not possible at this stage to determine the precise content of his programme in the UK on the next occasion, but should a visit to St Pauls again prove appropriate, I hope that you would feel able to offer the same admirable cooperation as you did on this occasion.

Keston College
Heathfield Road Keston Kent BR2 6BA UK
Telephone 0689 50116 Telex 897684 KESCOL

(4)

CDD
14/12

From: The Rev. Michael Bourdeaux
General Director

14 December 1988

R 19/12

Ms Sue Goodchild,
10 Downing Street,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AA.

Dear Ms Goodchild,

It was a signal honour to be invited to have dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev on 13 December. If there is a suitable opportunity, please thank the Prime Minister and Mr. Thatcher for their kindness and consideration in this. Needless to say, one looks forward to the postponed visit with probably an extended itinerary. My own plans include a visit to the Soviet Union but in this I am dependent, as always, on the willingness of the Soviets to give me a visa. A meeting with Mr. Gorbachev would have helped.

Meanwhile, I continue to be active on the Soviet Committee of the Centre for Policy Studies, which is preparing briefing materials for the Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Bourdeaux

Reverend Michael Bourdeaux

Dictated but not personally signed

PA

BBC RADIO FOUR

TODAY

DECEMBER 8, 1988

06.47

PRESENTER:

Mr Gorbachev is cutting short his visit to New York and flying straight back to the Soviet Union because of the earthquake in Armenia. It means of course that he will not be coming to Britain.

We have on the telephone now, from 10 Downing

Street, Mrs Thatcher, who I gather has just heard the news, Prime Minister (sic).

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
Hello, good morning.

I heard it on your news briefing. It was the first indication we've had, but of course we understand. When there's a tragedy like that Mr Gorbachev has to go home; anything else would be unthinkable. And then I heard later that you didn't know whether I'd heard so I thought I'd better let you know I had.

PRESENTER:
Well, thank you for calling us.

Have you been in touch since then with the Soviet Foreign Ministry or with Mr Gorbachev's people?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
No, I haven't. It's a little bit early but we'll get onto the Ambassador later and say that it's quite understandable and we hope

he'll be able to come soon because we were all looking forward to it. But when there's trouble like that home is the place to be and his people would expect it and he's just the sort of person who would do it.

PRESENTER:
I don't know whether you heard, I was talking to Mr Gerasimov earlier and asked him ... (interrupted).

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
Yes, indeed, I heard the, that's why I thought I'd better ring you to say that I heard through your programme.

PRESENTER:
Do you have any idea now when he might be able to come? You obviously will renew the invitation for the earliest possible opportunity?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
We will try to make ourselves available whenever he can come. We were very much

looking forward to the talks, particularly in view of his United Nations speech. Of course we'll make ourselves available, but I think he will have his hands full for the time being. But any time he wants to come we'll try and reset things up.

I'm afraid we, too, will have a lot of disappointed people, but they will understand as well.

PRESENTER:
Well now you've mentioned the United Nations speech. Since we have you on the telephone, Mrs Thatcher, can I ask you for some reaction to that?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
I thought you'd do this. I haven't read the whole thing, obviously, and as you know, I usually do, but when I got back from Yorkshire yesterday evening I did have a quick briefing on it and as you know we welcomed it because it is a very, very positive step forward and we shall be looking at it in detail. It takes

things one further step in the direction in which we were seeking because we said that after the 50 per cent reductions in strategic we should all be looking at reductions in conventional. So that's just exactly what we wanted.

PRESENTER:
Ought we now to react in some way ourselves? Ought the West to react to make some offer?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
Well, I think according to the briefing I had, and we must look at the details, that it reduces their superiority in conventional weapons from about 3 to 1 to about 2 to 1, so it is a very, very fundamental change that he's making. But I don't think we can go further than that. You know what I usually say - please let me look at all the details before I comment further.

PRESENTER:
Well I wonder whether you think to what an extent Mr Gorbachev is making a virtue out of

necessity? He has to cut his military spending and this may be a way of making a grand public relations gesture or do you think it's much more than that?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
Well, I think it's both. Yes, of course he wishes to cut his military spending because they have spent such an enormous proportion of their national income on it and now he realises he can't go on doing that because people want to have a higher standard of living. But equally he will be as determined to defend the Soviet Union as we are to defend the West, and so I think it's both, but just, it's a very positive step forward and let's not undermine that in any way. Let's have a look at it and then see what we can do.

As you know we were always working together in the Alliance to get a whole kind of comprehensive agreement about the strategy of defence and reduction in armaments so that we could tackle the conventional weapons reduction with an agreed policy.

PRESENTER:

He used ... (interrupted).

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

Let's just stick at the moment. I think the earthquake is so devastating and according to what I heard, the tragedy is so great that really we wish to offer our deepest sympathies to the Soviet people and to the bereaved and we're certain that all of the emergency services will be mobilised to help and anything that we can do to help, of course, we'll be only too pleased to do.

PRESENTER:

Mrs Thatcher, thank you very much indeed for calling us.

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

Thank you very much, Mr Humphries. Good bye.

PRESENTER:

Good bye.

END

PA

LBC

AM

DECEMBER 8, 1988

07.20

PRESENTER:

And we are now going to speak to the Prime Minister live on the AM programme. The Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, is cutting short his visit to America and flying home early because of a devastating earthquake in Armenia which has killed thousands of people. The decision means Mr Gorbachev will cancel a scheduled visit he was due to make to Cuba and it seems

likely he will also postpone his visit to Britain next week, but while in New York he made a significant speech to the UN about cuts in Soviet conventional forces. We now speak to the Prime Minister.

Good morning.

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
Good morning.

PRESENTER:
How important do you rate the speech by Mr Gorbachev?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
Oh, I think it was an enormously important speech. I've not yet been able to read it in full detail, but we have the broad points and I think it is a very positive contribution to world affairs.

PRESENTER:
What do you rate Prime Minister as the most important parts of it? I know you haven't had

a chance to read it in full but you obviously have seen it in headline form?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

(fade in) ... I think obviously are his proposals for a reduction in conventional forces. Both the proposals and the fact that he made them, it indicates that he is wanting, I think, to reduce the total amount spent on armaments. They have an enormous superiority in conventional forces, it's about three to one at present, and we did a quick calculation and from what we know up to date, believe it will take that down to two to one, but there is still of course a superiority.

PRESENTER:

Do you think that after his speech Mr Gorbachev is looking for any positive response from the West?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

I think, no, not immediately in that way, because the actual negotiations are not really done from speech to speech, they're done at the

table, at the negotiating table in Geneva. He knows that NATO was working on an agreed defence strategy, and against that background we were going to put forward our own proposals on conventional disarmament, or reductions in armament, so he's very much aware of that and he'll expect that to be coming out. But it is one of the things we were asking for because of their enormous superiority in that field.

PRESENTER:

There is still a feeling, is there not, in the West that whatever Mr Gorbachev says we should not really trust him. Is that a view that you hold?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

No, I don't think that's a view that I hold. We obviously look at the facts on the ground all the time and we must because once you make a false decision on defence it would take you years to catch up and as you know we are very, very firm that we never let down our guard. But what I thought you were going to ask me about was the earthquake that we heard

reported. I heard it on the news and heard that Mr Gorbachev naturally wanted to go home. Home is where you should be in a terrible tragedy like that; it would be unthinkable that he should do anything else, and I wanted to say that we perfectly understand. When these things happen in world affairs, we're all human flesh and blood, and every world politician understands that in these circumstances other plans must be postponed until later.

PRESENTER:
Will Britain be offering any aid to Armenia, Mrs Thatcher?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:
Any help that we can give, of course we shall give.

PRESENTER:
Now, you must be very disappointed, I know you understand fully the reasons for Mr Gorbachev going back to Russia, but you must be very disappointed that he has to postpone his visit.

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

Everyone is disappointed, but everyone understands that with such a thing on his mind he couldn't possibly undertake talks and everyone understands that you have to go home and want to go home and must be with your own people. Out of these terrible tragedies sometimes people can work together in a way that they wouldn't otherwise so let's hope that happens in this case.

PRESENTER:

Would it have been a ceremonial visit, generally speaking, or a business trip that he would have made?

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

Of course, there would have been some ceremony to welcome such a distinguished world visitor, but its main purpose was really so that we could have extended talks and then so that Mr and Mrs Gorbachev could also carry out one or two other visits and meet other people, and of course he was to be received by Her Majesty the Queen.

PRESENTER:

Prime Minister, thank you for talking to the AM programme this morning.

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

I'm sorry it was such a sad occasion.

PRESENTER:

Yes indeed.

PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER:

Thank you. Good bye.

PRESENTER:

Thank you.

END