

Prime Minister

Agree that C-in-C BAOR
should meet his Soviet opposite
number later this year?

MO 14/10

PRIME MINISTER

1 Should have it A.S.C. 26.
for French more readily
yet - mt.

As you know, after the invasion of Afghanistan we decided that contact between UK and Soviet officials should be limited to the minimum necessary for the efficient conduct of business. In particular, social contacts have been curtailed.

2. A specific casualty of this hardening of relations with the Soviet Union has been informal meetings between C in C BAOR and C in C Group of Soviet Forces, which used to take place on an infrequent but not irregular basis. C in C BAOR has now requested approval to a meeting with his Soviet opposite number on the grounds that a satisfactory working relationship with the Russians over Berlin is important in Potsdam; and that there are some intelligence advantages to be gained by such links.
3. Such a meeting would not now represent a major breach of our guidelines on contacts with the Soviets. The French have maintained contacts throughout at a higher level than ourselves and, most importantly, the US recently permitted a meeting at C in C level. We are now the ones out of step and there seems no reason to treat the Russians more coldly than our partners do. And, of course, Malcolm Rifkind is currently visiting Moscow.
4. I therefore propose to allow a meeting later in the year after General Bagnall takes up his appointment. There is the question of public presentation should such a meeting become public. I believe that a defensible line would be that such meetings had taken place before, and that the Cs in C were meeting in the interests of a smooth and efficient relationship on certain issues.

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5. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to other members of OD.

Handwritten signature

Ministry of Defence

22nd April 1983

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cc HD WPO
LEO WPSO
FIO DOT
HMU COL
CO

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 April 1983

Dear Richard,

Meetings between UK and Soviet Officials

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 22 April proposing a meeting later this year between C-in-C BAOR and his Soviet opposite number. She is inclined to think that several more months should elapse before any such meeting takes place. Mr. Heseltine may therefore wish to consult the Prime Minister again later this year.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of other members of OD.

Yours ever
John Gales.

Richard Mottram, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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