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PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH THE SOVIET DEFENCE MINISTER

You are to have an hour's meeting with the Soviet Defence Minister tomorrow. He will be accompanied by the Soviet Ambassador. George Younger will also be present.

He has long been rumoured to be for the chop and indeed only just survived confirmation by the Supreme Soviet last week, as a result of Mr Gorbachev's personal intervention.

Nonetheless, the meeting is important. It will be the first contact at Ministerial level since the expulsions, and to that extent marks the return of normality. It is also the first ever visit by a Soviet Defence Minister to the United Kingdom (or to a European NATO country) and therefore a significant step forward in our relations in that area.

You might start by referring to your message to Mr Gorbachev, explaining the coincidence of our Ministerial reshuffle. You particularly arranged for George Younger to stay on as Defence Minister to the end of the week so that he could act as General Yazov's host. You hope he will also take the opportunity to get to know Mr King.

You might then go on to make a few comments about the Soviet internal scene. We have been impressed by the pace and scale of political change, and continue to express our full support for Mr Gorbachev's efforts. We note the very considerable problems which he faces, but applaud the courage and determination with which he is tackling them.

On the defence side, there are three main areas to cover:

- Conventional Force Reductions. NATO's proposals are a major step forward and we hope there will be a positive Soviet response. The Soviets have complained because we

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do not distinguish between strike and defensive aircraft and deal only with US manpower in our proposals. The answer is that we do not think it makes sense to distinguish between different types of aircraft which have a combat capability. And on manpower, we think it sensible to deal only with US and Soviet-stationed forces, since these are the two countries with territories outside Europe. If he tries to tackle you on the need for maritime arms control, you should remind him that we need our maritime forces to redress the acute geographical asymmetry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the latter with its huge hinterland.

- Chemical Weapons. You will want to make the same point as you made to Mr Gorbachev viz that we still found it difficult to accept Soviet claims to have stopped production of CW, and to have only 50,000 tonnes of CW agent, and never to have deployed CW in Eastern Europe. We shall only get the confidence necessary for a CW Agreement when both sides are entirely open about their capabilities.

- Nuclear Weapons. Yazov tends to follow the propaganda line about abandoning nuclear deterrence and eliminating nuclear weapons by the year 2000. You are better equipped than anyone to counter these arguments.

CDP

C. D. POWELL
24 July 1989

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CCB/Dr.
RC

MO 6/18/4L

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 01-218 2111/3

24 July 1989

Dear Charles,

CALL BY THE SOVIET DEFENCE MINISTER, ARMY GENERAL DMITRI YAZOV
ON THE PRIME MINISTER: 1200-1300, 25TH JULY

The Soviet Defence Minister, Army General Dmitri Yazov will be calling on the Prime Minister at 1230 on Thursday 25th July. This meeting (and that with Deputy Prime Minister Biryukova) will be the first with Soviet Ministers in London since Mr Gorbachev's visit in April and the 19th May expulsions. The Prime Minister may therefore like to take the opportunity to reaffirm the Government's support for the Soviet reform programme and our firm commitment to the further strengthening of relations with the Soviet Union.

Political Background

2. The key development in the Soviet Union since late May has been the Inaugural session of the Congress of People's Deputies and the new Supreme Soviet. The debate in both has frequently been sharp, and may not have been welcome to General Yazov, as it focused on the Army among other sensitive issues (such as the leadership, privileges and the KGB). The Supreme Soviet also came close to refusing to confirm Yazov's appointment. Seventy-seven deputies voted against him and sixty-six abstained. Defeat was only averted by a vigorous intervention in his favour by Gorbachev himself. Despite its predominantly traditionalist composition, the Supreme Soviet rejected ten other Ministerial nominations including Deputy Prime Minister Kamentsev.

3. While the Prime Minister will obviously be aware of General Yazov's likely sensitivity on this subject, it would still be appropriate for her to express the interest felt by the British Government, Parliament and many other circles in Britain in the working of the new Congress and Supreme Soviet - which constitute the most far-reaching advance to date in the process of perestroika. The Prime Minister may also wish to express the Government's admiration for the contribution made by Mr Gorbachev as chairman of the Supreme Soviet, and the extent to which his role as architect and his skill as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet have won him yet further international recognition.

Charles Powell Esq
No 10 Downing Street



4. If the conversation moves to the Soviet Union's current economic problems (notably the shortages leading to the coal miner's strikes, and the growing nationality pressures), the Prime Minister may like to congratulate the Soviet leadership on the courage they have shown in recognising that reforms are bound to lead to the emergence of a plurality of voices and demands - a process which is pivotal in any open society. She might wish to add that while it is not for Western governments to interfere in matters which are internal questions for the Soviet Union, these problems can never be resolved until they and their root causes are honestly confronted. The Prime Minister could add that we are doing our best to help the reforms through providing training courses for Soviet managers.

5. On Defence issues, there are three main areas which the Prime Minister might discuss with Yazov:

The need for progress at the CFE talks

6. As the Prime Minister will be aware, the Warsaw Pact pressure on NATO to discuss manpower, helicopters and aircraft, and (less explicitly) to agree a timescale for reductions increased when the Warsaw Pact tabled its own proposals for zonal arrangements and ceilings, in May. NATO took the initiative again with President Bush's proposals tabled at the Summit. Formal proposals reflecting the Bush initiative were worked out and tabled in time for the end of the current round in Vienna on 13 July, an indication of the high priority we give to reaching an early agreement. Initial Soviet reactions (including that of Gen Yazov) have been welcoming, while noting that the West's proposals do not distinguish between strike/attack and defensive aircraft, and deal only with US manpower on the Western side.

7. A particular concern for the UK has been to ensure that our Dual Capable Aircraft (DCA) capability is preserved. Work on this indicates that the 15% cuts in aircraft can be found without touching our DCA. The full military implications of the NATO Summit initiative are now being analysed. As now expanded it would allow somewhat higher aircraft and helicopter holdings than the Warsaw Pact's proposals. The definition of aircraft is significantly different and there are no zonal restrictions on them, or on helicopters. The Bush proposal for US and Soviet forces in Europe on the other hand, is considerably lower than those proposed by the Warsaw Pact. The proposed NATO timescale, too, is much shorter than the Warsaw Pact's who had proposed completion by 1994 for the first phase of reductions.

8. The Prime Minister could develop the discussion with Yazov along the following lines:



- our expanded proposal tabled on 13 July is an indication of the high priority we attach to reaching an early agreement.
- Gratified by the degree of convergence in both alliances' proposals; hope that outstanding definitional problems will not prove too difficult.
- Look forward to a positive Soviet response when negotiations resume in September, and to rapid progress towards agreement.
- NATO manpower proposals address only US and Soviet stationed manpower; in view of differences between stationing forces by small European states within Europe, and movement of forces by super powers into the area that is a necessary distribution. Soviet Groups of Forces, at 600,000, is over ten times the size of BFG; we believe the forces of the two major stationing nations with extra ATTU territories to be the first priority.
- Do not believe it makes any sense to attempt to distinguish between different types of aircraft which have a combat capability.

9. General Yazov might well raise the need for maritime arms control. The Prime Minister might respond that the pressing need is to deal with the security problems posed by the huge imbalances in land forces; NATO's maritime forces are an essential part of our defence because of our need to protect reinforcement and supply routes, they help to redress the acute geographical asymmetry between the alliances whilst they cannot seize and hold territory.

The need for greater openness on Chemical Weapons

10. This is one area where we have yet to witness the greater Soviet openness about military matters which we are beginning to see in other areas. The continuation of these attitudes inevitably casts some shadow over other areas. Official level discussions following Mr Gorbachev's visit earlier this year have yielded minor clarification, but not removed our main concerns.

11. The Prime Minister could reiterate that we have considerable difficulties in accepting Soviet claims about their CW capabilities, including the claim to have stopped production; to have only 50,000 tonnes of CW agent; and to have never deployed CW in Eastern Europe. We are also concerned that Soviet research and development of new agents continues. The Prime Minister should emphasise that the confidence necessary for a truly global, comprehensive and effectively verifiable CW ban can only be built through greater openness about CW capabilities.



12. If Yazov refers to the lack of US openness, The Prime Minister should point out that the US have made available a great deal of information about their CW capabilities, including stockpile composition and the location of their CW production facilities.

The role of nuclear weapons

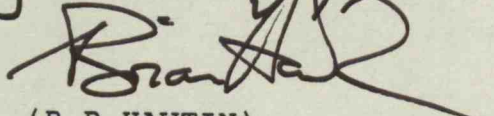
13. Yazov has been a strong advocate of the need to abandon nuclear deterrence and to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. To the French, he said that their independent deterrent (and ours) should be included in arms control negotiations when the time is right. With the Spanish he claimed that modernisation of Lance (and lengthening its range) would circumvent the INF Treaty. He appears to hold a deep distrust of the United States, and has - rather overtly - tried to emphasise differences of interest between Europe and North America.

14. On the general issue, the Prime Minister will wish to emphasise the unique role that nuclear weapons play in deterring any outbreak of conflict, and point out that they cannot be "dis-invented". To do their job effectively, these weapons need to be kept up to date where necessary and NATO is fully agreed on this. The Warsaw Pact is not in a position to criticise since it has already carried out an extensive modernisation programme covering both missiles and artillery.

15. On the issue of the UK's strategic deterrent, the Prime Minister should reiterate that our position is well known. We regard Polaris/Trident as the minimum credible force for deterrence. We have never said never to associating our deterrent with the arms control process. But before we could consider how best to contribute to the process very substantial cuts in superpower arsenals (beyond 50%) would be necessary; and no improvement in Soviet strategic defences.

16. The Prime Minister may wish to reaffirm our desire for a continuing substantial high level dialogue with the Soviet leadership, symbolised by General Yazov's own visit. She may like to mention the invitation to Prime Minister Ryzhkov to visit the UK.

17. I am copying this note to Stephen Wall (FCO) and to Sir Robin Butler.

Your sincerely


(B R HAWTIN)
 PS/S of S

YAZOV, ARMY GENERAL DIMITRY TIMOFEEVICH

MINISTER OF DEFENCE, USSR; CANDIDATE MEMBER OF POLITBURO

Born November 1923, Russian.

Fought on Leningrad front in World War II. Graduate of Frunze Military Academy and General Staff Academy.

- 1973 - Lieutenant General (in Azerbaijan).
- 1976-9 - Deputy Commander, Far East Military District.
- 1979-80 - Commander, Central Group of Forces, Czechoslovakia.
- 1980-84 - Commander, Central Asian Military District.
- 1984-87 - Commander, Far East Military District.
- 1987 - Deputy Minister of Defence, responsible for personnel.
- 1987 (May) - Minister of Defence.
- 1987 (June) - Full member of Central Committee and candidate member of Politburo.

Yazov's appointment as Minister of Defence in May 1987 (after the Rust incident) came as a surprise: he was promoted over several more senior figures. He may have come to the attention of Gorbachev in July 1986 when the Soviet leader met the "Command Staff" of the Far East Military District. Yazov has the reputation of being a strict and

demanding commander, one who takes a strong interest in the welfare of his officers and soldiers and has a good relationship with his colleagues.

He has not previously travelled to any European NATO country, but had three meetings with his US opposite number.

