



Prime Minister.

Contact for Bernard to
take the line in briefing the
press about Hungary?

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 January 1984

A.S.C. 24/1

*As requested
not*

Dear John,

Prime Minister's Visit to Hungary

You asked on the telephone for some thoughts about how the British media might be handled during the Prime Minister's visit to Hungary and in particular the guidance they should be given about her objectives.

We think the press may be inclined to bill the visit as a breakthrough in East-West relations and a first step on the road to Moscow. They may speculate on proposals that the Prime Minister is putting indirectly to the Russians. Whatever the reality, we think it would be right to discourage such ideas. Too much reporting on these lines would make the Hungarians feel they are being put in the spotlight unfairly and unhelpfully. Although, as the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary agreed the other day, the problem with Mr Bush's Vienna speech was mainly one of substance, this may have made them apprehensive of once again being 'used'. They will certainly tend to link British press comment with official briefing. If this is conducted mainly with an eye on its impact in Hungary, it is likely to be right at the end as well.

We suggest therefore that press briefings should underline the Prime Minister's interest in Hungary for its own sake. Its economic reform and social developments have made it one of the most interesting communist states offering good business opportunities for British firms. The experience of visitors such as Lord Carrington and Sir Geoffrey Howe have shown also that it is possible to have wide-ranging and frank talks with the Hungarians on international questions. Such talks increase our understanding of the intentions and concerns of the Warsaw Pact countries. But they are not designed to send specific messages to Moscow, nor would we take the Hungarians to task for their allies' behaviour. At this particular time, dialogue with the East is vital. The objective of the visit is to promote Anglo/Hungarian relations, to see a communist country and to have a thorough exchange of views with the Hungarian leadership.

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It is just possible that the Prime Minister's visit could be criticised as condoning the suppression of the 1956 Revolution and Kadar's role in it. It would be reasonable to answer such criticism on the following lines:

~~The Hungarian Revolution took place over 27 years ago.~~ We must look to the future if we are to make progress between East and West. Hungary is now one of the more liberal and prosperous communist states. The visit enables the Prime Minister to talk to Mr Kadar and his colleagues about matters of concern to us all.

Yours ever,

Peter Rodcuts

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Private Secretary

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23 JAN 1964



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FILE

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cc: Blingham

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

25 January, 1984

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO HUNGARY

Thank you for your letter of 23 January about the handling of the media during this visit.

The Prime Minister agrees with your proposals, except that in answering possible criticisms about the visit appearing to condone the suppression of the 1956 Revolution we would not use the first sentence of the suggested line ("The Hungarian Revolution took place over 27 years ago."). I think Mrs. Thatcher feels that such a statement might create the impression that we were seeking to play down the significance of that event.

11 COPIES

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