

PRESS BRIEFING FOR MOSCOW VISIT - March 25, 1987

This will be the first official visit by a British Prime Minister to Moscow since Mr Wilson in 1975, though the Prime Minister has already been to Moscow three times during her term of office - in 1979 when she called in on the way to the Tokyo Economic Summit; and for the funerals of Mr Andropov and Mr Chernenko.

The five day visit which starts with a lunchtime departure from Heathrow on Saturday arose from an invitation conveyed by Mr Gorbachev when he visited Britain in December, 1984 immediately before he succeeded the late Mr Chernenko as General Secretary.

You will recall that on that occasion the Prime Minister and Mr Gorbachev had extensive talks at Chequers (on Sunday, December 16) lasting some 5 hours, including lunch. It was during that wide ranging discussion that the Prime Minister formed the impression that she "could do business with" Mr Gorbachev.

They clearly formed a good rapport on the basis of mutual respect - as distinct from sympathy with each other's different political philosophy - and this is reflected in the Prime Minister's programme in Moscow.

Leaving aside the normal welcoming and departure ceremonies required by protocol, the Prime Minister will:

- be guest of Mr & Mrs Gorbachev at a special performance of Swan Lake at the Bolshoi on Sunday evening

- have two sessions of talks with Mr Gorbachev on Monday morning and afternoon - the main working day of the visit

- be guest of Mr Gorbachev at the official dinner of the visit on Monday evening

The clear impression from those who have been to Russia in preparation for the visit is that the Russian Government is sparing no effort to make the Prime Minister welcome and to provide her with a full and varied tour.

This leads naturally into the programme which is not yet absolutely finalised but which is substantially complete. I will go through it day by day with interpretive comment interwoven.

DAY 1 - Saturday, March 28

Moscow is three hours ahead - and will continue to be after the clocks go on this week-end.

Departure, with Foreign Secretary - the only Minister accompanying her - from Heathrow 12.30pm. Roughly a three hour flight so arrival in Moscow early evening. We shall fly into Vnukovo 2 airport - one of five airports in the Moscow area but not the international airport - where the Prime Minister will be met by her opposite number, Mr Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, and there will be a military guard of honour which the Prime Minister will be invited to inspect.

The Prime Minister will then drive to the Kremlin for a welcoming ceremony by Mr Gorbachev in, appropriately you may think, St George's Hall. This will be the Prime Minister's first meeting with Mr Gorbachev. These ceremonies are usually formal and not normally the occasion for serious discussion.

The Prime Minister will then go to the British Embassy, where she is staying, for dinner and briefing with the Ambassador, Sir Bryan Cartledge who, as a matter of interest, was her first Foreign Affairs private secretary in 1979.

That concludes Day 1.

DAY 2 - Sunday, March 29, 1987.

This will be the first of two spectacular days - ie days which are likely to be very photogenic. This is the day of the visit to Zagorsk, a 40 minute drive North-east of Moscow. Zagorsk developed around the fortified walls of the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery, founded in 1337. The theological seminary, founded in 1742, remains the principal seminary of the USSR.

The Prime Minister expects to depart around 9.30am. She is going there as a mark of solidarity with the Christian church in the Soviet Union.

The tour provides for a visit to the main churches and chapels and in her progress through the main church, the Refractory Church, a service will be in progress and it is likely that you will hear some magnificent choral singing. Those of you who are going will also see the magnificent displays of ikons which are a particular feature of the seminary.

The Prime Minister will have lunch in the seminary and is expected to leave about 3pm. On the way back to Moscow she will call in on a suburb, or part of the city - it is not yet clear - where she intends to meet the Russian people in the street, in the shops and in their homes.

In the evening the Prime Minister will be guest of Mr & Mrs Gorbachev at the Bolshoi. This will be a special performance in the Prime Minister's honour and we understand that the Russian Government has taken over the theatre for the evening.

After the performance - from about 10.15 or so - the Prime Minister will attend a reception at the British Embassy for the British community in Moscow and the Embassy staff.

That ends Day 2

DAY 3 - Monday, March 30

This is the main working day. It will begin at 10.30 with the Prime Minister laying a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior at the walls of the Kremlin - an occasion of some ceremonial.

The Prime Minister will then go into highly restricted talks - ie tete a tete with notetakers and interpreters - with Mr Gorbachev. These talks will last until lunchtime. The Prime Minister will have lunch at the British Embassy and then resume talks in the afternoon with Mr Gorbachev. The talks are likely to broaden out later into a plenary involving the Foreign Secretary and Mr Shevardnadze who will have been having separate talks meanwhile.

In the evening the Prime Minister will be guest at the official dinner in the Faceted Hall of the Kremlin where there will be formal speeches, including, of course, one from the Prime Minister.

While this dinner is going on there will be a reception for all journalists given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

End of Day 3

DAY 4 - Tuesday, March 31

This varied day will begin at 9.30 with discussions with the chairman of the Council of Ministers, Mr Ryzhkov, the Prime Minister's opposite number.

At noon she will go on to open the offices of the British/Soviet Chamber of Commerce, first established in 1906 - ie pre-Revolution. The offices are only just being occupied. (NB - If there are to be any trade agreements signed they are likely to be signed at this juncture)

The Prime Minister will have a private lunch at the Embassy before going on at 2.30 to the Institute of Crystallography of the Academy of Sciences. The Prime Minister did work on crystallography as a young scientist and was recommended to go to the Institute by Professor Dorothy Hodgkin, her tutor at Oxford.

From the Institute the Prime Minister will go on to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where she will be interviewed by two or three Soviet journalists for Soviet TV. It is assumed that the interview will be recorded for broadcast later.

Immediately afterwards the Prime Minister will give an international press conference in the same Ministry of Foreign Affairs building.

We expect that the Prime Minister will give a number of media interviews after the press conference in the early part of the evening. The programme for the rest of the evening is not yet finalised.

That ends day 4.

DAY 5, Wednesday, April 1.

This final day of the visit will be spent in Tblisi, capital of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, from which the Prime Minister will fly home direct to London that same evening.

The day will begin with a farewell ceremony in St George's Hall at the Kremlin at which Mr Gorbachev will wish the Prime Minister a safe return home. This will be followed by a farewell ceremony at Vnukovo 2 airport, similar to the arrival formalities.

The Prime Minister will fly, as is customary, in a Soviet aircraft south to Tbilisi, arriving about 2pm local time

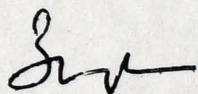
Tbilisi was founded in AD 458 on the Kura River where it dissects the Trialeti and Kartliyski mountain ranges. The picturesque city has known many masters - Persians, the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs, the Mongols, Tamerlane, the Turks, again the Persians and finally the Russians in 1801. It is a major cultural, educational and industrial centre with a population of nearly 900,000.

The Prime Minister will have lunch on the 'plane and will be formally greeted by the Prime Minister of Georgia. She will have talks with the Georgian Council of Ministers before going on a sightseeing tour of Tbilisi, including a view of the city from the plateau above it. She will go into the old part of the city, visiting churches and two museums where she will see examples of Georgian fine art, relics and ikons.

After laying a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior she will be guest at a concert given by a Georgian State Folk Troupe which has toured the UK and is reputed to be the finest in the Soviet Union.

The concert will be followed by dinner given by the Government of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Immediately after dinner the Prime Minister will fly direct from Tbilisi to London Heathrow arriving at about 11pm London time.



B Ingham
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Present at E(A) Wednesday 25 March

Prime Minister in the chair

Energy

Wales

Lord Privy Seal

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Agriculture

Environment

Employment


Treasury

Scotland

Trade and Industry

Transport

Chief Whip



MENU FOR LUNCH ON 25 MARCH

Melon, Citrus and Ginger Salad

Fillet Mignon of Lamb
Tarragon Sauce
Bouquetiere of Market VEgetables

Galette of Honey and Yoghourt
Redcurrant coulis

Coffee

