

NOTES ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S DISCUSSION WITH MR. AND  
MRS. GORBACHEV AT BRIZE NORTON ON 7 DECEMBER 1987

1. PM takes Mr. Gorbachev in - after Mrs. Gorbachev removes fur coat in which she had emerged from her powder room, unsure whether to keep it on for lunch [Mr. Gorbachev said to take it off when Mrs. Gorbachev consulted him] - from foyer. On the way PM and Mr. Gorbachev talk briefly about Mrs. Gorbachev's health, he said she had had an operation before the summer break, but feels alright now.

2. PM seats Mr. Gorbachev, Richard Pollock (interpreter) seats Mrs. Gorbachev. PM quietly mentions to Richard Pollock the very private subject she wishes to mention to Mr. Gorbachev - Richard Pollock suggests that be done on the way out of lunch, when best chance of being out earshot of Soviet interpreters: PM agreed [it was so done, see below, paragraph 17].

3. PM asks Mrs. Gorbachev if warm enough [Mrs. Gorbachev looked pale - possibly no time for make up in powder room: Mr. Gorbachev had lightheartedly remarked - while we waited for Mrs. Gorbachev in the foyer - that what she had to do took longer than what he had to do on such occasions of withdrawal from the proceedings!].

4. Kenneth Baker, standing, tells the PM (once she and Mrs. Gorbachev were seated) that the morning (visit to school etc) had been a great success (nativity play, carols, etc). PM registers pleasure. Kenneth Baker returns to own seat.

5. PM asks after Mrs. Gorbachev's health. Mrs. Gorbachev replies - "Our life has its ups and downs [an initially ambiguous phrasel], and so I had to have an operation in the summer. But I feel alright now. PM: "You look fine, you look wonderful!" Mrs. Gorbachev: "I feel quite alright now". PM: "You'll find Nancy Reagan looking very drawn". Mrs. Gorbachev: "I was shocked to hear she had had



to have an operation." Then Mrs. Gorbachev turned subject to schooling.....

6. Mrs. Gorbachev animatedly tells PM how 8 year old boy asked her to say "Guten Tag" (sic) in Russian. Mrs. Gorbachev told him it was "zdravstvuyte!" - and expresses to PM her amazement that the small boy could articulate it correctly. Mrs. Gorbachev says she herself finds that, although she has studied English herself, she quickly loses the knack of pronunciation and forgets vocabulary. PM says that she has the same problem with French and German, especially tenses and structures.

7. PM tells Mrs. Gorbachev it is so important to tackle languages when you are young. Mrs. Gorbachev: "All our children do at least one language in school". PM: "I was impressed when I went to a school in Leningrad where all children were learning not only English, but other subjects through the medium of English." Mrs. Gorbachev: "12/13 million Soviet children learn English at school - incidentally there are 500+ special English schools (ie other subject taught as well in English)".

8. At this point, PM's attention engaged by Mr. Gorbachev - re, and with Marshal Akhromeyev, sitting opposite, slightly to right of Mr. Gorbachev. Soviet interpreter took over, being more conveniently seated. PM enquired what arm of the forces Akhromeyev was in. Akhromeyev replied: "Land forces" (thus - and correctly - rendered by Soviet interpreter). Dobrynin chips in with a wrong translation of Akhromeyev's remark - ie "Infantry"!

9. Meanwhile, seeing Mrs. Gorbachev "neglected", Richard Pollock asks after her grand-daughter, Oksana. Mrs. Gorbachev gently reads Richard Pollock a lecture about why Oksana must not be called Oksana, but rather - 'Ksenya' [(since latter is a Ukranian name, and Mrs. Gorbachev's "dad" (sic) was Ukranian [Mrs. Gorbachev's maiden name ends in the typically Ukranian "-enko"])]. Grand-daughter much prefers Ukranian 'Ksenya'.



Richard Pollock said he would bear that in mind in hope of meeting her!

10. Sir Geoffrey Howe engages Mrs. Gorbachev in conversation about her morning visiting local school (other UK interpreter).

11. Richard Pollock reverts back to PM as she informs Mr. Gorbachev that Britain has much experience in handing back territory to local peoples. PM emphasises this requires knowledge of respect for local people's traditions, culture, history. Mr. Gorbachev agrees on latter, affirming UK has much experience at handing back territory.

12. PM makes point that individual freedom is paramount, and that it is enshrined in British legal system. Secret of effective freedom/governmental system is legal system. Our history is the history of our judicial system. Even the humblest citizen (repeated) knows he/she will be assured just treatment under our legal system - which has been in existence for hundreds of years, longer than our Parliamentary system, long before principle of "one man, one vote".

13. Mr. Gorbachev comments it is interesting that Marx found it appropriate to develop many of his political ideas in Britain. PM immediately points out that was because he was in a free society in which he was at liberty to develop any ideas. Mr. Gorbachev laughed.

14. PM tells Mr. Gorbachev she has been reading some of his earlier speeches - in which he mentioned that after a few years Lenin changed some of his theories. PM comments that it was tragic Lenin died prematurely - history might have been different, otherwise .... Mr. Gorbachev rejoins [with a smile]: "It's not for us to indulge in speculation!"

15. [Mr. Miller, RAF Brize Norton, asks Richard Pollock to inform PM that only two minutes remain: Richard Pollock does so - PM registers immediately.] PM then says privately to



Mr. Gorbachev - and quickly - that only two minutes remain, but "you will come again, won't you?" (to which Mr. Gorbachev immediately responds, smiling, "But you have invited me!" [first reference to invitation inside Officers' Mess Building, in Richard Pollock's hearing]. In her private, rapid words to Mr. Gorbachev before the speeches, PM says several of the things she subsequently said in her post-lunch (at table) speech: ie "It has been a delight to have you with us; we are keenly interested in all that you are doing; this is a historic time; we wish you success...." Then PM taps glass with spoon to say her few post-prandial words - as above, adding thanks for the visit and saying we look forward immensely to continuing UK-USSR cooperation. PM includes specific mention of Britain's affection/welcome for Mrs. Gorbachev.

16. Mr. Gorbachev makes answering post-lunch speech. Mockingly protests at blatant discrimination: "first the PM says there are two minutes left, and then she talks for two minutes, then she says I have one minute in which to reply!". Confines himself primarily to gratitude for hospitality and proposes toast to continuing UK-USSR cooperation and strengthening of bilateral relationship.

17. PM, Richard Pollock, Mr. Gorbachev progressed to dining-room exit, Richard Pollock commented that a VIP guest-book awaited signature on the table in the foyer. Mr. Gorbachev acknowledged/indicated willingness to sign. Once in foyer, Mr. Gorbachev signed and called to Mrs. Gorbachev to do likewise. While wife signing, Mr. Gorbachev - seeing Christmas tree nearby - began reciting Russian folksong about a little fir tree: Richard Pollock continued it by a couple of lines, Mr. Gorbachev joined it for further couple of lines, saying "It's a lovely song, isn't it?". By which time, Mrs. Gorbachev had signed the book. Principals go over Christmas tree.

18. When PM entrusted two gifts to Mrs. Gorbachev (for conveyance to the aircraft), Mr. Gorbachev chafed (to wife):



"You'll never be able to carry all that." Then PM hands separate packet to Mr. Gorbachev. Mr. Gorbachev thanked her, said he had a present for her/her husband and (repeating what he had said in talks) that he would send PM a signed copy of his book. RAF Brize Norton Officer presents (a) Mrs. Gorbachev (b) PM with silver serving-dishes to commemorate visit. Mr. Gorbachev/Mrs. Gorbachev palpably touched by Brize Norton RAF Officer's presents (to Mrs. Gorbachev/PM) - and registered the point that the two serving-dishes together constituted a pair [perhaps Brize Norton Officers could be informed], as well as genuine gratitude.

19. PM goes to sign VIP guest book (as Mr. Gorbachev/Mrs. Gorbachev had done), then informs Mr. Gorbachev that the press await outside entrance to Officers' Mess. Mr. Gorbachev immediately says to Uspensky: "Kolya, where's my file?" Apparently he had notes prepared for this moment (though he did not have much - if any - recourse to them when standing before the press in entrance portico).

20. Thereafter, see live TV coverage of PM/Mr. Gorbachev's speeches to press outside Officers' Mess.

RICHARD POLLOCK



Notes on PM's lunch with MSG/RMG at Brize Norton [7/12/57].

1. PM takes MSG in — after RMG removes fur coat in which she had emerged from her powder room, unsure whether to keep it on for lunch [MSG said to take it off] — from foyer.   
 On way PM/MSG talk briefly about RMG's health: he said she had had op. before summer break, but feels alright now.
2. PM seats MSG, RP/seats RMG. PM quietly mentions to RP the v. private subject she wishes to mention to MSG — RP suggests that be done on way out of lunch, when best chance of being out of earshot of Sov. interpreter: PM agreed [it was so done, see below, §17].
3. PM asks RMG if warm enough [RMG looked pale — possibly no time for make-up in powder-room: MSG had lightheartedly remarked — while we waited for RMG in foyer — that what she had to do took longer than what he had to do on such occasions of withdrawal from the proceedings!].
4. Kenneth Baker, standing, tells PM (once she & RMG seated) that the morning (visit to school, etc) had been a great success (activity play, carols, etc). PM registers pleasure. KB returns to own seat.
5. PM asks after RMG's health. RMG replies — "Our life has its ups and downs [an initially ambiguous phrase], and so I had to have an operation in the summer. But I feel alright now. PM: — "You look fine, you look wonderful!" RMG: — "I feel quite alright now." PM: — "You'll find Nancy Regan looking very down." RMG: — "I was shocked to hear she had had to have an operation." Then RMG turned subject to schooling...
6. RMG amusingly tells PM how 8-year-old boy asked her to say 'Guten Tag' (sic) in Russian. RMG told him it was 'zdravstvuyte!' — and expresses to PM her amazement that the small boy could articulate it correctly. RMG says she herself finds that, altho' she has studied English herself, she quickly loses knack of pronunciation and forgets vocabulary. PM says she has the same problem with French and



- German, especially tenses and structures.
- 7. PM tells RMG it is so important to tackle languages when you are young. RMG: "All our children do at least one language in school". PM: "I was impressed when I went to a school in Leningrad where all children were ~~not~~ learning not only English, but other subjects thro' the medium of English." RMG: "12/13 million Sov. children learn English at school — incidentally, there are 500+ special English schools (i.e. other subjects taught as well in English)".
- 8. At this point, PM's attention engaged by MSG — re, and with Marshal Akhromeyev, sitting opposite, slightly to right of MSG. Soviet interpreter took over, being more conveniently seated. PM enquired what arm of the forces Akhromeyev was in. Akhromeyev replied: "land forces" (thus — and correctly — rendered by Sov. interpreter). Dobrynin chips in with a wrong translation of Akhromeyev's remark — i.e. "infantry"!
- 9. Meanwhile, seeing RMG 'neglected', RP asks ~~to~~ after her grand-daughter, Oksana. RMG gently reads RP a lecture about why Oksana must not be called Oksana, but rather — 'Ksenya' (since latter is a Ukrainian name, and RMG's "dad" (sic) was Ukrainian [RMG's maiden name ends in the typically Ukrainian "-enko"]). Grand-daughter much prefers Ukrainian 'Ksenya'. RP said he would bear that in mind in hope of meeting her!
- 10. Sir Geoffrey Howe engages RMG in conversation about her morning visiting local school (the UK interpreter).
- 11. RP (interpreter) reverts to PM as she informs MSG that Britain has much experience in handing back territory to local peoples. PM emphasises this requires knowledge of respect for local peoples' traditions, culture, history. MSG agrees on latter, affirming UK has much experience at handing back territory.
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13. MSG comments it is interesting that Marx found it appropriate to develop many of his political ideas in Britain. PM immediately points out that was because he was in a free society in which he was at liberty to develop any ideas. MSG laughed.
14. PM tells MSG she has been reading some of his (MSG's) earlier speeches - in which he mentioned that after a few years Lenin changed some of his theories. PM comments that it was tragic Lenin died prematurely - history might have been different, otherwise... MSG rejoins [with a smile]: "It's not for us to indulge in speculation!"
15. [Mr Miller, RAF Brize Norton, asks RP (interpreter) to inform PM that only 2 minutes remain: RP does so - PM registers immediately.] PM then says privately to MSG - and quickly - that only 2 minutes remain, but "you will come again, won't you?" (to which MSG immediately responds, smiling, "But you have invited me!" [first reference to invitation inside Officers' Mess building, in RP's hearing]). In her private, rapid words to MSG before the speeches, PM says several of the things she subsequently said in her post-lunch (at table) speech: i.e. "It has been a delight to have you with us; we are keenly interested in all that you are doing; this is a historic time; we wish you success..." Then PM taps glass with ~~the~~ spoon to say her few post-prandial words - as above, adding thanks for the visit and saying we look forward immensely to continuing UK-USSR cooperation. PM includes specific mention of Britain's affection/welcome for Mrs G.

...



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x 17. [On way out of dining-room, PM says quickly/quietly (and RP murmurs in Russian) to MSG... [request that whatever could be done re a certain family should be done if possible]. MSG strides purposefully on, without reaction, exactly as he did when the similar puncheon after Kremlin banquet on 30 March 1987 was used in same way. There is a possibility that the Soviet (bald) interpreter got within earshot when the matter was broached this time. MSG clearly registered the point, ~~but~~ with palpable (if unexpressed) emotion [slight tensing of cheek/neck muscles!]. After some 3 to 4 seconds of pregnant silence ds] PM, RP, MSG progressed to dining-room exit, RP commented that a <sup>VIP</sup> guest-book awaited signature on table in foyer: MSG acknowledged/indicated willingness to sign. Once in foyer, MSG signed and called RMG to do likewise. While wife signing, MSG ~ seeing Christmas tree nearby ~ began reciting Russian folksong about a <sup>little</sup> fir-tree: RP continued it by a couple of lines, MSG joined it for further couple of lines, saying "It's a lovely song, isn't it?"! By which time, RMG had signed the book. Principals go over to Christmas tree. 18. When PM entrusted <sup>2</sup> gifts to RMG (for conveyance to the aircraft), MSG chafed (to wife): "You'll never be able to carry all that." Then PM gave separate packet to MSG. MSG thanked her, said he had a present for her/her husband and (repeating what he had said in talker) that he would send PM a signed copy of his book. ~~PM goes to sign~~ RAF Brize Norton officer presents @ RMG (b) PM with silver serving-dishes to ~ 4 ~



Commemorate visit. MSG/RMG palpably touched by BN RAF Officers' presents (to RMG/PM) - and registered the point that the two serving-dishes together constituted a pair [perhaps BN officers could be informed], as well as genuine gratitude.

19. PM goes to sign VIP guest-book (as MSG/RMG had done), then informs MSG that the press await outside entrance to Officers' Mess. MSG immediately says to Uspensky: "Kolya, where's my file?" Apparently he had notes prepared for this moment (tho' he did not have much - if any - recourse to them when standing before the press in entrance portico).
20. Thereafter, see live TV coverage of PM/MSG Speeches to Press outside Officers' Mess.
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LONDON SW1A 2AA

file

PM

CCPC

From the Private Secretary

17 December 1987

Dear Tony,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR. AND MRS. GORBACHEV -  
LUNCH DISCUSSION

I have just received from Richard Pollock, the interpreter, his notes of the Prime Minister's discussion over lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev at Brize Norton on 7 December. I enclose a copy. I have excised one passage which refers to an individual case about which I have written to you separately.

In sending the notes, Richard Pollock has made a number of comments:

- as in the talks on 30 March, he was struck by Mr. Gorbachev's emphasis that the next two or three years in the Soviet Union would be difficult in terms of securing the cooperation of the Soviet people with his plans;
- it was interesting to note how often Mr. Gorbachev initiated during the talks points which the Prime Minister herself would have wished to raise. This suggested that their priorities were very similar;
- Mr. Gorbachev made more disciplined use of his speaking time than in March; and
- there was more proximity of mood - if not necessarily of views - than pauses for an interpretation from the Russian allowed to emerge. It was evident that both the Prime Minister and Mr. Gorbachev enjoy and benefit from lively debate.

I should be grateful if the notes could be given a very restricted circulation only.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to John Howe (Ministry of Defence) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

your diary  
C. D. POWELL  
*[Signature]*

A. C. Galsworthy, Esq., CMG.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

*[Handwritten initials]*

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From: Richard Pollock.

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11 December 1987.

*For Charles*

Prime Minister's meeting with Mr Gorbachev, RAF Brize Norton,  
7 December, 1987

I enclose herewith some notes, as you requested, on the proceedings in the Officers' Mess at RAF Brize Norton - other than during the restricted talks themselves. For reasons of security, I have not had them typed up: as previously, I leave you to arrange that - if, and as, you think fit - hoping you do not mind. I am sorry that I was not able to supply the notes as promptly as I would have wished. End-of-term pressures and 'flu (not, of course, INF-luenza!) caused unavoidable delay. I do apologise for any inconvenience.

I hope it will not be out of place if I comment on one or two matters which struck me on the day of the visit and subsequently - beyond what figures in my notes:-

- (i) Again during these talks, as on 30 March, MSG explicitly said he expects the next 2 or 3 years to be difficult in terms of winning internal cooperation. The similarity of phrasing struck me.
- (ii) It was interesting how often MSG initiated during the talks points which the PM herself would have wished (judging by the brief) to raise. This might be deemed encouraging closeness of positions re priorities.
- (iii) MSG made more disciplined use of his speaking time as cf. March, covering more topics in better balance - even granted time-constraints.
- (iv) I am sure there is more proximity of moods - if not necessarily of views - than the sometimes long pauses for interpretation from Russian allowed to emerge. Both the PM and MSG enjoy, and benefit from (in their thinking), lively debate.

If it is not too much trouble, could you kindly confirm safe receipt (to my home) - and also pass the enclosed reply to the PM, thanking her for her very kind letter, please? If I may, I will leave the circulation of the Brize Norton notes to you.

*With kind regards  
Yours ever  
Richard*  
Richard Pollock

Enclosures





10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

17 December 1987

Dear Richard,

Thank you very much for your letter of 11 December and for sending me your excellent notes of the discussion between the Prime Minister and Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev over lunch. These are very helpful indeed.

I have also passed on your letter to the Prime Minister and your various Christmas cards, for which thank you very much. May I take the opportunity to wish you and your family a very Happy Christmas - and advise you to keep a place yet unknown in your diary for next year in case of a further visit by your favourite couple!

Yours ever,

C. D. POWELL

Richard Pollock, Esq.

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