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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

Sir Robin Butler

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION WITH MOSCOW

I have seen a copy of Patrick Wright's letter of 14 June to you about improving communications with our Embassy in Moscow. I think that what he proposes would suit our needs quite well. On the evidence of her recent visit to Moscow, the Prime Minister's relations with Mr Gorbachev remain unusually good and I can certainly foresee the need for further telephone conversations arising. I would hope that we could go ahead relatively soon.

CHARLES POWELL

15 June 1990

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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS WITH MOSCOW

I have seen Patrick Wright's letter of 11 July to you about the proposed installation of a direct telephone line to the Kremlin, and his recommendation that we should drop the idea of protecting the line due to the considerable cost. In view of the snags, I agree that we should go ahead without encryption, at least initially. Certainly we could not find the funds from No 10.

I am copying this minute to Patrick Wright.

C.D.P.

CHARLES POWELL
12 July 1990

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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS Telephone 071-270 0101

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service
Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO

Ref.A090/ 1845

CR 27 July 1990

29/2

My dear Patrick,

Telephone Communications with Moscow

Thank you for your letter of 11 July. I gather that our experts and yours have been discussing the operational aspects of the proposed link and that your people have agreed to produce schematic and circuit descriptions for the two ends of the link. I am also advised that both sides agreed to postpone the question of encryption until the circuit arrangements have been agreed.

I am content to proceed in this way, although I agree with you and Charles Powell that if the extra cost of encryption turns out to be as high as suggested in your letter, we should do without it.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell.

Your ever,

Robin

Sir Patrick Wright GCMG
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Sov. Union: relations pr 17





Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Sir Patrick Wright GCMG
Permanent Under-Secretary of State

11 July 1990

Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO
Cabinet Office

My dear Robin.

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS WITH MOSCOW *leaf*

1. Thank you for your letter of 20 June.
2. The technical security implications of the link between No 10 and the Kremlin have now been carefully considered. To ensure that the security of the Embassy is not put at risk, a manual patch would be required which would entail physically disconnecting the private wire from the Embassy exchange and routing it to another connected to the Kremlin/MFA. And while the special link was connected, the cypher stream would be stopped. A similar arrangement would be required in London (though a way may be found to make this automatic).
3. Our experts have also evaluated two telephone encryption systems, one made by Racal, the other by Marconi. In each case, they paid particular attention to speech quality. The Racal equipment (£1,600) was basic and speech quality poor. The Marconi equipment was more expensive (£5,000) but speech quality very good (brochure attached). Our technical security experts favour protecting the line, but there are two snags: the first is that the encryption device would, after all, be subject to a COCOM embargo. Thus, if we decided we wished to proceed (and to play by the rules), we would need to get special agreement from COCOM partners. But secondly, the cost now makes this option increasingly unattractive since it would be only prudent to provide two back-up units which would mean an overall cost of some £20,000. You will probably conclude in the light of this - and especially since neither the Americans nor Germans bother with any encryption protection - that the idea should not be pursued.
4. We propose, therefore, to go ahead on this basis: but before asking the Embassy to speak to the Russians, I should be grateful to know whether you agree that the idea of protecting the line should be dropped.

/5. I

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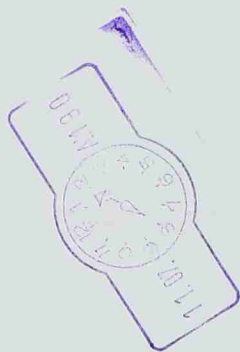
5. I am copying this letter to **Charles Powell.**

Yours tr.

Patrick

Patrick Wright

① SV UNION: Rele pr 17



2G/3157

From: Mr C K Davies
Date: 21 June 1990

Mr L V Appleyard

cc Mr S Hemans, FCO
Mr S Wall, FCO
Mr C Powell, No 10
Miss S Phippard, CO

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LONDON-MOSCOW 'HOT-LINE': TALKS AND PROGRESS

1. The latest series of talks took place in Moscow earlier this month with the UK Side being led by my deputy, Mr Hope. The formal record of the meeting is contained in the attached copy of the Agreed Minute.
2. In my note on earlier talks dated 21 December 89 to Mr Hemans and to the other addressees, I said there would be one more meeting prior to the new facsimile system going 'live', but there has been an upset to our plans. The full system, to ensure maximum reliability and availability, will comprise 3 identical parallel circuits. However, despite sustained pressure from both the Soviet and UK Sides the 3rd (satellite) circuit is not yet available from the commercial carrier, Intelsat. The satellite transponder is simply full to capacity and there will be a delay of at least two months before a channel becomes available.
3. At the Moscow talks a number of topics were usefully discussed. However the main point made by the Soviet Side was that they still wished to introduce the facsimile service on the target date and, in view of the delay on the 3rd circuit, to retain the existing telegraph circuits for back-up. The performance of the 2 installed facsimile circuits has, to date, been very satisfactory and we believe this arrangement will work. We therefore agreed to start a quasi-operational service using the facsimile system for 'live' traffic from 1 July 1990. We would not regard this as the formal adoption of the new Direct Communications Link (DCL), this would now be introduced as a new Phase 6 on the timetable.
4. The current target date for the introduction of the fully operational system using the 3 facsimile systems, Phase 6, is now 2 January 1991 - taking the optimistic view that the 3rd channel will be in place and properly tested before that date.

5. The Soviet side declared themselves 'delighted' with the performance of recently provided Version D software (in spite of one known 'bug' which the UK Side is seeking to correct) and were very complimentary about the facilities provided.

6. The subject of more frequent and improved liaison between the Soviet PTT and BTI regarding the operational and maintenance aspects of the new circuits was discussed at length. Both agencies will be looking at this during the next few months and the Soviet PTT will produce a discussion paper for consideration by BTI shortly.

7. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in London during the early part of December 1990 when it is hoped to finalise details for the formal introduction of the new DCL.



C K DAVIES
Telecommunications Secretariat

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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS Telephone 071-270 0101

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service
Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO

CBP-216

Ref. AO90/1448

20 June 1990

My dear Patrick,

Telephone Communication with Moscow

Thank you for your letter of 14 June. *flap*

I think that your proposal to extend the Embassy's Private Wire to the Kremlin and to No.10 will meet the need well, and we are happy that you should go ahead as you suggest. Indeed, I understand that Ken Davies of our Telecommunications Secretariat is already discussing the technical issues with your people. There are a number of technical and security issues to be resolved: for instance, the interconnection of the Private Wire in London and in Moscow and the switching arrangements between encrypted and plain language use. We presumably need to settle these before approaching the Russians.

Given the Prime Minister's continuing good relationship with Mr Gorbachev, No. 10 are understandably keen to make progress on this as rapidly as possible.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell.

Yours ever,

Robin.

Sir Patrick Wright GCMG
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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SOVIET UNION: Relations Pt 17.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH

Sir Patrick Wright GCMG
Permanent Under-Secretary of State

14 June 1990

Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO
Cabinet Office

My dear Robin,

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION WITH MOSCOW

1. I am sorry ~~not~~ ^{Had BTI} to have responded before now to your letter of 19 April: but only in recent days have our ideas on improving communications with our Embassy in Moscow fallen into place. We now see more clearly how we might meet No 10's requirement for a high quality telephone link with the Kremlin.
2. We believe that the expense of a Private Wire to carry all the Embassy's large and growing volume of telegrams, as well as their telephone calls to the FCO, will be justified; and we have gone ahead and placed an order with BTI. The circuit is, however, unlikely to be available for a couple of months or so, and a little more time may be needed before new computerised communications equipment is in place.
3. You will recall from my letter of 9 April that we had in mind to extend the same line into the Kremlin to meet No 10's requirement for telephone communications. BTI advise us that this should be feasible, even though the limited capacity of the line (M1020) would probably only accommodate a couple of speech connections at any one time. This is not ideal. But since the occasions when the Prime Minister might wish to talk to Gorbachev will be relatively rare, with notice at either end of an impending call, we think that suitable arrangements could be made to clear the line. (And BTI tell us that in perhaps 18 months a digital bearer might become available which could simultaneously carry several voice channels, fax and data).
4. I should be grateful to know whether No 10 would like us to proceed on this basis. If they do, we should need to ask the Embassy to tell the Russians what is planned; and then to ask BTI to talk to their counterparts in Moscow about the Kremlin extension. Only then would we have a clear idea of the costs which might fall to the Cabinet Office.

/5. Charles



5. Charles Powell suggested (his minute of 11 April) that it might be interesting to find out how the American and German Governments manage their own speech links with Moscow. There is, in fact, no permanent link between the White House and the Kremlin. Rather surprisingly, when President Bush wants to call Gorbachev, it seems that the calls are made over insecure public lines (the Americans are not happy with this, but have said they see no alternative for the moment). The Germans also use the insecure open system direct to the Kremlin.

6. You also asked about commercial cryptographic equipment. This is available, and is relatively cheap (about £2,000 per unit). It would provide protection against casual eavesdropping (but not much more), although the speech quality of the line would suffer somewhat (but the extent of this could be evaluated beforehand, if necessary). I expect we could find something which would not be subject to COCOM regulations: but we could not be sure until we had identified a specific piece of equipment.

7. I would be happy to have a word about this, if either you or Charles Powell (to whom I am copying this letter) thought it useful.

Yours truly,

Patrick Wright

Patrick Wright

SOVIET UNION : Relations P17

