



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 February 1989

Dear Charles,

Action taken
with Sussex
University.

CDP 9/2.

Visit of Mr Gorbachev

Thank you for your letter of 3 February about an Honorary Degree from the University of Sussex.

The Foreign Secretary's view remains as set out in my letter to you of 24 November 1988, namely that the programme is already likely to be very tight, and Sussex would not necessarily be either Mr Gorbachev's or our first choice.

Yours,
Stephen Wall

(J S Wall)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

SOVIET UNION: USSR of Gorbachev
Pg 3



DS2 AOA

NO ACK



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

3 February 1989

VISIT OF MR GORBACHEV

I enclose a copy of a letter from Sir Leslie Fielding about the possibility of awarding Mr Gorbachev an Honorary Degree from the University of Sussex during his visit to the United Kingdom.

This subject was raised through a slightly different channel when Mr Gorbachev's visit was originally contemplated for December last year. The conclusion we reached then was that it would certainly be impracticable for Mr Gorbachev to travel to Sussex to receive the degree and anyway the idea was not necessarily appropriate. I should be grateful if you could let me know whether that remains the Foreign Secretary's view, in which case I will reply to Leslie Fielding appropriately.

C. D. POWELL

Richard Gozney, Esq.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R. Gozney', located in the bottom right corner of the page.



UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

From the Vice-Chancellor
Sir Leslie Fielding KCMG
and Lady Fielding

Swanborough Manor
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 3PF

1 February 1989

CONFIDENTIAL

Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

My Dear Charles,

VISIT OF MR GORBACHEV

I saw from yesterday's papers that the visit is now on again, for 5 - 7 April. It will clearly be an important event in the development of what we must all hope will prove to be a new and better phase in East-West relations in Europe.

In agreement with Lord Trafford, the Chairman of our Council, I should like to renew the University's confidential offer, if this would be helpful, to confer Honorary Doctorates of Law jointly on the Prime Minister and Mr Gorbachev during the visit.

The University ceremony could be brief: a short (3 minute) statement by a senior University officer, to present each Honorary Graduand; and a handshake and presentation of a scroll from myself, or from the University Chancellor (the Earl of March) if he is present. Graduands (and everyone on the University side) will need to robe and de-robe; and time might be needed for a photo-call. But total time need be no more than 20-25 minutes. A minimum of three University people would need to be present (Tony Trafford, myself and the Registrar, Dr Geoffrey Lockwood).

Location can be anywhere - perhaps best, for convenience and security at No. 10. An alternative scenario, if you wanted a photo session out of town, could be to hold the ceremony in one of the state rooms at Goodwood House, where the Earl of March lives. Security would not be a major problem there, since the House can be sealed off, and the grounds include an airfield (normally used by a private flying club) where a helicopter could land. But I have not consulted Charles March about it; and I imagine anyway that there would be no time for such an excursion.

Spoken to Sir
Leslie & explained
that this will not
be possible, in the
short time available.
CBP 9/2.

Some members of the University will not, on UK political grounds, very much like the award; but the international significance of the joint conferment will appeal to the great majority of academics; and I do not anticipate a serious row, apart from the ululations of the usual handful of "loony left" people on campus. We can override and discount them.

Perhaps I should explain how our procedures work? The award of an Honorary Degree is decided by majority vote in a Special Committee of which I am the Chairman. The proposal then normally has to be laid in advance on the table both of the Senate (an internal academic body chaired by me) and the Council (a lay-dominated external body chaired by Tony Trafford). The University regulations also, however, permit the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of Council to take "Chairman's" action on behalf of Senate and Council, in between their thrice yearly sessions, where circumstances of special urgency arise. Once awarded, a degree can only be subsequently withdrawn by a majority vote of both Senate and Council (unthinkable in this case - the Council is Centrist and Tony dominated).

This leads Tony Trafford and me to suggest, if the project were to go ahead, the following scenario:

- (a) Leak proof confidentiality for the present, until;
- (b) I convene the Honorary Degrees Committee, shortly after the next sessions of Senate and Council on 15 and 17 March. The formal decision is then taken. (I know from soundings that it will be carried by at least 7 votes out of 10 votes);
- (c) Lord Trafford and I take Chairman's action (which we are happy to do, and which would be tactically the best way of handling it) in deciding that the degree will be conferred between 5 and 7 April. An announcement can then be made if required;
- (d) the award is formally reported, "after action" as it were, to Senate and Council, at their respective sessions on 28 and 30 June.

I know what a lot will have to be squeezed into so short a time during this visit. But I thought I would set out on paper what we can do.

I suggest that, for the time being, written communications should be addressed to me here at my private residence, where the ex-Directory number is (0273) 479655. My direct line at the University is (0273) 678211.

One last thing. The degree of Honorary Doctor of Science has been offered to, and accepted by, Dr Sakharov and will be announced after Senate and Council next meet (in practice, on or after 17 March). Sakharov does not know when he will be able to come to receive it - probably not for some time. I assume (from what I read in the press of his attitude to Sakharov) that this will not embarrass Gorbachev; but you may wish to weigh that factor, if we go ahead.

Please let me know if the University of Sussex can be of assistance.

I am copying this letter to Tony Trafford at his home address; he has been consulted and fully concurs.

*Yours truly
Leeds*