



FILE

cc Master  
Foreign Pol, East/West  
Relations, Pt 3

## 10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 September 1983

Dear Brian,

POLICY ON EAST/WEST RELATIONS

On 8 September the Prime Minister held two meetings at Chequers to discuss the question of East/West relations.

The morning was devoted to a discussion with eight academic experts on the basis of papers which they had submitted earlier. In the afternoon a meeting of Ministers and officials considered, in the light of the morning's discussion and a paper on East/West relations prepared by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the policy which the Government should pursue on East/West relations in the next few years. A list of those attending the two meetings is enclosed.

The purpose of this letter is to record the policy conclusions which were agreed.

The meeting considered whether British policy should aim at, in the words used by the US Secretary of State on 15 June, 1983, "the gradual evolution of the Soviet system towards a more pluralistic political and economic system". The view was reached that the realistic possibilities of change in the Soviet system were such that it was very doubtful whether in the foreseeable future any substantially greater diversity could be expected. Our policy should therefore be based on the assumption that any change in the system in at least the medium term would not be fundamental.

It was agreed that the capacity of the West to exercise influence on the Soviet Union was not great, that Eastern Europe might provide more scope for influence but that the process of change in both would be at best gradual.

Soviet Union

The question of whether or not the United Kingdom should seek increased contact, at higher levels, with the Soviet Union was discussed at length. It was agreed that the aim should be to build up contacts slowly over the next few years. There would be no public announcement of this change of policy. The timing and nature of exchanges should be very carefully

/ considered,



considered, bearing in mind both the recent Korean airliner incident and the fact that the reason why contacts had been reduced was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, where Soviet forces were still present. We should continue to pursue the present policy of making the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan as burdensome and embarrassing as possible.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would hold a meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister at the UN General Assembly in September. Mr. Gromyko might be invited to visit the United Kingdom in 1984.

Further thought should be given to the timing of the resumption of meetings in Berlin between the Commander in Chief, British Forces, Germany, and his Soviet Opposite number.

There were arguments both for and against a meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr. Andropov. It was possible that the new policy of increased contacts would result, in the next two or three years, in a meeting at this level at an appropriate time and place. But the Prime Minister would not go to the Soviet Union for this purpose. The aim should rather be to persuade Mr. Andropov to visit the West (which he had never done).

It might also be useful to arrange at the appropriate time for other senior members of the Politbureau, particularly potential successors to Andropov, to visit London. The Prime Minister would be prepared, in principle, to receive one or more such visitors. This question should be further examined and recommendations made in due course.

It was agreed that the main means of influencing developments within the Soviet Union was through the spread of information and that the most effective current instrument was Western radio broadcasts. Ways of increasing the flow of information to the Soviet Union should be actively pursued. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office should in this connection re-examine the role of the BBC External Services with regard to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. (It had been suggested during the earlier discussion with academic experts that the BBC were prevented by a policy directive from broadcasting to the Soviet Union in languages other than Russian and, further, that the effectiveness of its Eastern European programmes was limited by the convention that events in those countries could be covered only if they had already become the subject of media comment in the United Kingdom.)

As regards economic relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe it was agreed that the nature of the Western free market system and the widespread availability of technology ruled out a total ban on the transfer of technology. But our security interests required that the utmost care was taken to ensure so far as possible that exports which could have significant military application did not occur. Strategically significant exports should continue to be identified and embargoed under effective COCOM procedures.



Governments should exercise financial prudence in trading with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries and avoid granting preferential treatment. The West should avoid over-dependence on imports from or exports to the Soviet Union in all trade sectors. Although trade might bring certain desirable political benefits, this could never justify conducting trade on terms disadvantageous to the West.

Soviet policy in the Third World was reviewed. It was agreed that this policy had been cynical and opportunistic. The Russians were facing increasing problems in responding to developing countries' real needs. Even where Soviet/Cuban influence had been established, countries were increasingly turning to the West for assistance. We should take advantage of this and should, in a variety of ways, seek to build up resistance to the Soviet Union in the Third World.

A fundamental characteristic of the relationship between the West and the Third World was that, unlike the Soviet Union, the West sought to help resolve the underlying problems of particular regions. We should play our part in maintaining this Western approach which was of great importance for world stability.

#### Eastern Europe

A number of conclusions relating specifically to Eastern Europe were reached.

It was possible to be more optimistic as to the possibilities for encouraging greater diversity in Eastern Europe but even here the prospects for fundamental change were severely limited. It was essential that our policy towards the Eastern European countries, and especially the public presentation of that policy, should not be such as to induce the Soviet Union to become even more repressive in its behaviour in the area.

Some evolutionary gains had been maintained in Eastern Europe. It was in the interests of the West to assist in preserving these. Each country should be treated individually and those tendencies which diverged from the Soviet model should be encouraged.

Eastern European awareness of developments in the West should be fostered by increased contacts of various kinds and by an active policy in the field of information.

A further programme of Ministerial visits should be arranged. Consideration should be given to the possibility of a visit by the Prime Minister to Hungary. High-level contact with Romania had value in helping that country to maintain its comparatively independent stance in international affairs. In the case of Czechoslovakia and East Germany, visits at above the level of a junior Minister would probably be inappropriate.

/BBC broadcasting



BBC broadcasting to Eastern Europe should be maintained at the highest level which was compatible with the resources available.

Similarly, the British Council's programme of exchanges should be maintained. There was particular value in exchanges which allowed young people in Eastern Europe to be exposed to Western society. Exchanges between schools were a good example.

A criticism made during the meeting with academic experts - that in selecting candidates for exchanges the British Council were obliged to ensure that those chosen should not be likely to become involved in controversial human rights questions - should be examined.

Cultural exchanges (the arrangement of British cultural events in Eastern Europe and vice-versa) brought less certain benefits than other types of exchange and should be considered selectively.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever*

*John Colclough*

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



MEETING WITH ACADEMIC EXPERTS

The Prime Minister

Mr. Michael Kaser

Mr. A.H. Brown

Professor A. Nove

The Reverend Michael Bourdeaux

Dr. Alex Pravda

Mr. C.N. Donnelly

Mr. G. Schopflin

Dr. Ronald Amman

Lord Thomas of Swynnerton

Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, MP

Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, MP

Sir Antony Acland

Sir Julian Bullard

Mr. J.M. Mackintosh

Sir Anthony Parsons

Mr. Robin Butler

Mr. John Coles



MEETING OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

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Prime Minister

Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, MP

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, MP

Sir Antony Acland

Sir Julian Bullard

Mr. Bryan Cartledge

Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP

Sir Clive Whitmore

Field Marshal Sir Edwim Bramall

Mr. John Blerloch

Sir Robert Armstrong

Mr. David Goodall

Mr. J.M. Mackintosh

Sir Anthony Parsons

Mr. Robin Butler

Mr. John Coles



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 September 1983

Foreign Policy:  
Britain's global interests and priorities

At a meeting at Chequers on 8 September there was a brief discussion of a paper presented by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the above subject. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Defence Secretary, Mr. Rifkind and officials were present.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he believed that the paper was a reasonable check-list of priorities in British foreign policy. He doubted whether detailed discussion was necessary except perhaps with regard to paragraph 20 which discussed the problem of the financial resources available for our overseas activities. He would like to see a more coherent and sustainable plan for expenditure on overseas activities, including that part of defence expenditure which was related to foreign policy as well as expenditure on aid, the British Council and the BBC's overseas services.

Following further discussion the Prime Minister asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to discuss this matter with the Defence Secretary on the basis of a note to be prepared by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Cabinet Office should also be involved in the discussions. She thought it would be wise to avoid too intensive or deep a study since in the end some of the choices which might have to be made could be rather artificial.

The Prime Minister concluded the discussion by saying that the meeting would not attempt to approve in detail the FCO paper on Britain's global interests and priorities but would note it as an account of the range of problems which confronted us.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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