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From the Private Secretary

10 November 1987

*Dear Lyn,*

**MEETING WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR**

The Soviet Ambassador came to see me this morning at his own request. He was accompanied as usual by Mr. Kossov. He raised a number of points.

The Ambassador said that he had attended two recent meetings of the Central Committee in Moscow including the one at which Mr. Yeltsin had made his now notorious speech. It had not been very easy to follow exactly what Mr. Yeltsin had been saying. But his argument appeared to be that there was a conflict between what it was realistically possible to achieve as a result of perestroika and glasnost and what had been promised to the Soviet people. Expectations had been created which could not be met. It would be better to halt the whole process of restructuring temporarily, think it out more fully, and promise people only what could in practice be achieved. His attitude appeared to have been affected principally by the problems which had arisen in the Moscow district. Mr. Yeltsin had not received much support for this approach although it had not been widely recognised that there were great difficulties in reconciling new policies with an old Five Year Plan, and Mr. Yeltsin had subsequently spoken of resigning. It had been agreed that this was a matter to be considered at the Moscow Party Conference which, as I understand it, is now in progress or shortly will be.

The Ambassador asked what assessment we had made on Mr. Gorbachev's speech at the 70th Anniversary celebrations. I said that the general view was that it was slightly disappointing in its treatment of Soviet history and had said nothing very new on the current situation or future policies. The Ambassador said that this seemed to be the general view in the United Kingdom. Perhaps expectations had been too high. In Mr. Gorbachev's view, it was not for him to re-write Soviet history but for professional historians to be given access to all the documents and come up with their conclusions. This would now happen. Another important development was that the records of all Party conferences since 1917 were now to be disclosed and made available to "subscribers and reading rooms". People would be able to see the truth for themselves.

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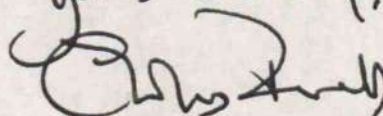
The Ambassador recalled that there had been earlier mention of the possibility that Mr. Gorbachev might stop over in the UK on his way to or from the Summit meeting in the United States. He wondered whether this invitation remained open. I said that I had checked with the Prime Minister and that it certainly did, but that there was a slight preference for a stop-over on the way to Washington. I hoped that the Ambassador would make this clear to Mr. Gorbachev. We would make any convenient arrangements either in London or possibly at a Royal Air Force airfield. The Ambassador said that he had established that Mr. Gorbachev would need to make a technical stop somewhere en route to Washington, although he could fly back without stopping. A minimum of two hours would be required for a stop. He would make sure that Mr. Gorbachev understood that the offer remained open and would contact me if he received any instructions.

The Ambassador continued that he knew that Mr. Gorbachev was currently looking at his plans for travelling abroad next year. Although he had no specific authority to say so, he believed that Mr. Gorbachev might well want to take up the Prime Minister's invitation to pay a visit to the United Kingdom in the second half of next year. He enquired whether this was likely to be convenient. Mr. Gorbachev had told him there were many matters which he would like to discuss with the Prime Minister. He particularly appreciated her support for the INF Agreement which had been very important in bringing it to fruition. She had told Mr. Gorbachev in Moscow that she would support such an agreement and had honoured her word. I said that the invitation was an open one and that we looked to Mr. Gorbachev to make a firm proposal on dates. I could see no reason why a visit next year would not be welcome, subject to checking specific dates.

The Ambassador continued that he thought that chemical weapons might be one of the main issues for discussion during such a visit. He wondered whether it might be a good idea to establish an Anglo/Soviet working group on this subject to prepare for the meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr. Gorbachev. I said that this was something which he should raise with the Foreign Secretary. I recalled that we had not been attracted by the idea of a working group to prepare the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow.

We had a brief word about the visit of Academician Marchuk and Mr. Tolstykh. I explained the Prime Minister's preference for meeting the two delegation leaders and one or two others only. She would of course meet all the members of both delegations at drinks at the Royal Society the preceeding evening. The Ambassador seemed quite content with this.

I am copying this letter to John Howe in the Ministry of Defence and to Trevor Woolley in Sir Robert Armstrong's Office.

*Yours sincerely,*  
  
C. D. Powell

Lyn Parker, Esq.,  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office.