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C L G Mallaby Esq
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- 1. Copy UKdel NATO, Mr Bellard, RD, Mr Ferguson, CSCE Unit, CRE4
- 2. Mr Battoccombe

My dear Christopher,

UK/HUNGARIAN RELATIONS

The point at X is the most specific and the broadest definition we have seen of the Soviet ban on high level contacts. We must watch to see whether it is applied. For instance, economic + technical Ministers may be exempt

You will have seen from my telegram no. 72, reporting on the last meeting here of the representatives of the Nine to discuss the implications for Hungary of the Afghanistan crisis, that the Hungarians - almost certainly in deference to Soviet wishes - appear to have imposed a moratorium on senior Ministerial visits to countries which have taken a "negative" position towards the Soviet invasion. My Austrian colleague told me that, according to a source in the Council of Ministers, this restriction applies to all visits by State Secretaries (ie Ministers of State) and above. The impact of the moratorium on Hungary's bilateral relations with Western countries has depended on what visits have happened to be in the pipe line; having no major visits in prospect ourselves, we have not been affected. You may like to know, for the record, that although the Hungarian media were at the beginning of this month giving the UK some prominence as the most active supporter of President Carter's retaliatory measures against the Soviet Union (we have been singled out less since the Giscard/Schmidt declaration), we have not so far felt the draught in our everyday bilateral business.

2. For example:



- i) the reception which the Cultural Attaché gave for me on 30 January was exceptionally well attended by Hungarians prominent in the creative arts, the universities, galleries and museums, a number of them having travelled some distance to attend;
- ii) a reception which I gave on 3 February for the King's Singers (whose two concerts here over that weekend were a triumphant success) was equally well attended - although Mr Fejer, Secretary General of the Opera House, did remark on this occasion to a member of Cultural Section that if the present political situation, and the British Prime Minister's contribution to it, continued, Anglo/Hungarian cultural relations might suffer;
- iii) the first of a series of showings in the Embassy, on our new video recorder, of recordings of BBC "Panorama" and other current affairs programmes was attended by nearly all the Hungarian journalists and broadcasters whom we had invited, including Hungarian television's most senior commentator;
- iv) the first in a series of weekly showings in our Embassy cinema of Lord Clarke's "Civilisation" series attracted a capacity audience of Hungarians from all walks of cultural life and a repeat showing three days later also had a full house;



- v) during my first call on the President of the Institute for Cultural Relations, Dr Ronai, there was no reference to the international political situation or to the possibility of its potentially adverse effect on UK/Hungarian relations (although I had to sit through the usual lecture about the "cultural imbalance" and to a repetition of some of Dr Ronai's other well-known complaints against us): if there were any internal directive to be cool towards the British, I would have expected Dr Ronai, more than most, to give conscientious effect to it, but in fact the atmosphere was by his standards remarkably cordial;
- vi) when the Head of Chancery called yesterday on Mr Kővari (Director of Department in the Planning Commission) at the latter's request, to discuss the programme for Mr Kővari's forthcoming Category 2 visit to the UK, Michael Atkinson remarked, at the end of a useful and practical discussion, that he had half feared that Mr Kővari had called him round to say that, in view of the pressure of other work, he would have to seek a postponement of his visit. Mr Kővari replied, with engaging frankness and pointing to a file of papers on his desk, that Janos Nagy (Deputy Foreign Minister) had indeed suggested to him that in view of the general situation it might



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be better for him to postpone his visit to the UK; but that Mr Nagy had, when Mr Kővari had explained to him that if the visit were not fitted into the current UK financial year it might not be possible for the invitation to be repeated, agreed that in the circumstances he could go ahead.

3. To sum up, there is evidently at present no abnormal restriction on everyday contacts by Hungarians with our Embassy or on their attendance at Embassy functions; if anything, Hungarians at the moment seem more than usually ready to attend them. And although there is evidently some disposition in theory to cut down on official visits such as Mr Kővari's, it is not in practice enforced if there is any risk of losing a genuinely useful professional opportunity. That said, it of course remains true that the Hungarians have a difficult course to steer and if the West's relations with the Soviet Union were to cool even further, they would have to trim their sails accordingly.

4. I am sending copies of this letter to Chanceries at Moscow, East Berlin, Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest and Sofia.

Yours ever,
Bryan

(Bryan Cartledge)