

CCPC



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 December 1985

Dear Charles,

Possible Call by Foreign Minister of Japan: 21 January 1986

The Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr Shintaro Abe, is due to visit London early next year, almost certainly on 21 January. The Japanese Embassy have asked whether it would be possible for Mr Abe to call briefly on the Prime Minister.

The visit is however not yet formally agreed. Mr Abe is required to place his office at his Prime Minister's disposal for an end of year Cabinet reshuffle, and there are difficulties in the Diet which prevent Ministers from announcing their overseas travel plans. But in practice it is expected that Mr Abe will retain his job and will be a key figure at the Tokyo Economic Summit and in the run-up to it.

In view of the Summit, and of current discussions between Departments about trying to tackle the Japanese over the economic and commercial problems posed by their vast trade imbalances, Sir Geoffrey Howe believes that it would be most valuable if the Prime Minister /able to receive Mr Abe for perhaps half an hour on 21 January. Mr Abe is a former Minister of International Trade and Industry. He is one of the front runners to be the next Prime Minister of Japan, possibly taking office in 1986, if Mr Nakasone were unable to secure a change in his Party rules to allow him a third term as Party President and therefore Prime Minister.

I enclose a personality note on Mr Abe. We can provide an interpreter, who is recently returned from the Embassy in Tokyo.

Yours ever

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

RESTRICTED

file

SM



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 December 1985

POSSIBLE CALL BY FOREIGN MINISTER OF JAPAN

Thank you for your letter of 18 December about Mr. Abe's visit.

U The Prime Minister can see Mr. Abe at 1030 hours on 21 January for half an hour. She would prefer a very small meeting. I accept your offer of an interpreter.

(C.D. Powell)

R.N. Culshaw, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

RESTRICTED

SM

CONFIDENTIAL

ABE, SHINTARO

Minister for Foreign Affairs (since November 1982)

Born 1924. Graduated in politics from Tokyo University, then worked for the Mainichi newspaper. Was Private Secretary to former Prime Minister Kishi whose daughter he married. He has been a member of the House of Representatives for Yamaguchi Prefecture since 1958, with one short break.

Through his experience as a correspondent for the Mainichi and later as Parliamentary Vice Minister of Agriculture, he built up an extensive knowledge of agricultural affairs, and became Minister of Agriculture in the first Miki administration (1974-76). However he also has a reputation for of negotiation within the Diet and was appointed as the LDP's Diet Policy Chairman in Fukuda's first Cabinet (1976). Chief Cabinet Secretary 1977-78 and Chairman of the LDP Policy Affairs Research Council 1979-81. As Minister for International Trade and Industry 1981-82, he travelled extensively overseas and accompanied Suzuki to the Versailles Summit. He has also travelled a lot as Foreign Minister, with visits to Europe (including Romania and Bulgaria), the United States, China, Korea, the ASEAN countries and the Middle East.

He is heir apparent of the Fukuda faction (the third largest) and is one of the "new leaders" of the LDP. He was retained as Foreign Minister in December 1983 despite having made it clear that he wanted the job of Secretary General of the LDP. In the LDP Presidential election of the in October 1984 he kept open for a long time the possibility that he might run. However he withdrew when it became clear that he could not win and Nakasone was the only candidate. In the subsequent reshuffle Abe was again against his will, retained as Foreign Minister, He is still seen as a likely future Prime Minister.

An activist politician he is generally popular with officials who have served him. But in discussion with foreigners he can appear rather arrogant and cold. He is married, with two sons. He is a 6th dan in kendo. (Japanese fencing). He does not speak English.

CONFIDENTIAL

