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Comments



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

25 November 1988

Dear Lynn,

PRESIDENT GORBACHEV'S VISIT

The Soviet Ambassador called this morning to deliver President Gorbachev's reactions to our proposals for the programme for his visit. His instructions were clearly hot off the press, since he arrived twenty minutes late clutching the teleprinter version of his telegram (which he inadvertently handed to me, but Mr. Kossov promptly retrieved).

The Ambassador stressed at the beginning that he had had to fight very hard to persuade the powers that be in Moscow to agree that President Gorbachev should stay until after lunch on the second day. The clinching factor had been The Queen's kind invitation to the Gorbachevs to lunch. As I would see, the hour which the Russians proposed for the lunch would appear inconveniently early. But he was bound to say he was not at all confident of being able to persuade President Gorbachev to accept a later departure from London. His instructions said firmly that this was the last word on the matter. He understood that Gorbachev had to be in Moscow by a reasonable hour that evening.

The Ambassador then turned to the detailed programme proposals. President Gorbachev would arrive at Heathrow at 2300 hours on 12 December. There would presumably be a brief welcoming ceremony after which he would drive with the Prime Minister to the Soviet Embassy. The Prime Minister would come in for 15-20 minutes for a very brief talk.

The next morning President Gorbachev would like to start talks with the Prime Minister, if convenient, at 1000 hours at No. 10 Downing Street in a very restricted session. Meanwhile, Mrs. Gorbachev would like to use the time between 1030 and 1230 hours to visit Windsor and see the Castle. If there was time she might stop briefly at Kew Gardens. She might then rejoin President Gorbachev for a working lunch at No. 10 from 1300 to 1400 hours. The Gorbachevs hoped that this could be a very small and intimate occasion.

President and Mrs. Gorbachev would then like to spend the time between 1400 and 1630 hours sightseeing in London. This might start with laying a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey and thereafter take in the Thames Embankment, the City, Fleet Street (!) and St. Paul's

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Cathedral, which the Gorbachevs would like to tour. Thereafter they would like to see some of the new development in London Docklands. President Gorbachev would be happy to get out of the car to meet and mix with people at any point during this expedition.

At 1700 hours President Gorbachev would receive the Leader of the Opposition at the Soviet Embassy for 30 minutes. At 1800 hours he might attend a reception at the Mansion House to meet bankers and captains of industry. He hoped this could be restricted to some 100-150 people as he wished actually to meet as many as possible and would not welcome a crush. Meanwhile, Mrs. Gorbachev would like to visit the Museum of the History of London between 1700 hours and 1800 hours. President Gorbachev hoped that the Prime Minister's dinner at No. 10 could start at 1930 hours so that it did not end too late. He envisaged speeches after dinner lasting only some 7-8 minutes each.

On 14 December President Gorbachev would start with a meeting with the Chairman of the British Communist Party at the Soviet Embassy at either 0930 or 1000 hours. Thereafter he would like to have a final session of talks alone with the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street, lasting approximately from 1015 to 1115 hours. He hoped that The Queen might be able to receive him and Mrs. Gorbachev at 1130 hours. If there were an opportunity to see some of the great works of art at Buckingham Palace, that would be much appreciated by the Gorbachevs. The lunch given by The Queen might last from 1200 hours to 1300 hours and he would hope to take off from Heathrow at 1330 hours.

I said that I would report these proposals to the Prime Minister, the Palace and the Foreign Office. While in general they seemed straightforward and we would do our best to fall in with President Gorbachev's wishes, I thought that the Palace might well find the timings on 14 December a bit difficult. I would establish their views as quickly as possible. I hoped that the talks with the Prime Minister on the second day could start not later than 1015 hours to allow a good hour. The Soviet Embassy should discuss details of the remainder of the programme with the Foreign Office.

The Ambassador said he had one point of substance to add. The Soviet Union would be ready to sign the Agreement on the Early Notification of Nuclear Accidents during the visit. They had already fulfilled their obligations to notify us of the nature and scope of the information to be covered by the agreement. It was now up to us to say whether we were equally prepared to sign.

At no point did the Ambassador make any reference whatsoever to press speculation about the invitation to The Queen to visit the Soviet Union.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Heseltine at the Palace.

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C. D. POWELL *CP*