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From the Private Secretary

15 December 1989

VISIT OF THE SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER

This is to bring you up-to-date with action on the visit of the Soviet Foreign Minister next week.

Bill
The Soviet Ambassador came to see me this morning to say that Mr Gorbachev was very keen for this visit to take place. Mr Shevardnadze could travel to London on the afternoon of Tuesday 19 December, after his visit to Brussels, but had to return to Moscow that night for a visit by the new Czechoslovak Prime Minister the next day. He would be available for talks from about 1500. I explained the Prime Minister could not in any event be available until after Questions and that she had an engagement which it would be very difficult to move immediately thereafter. It was unlikely, therefore, that the meeting could start until 1700.

I have subsequently put this to the Prime Minister who has agreed that we should offer a meeting starting at 1700 and I am so informing the Soviet Ambassador. The Prime Minister agrees that the Foreign Secretary should be present but would not want to extend participation beyond that. We shall be seeking similar restraint on the Soviet side.

BM
You will want to put in hand appropriate arrangements for transport and security. It occurs to me that we ought to offer a helicopter to Mr Shevardnadze and his immediate party back from Wellington Barracks to Heathrow so that his take-off for Moscow is not unduly delayed. I should be grateful if consideration could be given to this. I am sure the Prime Minister would very much like to have Richard Pollock to interpret if he is available.

Charles Powell

Richard Gozney Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Soviet Union: Rels PR

Ph. file
CQ.

Prime Minister,

Your proposal to meet ~~with~~ Mr. Shevardnadze in London was considered by Mr. Gorbachev. Mr. Gorbachev has instructed me to convey to you the following.

Mr. Gorbachev welcomes your initiative. Frankly speaking we also had an intention to exchange views with Britain's leadership at this important phase of the development of events in Europe. We believe that the continuation of the dialogue between our two countries is important and timely. That is why we accept your invitation with gratitude.

About the timing of the visit. In view of the fact that on December 20 the visit to Moscow of the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia is planned and on December 21 1989 a visit of the Foreign Minister of Mongolia is taking place, not to mention the second Congress of the USSR People's Deputies, we propose that the meeting be held in the second half of the day on December 19, 1989. Mr. Shevardnadze could come to London so as to begin the talks with you at 3 p.m.

He could depart for Moscow immediately after the completion of the talks.