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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

Defence Contacts with the Soviet Union

1. Thank you for your minute of 24 February, ^{at 12.00} in which you set out progress with the Soviet authorities about resumption of defence contacts. I am pleased to hear that the Russians have responded positively.

2. As far as ministerial visits are concerned, we have made it clear that we should welcome the inclusion of Defence Minister Yazov in Mr Gorbachev's visit in April. This is still open, although Shevardnadze implied in Vienna when I saw him that Yazov will not come. If the Russians choose not to take up this suggestion, I suggest that either the Prime Minister or I might use the visit to issue an invitation on your behalf to Yazov for a visit later this year. If you were happy with this, we could tip the Russians off in advance and possibly even steer them towards some dates. We could say that you would be happy to go there if that suited them better.

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3. A visit to Hungary in September would seem a good idea. I see no reason to hold up planning for this because of uncertainty over a Moscow visit. It would be preferable from all points of view not to visit Moscow and Budapest as part of the same trip. But I see no problem in your going to both in the same year, and do not think it matters much whether Budapest or Moscow comes first.

4. I am copying this to the Prime Minister and Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
10 March 1989

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FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

DEFENCE CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

Thank you for your helpful *at Flap* minute of 10th March. I am quite happy for you to proceed, as proposed, on issuing an invitation to Yazov to visit this country later this year. If, of course, Mr Gorbachev takes the initiative in issuing an invitation, I would very much like to take advantage of it.

2. We will now also proceed with arrangements for my visit to Hungary and are looking at dates in early September. I will, of course, keep you informed as this progresses.

3. I am copying this to the Prime Minister and to Sir Robin Butler.

A.Y.

Ministry of Defence

16 March 1989

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SOVIET UNION: Relations

Pt 12



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24h*

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

DEFENCE CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

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I was grateful for your minute of 5th December agreeing that we could begin to talk informally to the Soviet Authorities about resumption of defence contacts. We have now done so with the full involvement of your officials, and I am pleased to say that our approaches have been received positively. At a meeting on 20th February, representatives from the Soviet Embassy told my officials that they accepted our suggestions for an exchange of ship visits, an exchange between the Royal Air Force Staff College and the Gagarin Academy and for meetings between senior commanders in British Forces Germany and the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany. These are now being followed up through the Embassy in Moscow; we are looking at a list of possible further measures to propose to them.

2. At the meeting, the officials from the Soviet Embassy also made it clear that a meeting of Defence Ministers would be welcome. As you know, this is something which I too am anxious to arrange as soon as possible. It is still not clear whether General Yazov will accompany Mr Gorbachev to this country in April. If unfortunately he does not, we should take that opportunity to stress the desirability of an early meeting between Defence Ministers. Meanwhile, it might be helpful for our Embassy to give initial consideration to how best to proceed quickly if Yazov does not come in April: either I could visit Moscow or Yazov could come here. My preference would be for the former if a specific invitation



could be stimulated as my American and German and Turkish colleagues have recently done so; my French colleague is due to go there in April. I believe it is most important that the British voice on defence matters should also be fully in evidence in the Soviet Union.

3. I have also been invited to visit Hungary in September, and should like to accept. To do so would be in keeping with our policy of developing defence contacts with the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries; it would be particularly appropriate in view of the recent moves towards democratisation in Hungary for which it could be seen as a signal of approval. However, my priority would be a visit to the Soviet Union if that could be arranged and I should, therefore, be grateful to know that you would have no objections to my visiting both countries this year if that possibility were on offer.

4. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister and to Sir Robin Butler.

Ministry of Defence

24 February 1989

A.Y.

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