



cc: FCO
Sir P. Cradock

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

10 February 1987

Thank you for your letter of 28 January about the agreement you have reached with the Soviet Central Armed Forces Museum to exchange historic tanks.

We have had to balance some conflicting considerations on this. On the one hand it would remind people in countries of the War-time alliance. On the other, we are not particularly keen, especially during the occupation of Afghanistan, to underline any sort of military ties with the Soviet Union. There are some very real practical difficulties which you point out. And the Prime Minister's programme is desperately full.

On balance we have decided that we prefer to pursue this idea. I am sorry to disappoint you, because I think that the agreement you have reached with the Russians is welcome and important. If you need help in encouraging it forward towards realisation, do please get in touch with the Soviet Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Charles Powell

Dr. Alan Borg

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CCP



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 February 1987

*Dear Charles,*Exchange of Historic Tanks

Thank you for your letter of 28 January enclosing one from the Director of the Imperial War Museum suggesting that a proposed exchange of historic tanks might take place during the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union.

We have thought carefully about this proposal and concluded that it would be best not to pursue it. It has certain attractions. The exchange would be a visual event which would make an impact on the public: and it might appeal to the Russians as a reminder of our wartime alliance.

But the counter-arguments are strong: first that it would be a reminder and acknowledgement of Soviet military power at a time when, because of Afghanistan, we do not wish to draw attention to this. Secondly, as a war-time reminder it would be essentially backward-looking. Finally, the exchange would, we believe, run the risk of seeming both to the Soviet authorities and to the public a trivialisation of the visit.

If it is accepted that the exchange should not take place in the context of the Prime Minister's visit, the question of transporting the tanks by a Soviet aircraft need not arise.

I enclose a draft reply to Dr Borg.

I am copying this letter to John Howe (MOD).

Yours ever,

(L Parker)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:

Reference

PS/NUMBER 10
DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

Your Reference

BUILDING:

ROOM NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Copies to:

Top Secret

Dr Alan Borg FSA
Director
Imperial War Museum
Lambeth Road
LONDON SE1 6HZ

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

SUBJECT:

PRIVACY MARKING

Thank you for your letter of 28 January about the agreement you have reached with the Soviet Central Armed Forces Museum to exchange historic tanks.

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT

~~The programme for the Prime Minister's visit is likely to be very full, and I regret to say that we shall not be able to find a place in it for the exchange of tanks. But I agree that the agreement you have reached with the Russians is welcome and ^{important} significant. If you need help in ^{encouraging} pushing it forward towards ^{realisation} implementation, do please get in touch with the Soviet Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.~~

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Handwritten initials

SOVIET UNION: Relations: A66