



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 June 1990

Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's Visit: Armenia: The Church

The Catholicos, or Head of the Armenian Church, has told us, through his representative in London, that he is disappointed at the Prime Minister's programme for her few hours in Armenia. He does not believe that the Armenian Church is getting a sufficient look-in. He has reminded us that the Church chose Leninakan as the site for our school and persuaded the Armenian Government to agree.

The ruined church in the Prime Minister's programme was a museum, not a church, at the time of the earthquake. To get to it involves passing the main cathedral in Leninakan. The Catholicos suggests substituting a short visit to the cathedral and a walkabout outside it. He himself will have to be in Moscow for the enthronement of the new Patriarch. But he would ensure that the Prime Minister was suitably received.

We sympathise with the Catholicos; the secular authorities have secured most of the programme for themselves and it is a pity that the Armenian Church was not considered properly at an earlier stage in the planning. It would be reasonable to spend a few minutes with the Armenian Church, which has been extremely effective in organising relief as well as being influential in Armenia. Such a visit would also add media interest to the visit. The Embassy in Moscow point out that as the two buildings are so close together, it will be possible to add the cathedral without dropping a look at the ruined church.

I should be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister would be content. If so, we would instruct Moscow to negotiate this change with the Armenian authorities.

Yours ever,

Richard Gozney

(R H T Gozney)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street



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PC

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From the Private Secretary

1 June 1990

**PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ARMENIA:
THE CHURCH**

Thank you for your letter of 1 June about the disappointment expressed by the Head of the Armenian Church that the Prime Minister would not be visiting any of its churches during her visit. I must say that I had not realised this or that the reference to the ruined church in the programme was to a museum. I very much agree that we should do a short visit to the cathedral and a walkabout outside it, and will be grateful if this can be put to the authorities immediately.

CHARLES POWELL

Richard Gozney, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Ref. A090/1146

MR POWELL

*Please file with pp> to PM's
programme. CBP 15/5*

I met the Reverend Michael Bourdeaux (who is now a visiting fellow of St Edmund Hall, Oxford) at a lunch the other day. He said that he had not had much contact with the Prime Minister since her 1987 visit to the Soviet Union but, particularly given the dramatic increase in religious worship in the Soviet Union since glasnost, he hoped that she would be able to do something further to support Christian worship on her visit to Kiev. If he could be of any help to her, he would be delighted to - his telephone number, in case you do not have it, is 0865 747708.

R.R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

15 May 1990