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PRIME MINISTER

31 March 1989

cc: Mr Powell
Mr Ingham

GORBACHEV VISIT: PUBLIC PRESENTATION

I have submitted separately detailed points for the talks. But we should also consider how we wish to present the visit, given the risk that, without care, it could become an unqualified celebration of Gorbachev and all his works.

As we agreed in our discussion on 21 March, we need to strike a delicate balance between our approval of part of what Gorbachev stands for, eg internally, and our concern over other much less favourable aspects of his activities, particularly on the external side.

There are of course a number of strong positive aspects which we shall want to bring out:

- (a) The fact that he is coming here again for the third time before visiting any of the other European countries. His obvious respect for you and the firmness and realism of your policies.
- (b) Your interest in and general support for the direction of his internal reform programme (though I do not think we want to take this too far, since it could make more difficult the necessary qualifications on the external side).
- (c) The timing of the visit at a favourable international juncture when, by his and other Communist leaders' admission, Communism has failed and there are strong

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surges of freedom in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself.

- (d) The opportunity the visit gives for two world leaders to discuss a wide range of issues frankly and realistically. And the signs of greater Soviet flexibility, particularly in the Third World.

At the same time the fact is that Gorbachev is conducting a skilful and dangerous foreign policy which deliberately plays on credulous Western public opinion and has already achieved a measure of success beyond the reach of any of his predecessors (witness our worries over Germany). Despite an inadequate reform programme (he does not seek to break the mould and wants only a more efficient "socialism") and continuing denial of freedom in Eastern Europe and for non-Russian nationalities he has contrived to occupy the moral high ground and become the most popular of international figures. He will undoubtedly seek to exploit this position during his visit, particularly in his Guildhall speech. Without appearing too grudging or hostile we have therefore to introduce serious cautionary notes into the general euphoria.

I think the two main notes to strike are:

- (a) The denial of freedom in Eastern Europe. Freedom of choice has been proclaimed as a principle in the 7 December speech. We wait to see it applied in practice.
- (b) The continuing military imbalance (2-1 even when the 7 December cuts are implemented) and the associated political/military shadow over Western Europe, made more acute by Soviet efforts to

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dismantle our nuclear defences and Soviet untruths over their chemical weapons strength. Again we shall judge by their deeds. Further deep conventional cuts and glasnost on CW must be the first steps.

You will of course put these points to him in the talks. But we shall want to ensure that a strong echo gets through to the media. In the public presentation we should perhaps put emphasis on testing the seriousness of change in Soviet external policies. For example

- "(a) the Prime Minister explained frankly our concern over the Soviet Union's CW capability and our serious doubts about Soviet public statements on this subject.

- (b) She welcomed the unilateral reductions of 7 December, showing that the Soviet leadership is at last ready to take practical measures to reduce asymmetries between East and West. The Prime Minister pointed out that this still left a 2-1 advantage for the Soviet Union and stressed how important it was that this move should be followed up with further major Soviet cuts so that the most threatening asymmetries could be rapidly removed.

- (c) She welcomed Mr Gorbachev's principle of freedom of choice and expressed hope that this could be applied to countries like Hungary and Poland.

We shall study closely how the Soviet Union responds to these messages. If it continues to press for a denuclearised Europe, or if it tries to appeal over

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the Heads of Government to Western public opinion through propaganda gestures (such as small cuts in the vast Soviet theatre nuclear arsenal, or headline-grabbing proposals for "zones of peace") we shall draw the conclusion that new thinking has not yet permeated Soviet policy on East/West security. If, however, the Soviet Union accepts the legitimacy of nuclear deterrence for Europe and gets down to real business to remove the conventional imbalances and give a convincing account of its CW capabilities, we shall be ready to conclude that we are indeed dealing with a very different Soviet approach to relations with her neighbours."

Your speeches at the dinner and Guildhall should also take these aspects into account. About two-thirds of the way through, after the welcome and the encouragement, should come a passage saying, for example "It would be wrong to pretend that there are no problems. The first steps have been taken to remove the deep and legitimate anxieties and insecurities of Western Europe and we warmly welcome them. But, on your own principle, the side with the more weapons must make the reductions. There is a very long way to go, on the road to military security, as on the road to greater political freedom."



PERCY CRADOCK

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