

PRIME MINISTER

SOVIET UNION

Mr Kossov from the Soviet Embassy came in to see me this morning. His Ambassador is back from the various Central Committee meetings in Moscow and had seen Mr Gorbachev, who had been very grateful for your prompt and warm message of congratulations on his election as President.

He had also brought back a message to the effect that Mr Gorbachev would very much like to talk to you on the telephone at some stage. He had in fact referred to talking on the "hot line". I pointed out that we did not actually have a telephone hot line, only a teleprinter and facsimile link. Mr Kossov was rather taken aback at this and said that they had assured the Ambassador in Moscow that there was now a hot line. Still, it did not alter the fact that Mr Gorbachev would very much like to talk to you at some point. He seems to have two main purposes in mind. The Soviet press and television have apparently picked up stories in the British media about threats to your position and magnified them even further. Mr Gorbachev wants to express his support for you. There are also aspects of German unification which he would like to discuss. I said I would report the suggestion to you. I thought in principle you would be very happy to have a talk, although it would have to be on an open line. It would need to be carefully arranged in advance so that there were interpreters ready.

Mr Kossov said the Ambassador reported the situation in Moscow as being "tense". Some far-reaching personnel changes were in prospect, both in the upper reaches of the Party hierarchy and within the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

Another message which the Ambassador had brought back from Gorbachev was that he much appreciated your forthright stance on German reunification and felt that Britain and the Soviet Union

were close on the main aspects of this, although they differed on the question of a united Germany's membership in NATO. The first meeting of the Four Plus Two group had been encouraging.

C.D.P.

C. D. POWELL  
19 March 1990

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