



PM/85/13

PRIME MINISTER

Transfer of Carbon-Carbon Technology to the USSR

1. I understand that you are calling a meeting this morning to discuss the exchange of letters between Michael Heseltine and Norman Tebbit and my own minute of 6 February.

2. I shall not be able to attend and have asked Richard Luce to come in my place. I thought it might be useful for you to have in advance my views on Norman Tebbit's suggestion that we explore the possibility of asking the Americans to take some action to prevent shipment of this material. I sympathise with the practical difficulties that have led Norman Tebbit to suggest this approach. But I have to say that I see some drawbacks. Time is the main problem. Given the possibility that shipment may take place as early as the beginning of next week, any action at the American end is likely to take too long. The other potential practical difficulty is that the US company, or its British subsidiary, might simply refuse to cooperate. I therefore believe that if the meeting concludes that there are overriding national security reasons for preventing this shipment from going ahead, we should need to find an alternative approach which is both foolproof and can be effected very quickly. The precise mechanisms are of course a matter for Norman Tebbit, though I understand that one option that has been considered is an amendment to the Export of Goods (Control) Order of 1981.

3. I am copying this letter to Michael Heseltine, Norman Tebbit, Nigel Lawson, George Younger and Sir Robert Armstrong.

GEOFFREY HOWE