

PRIME MINISTER

GAIL SHEEHY - VANITY FAIR

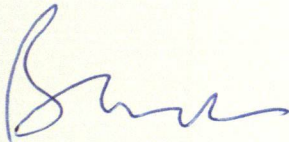
You will recall that, at Woodrow Wyatt's instigation, you gave an interview to Gail Sheehy of Vanity Fair. In it she referred to electric baths which certainly electrified the British media at the time.

She has now written to Woodrow Wyatt seeking help in filling out some background to a 15,000 word portrait she is doing of President Gorbachev. She makes the point that you "discovered" him and she would like some insight into how your relationship has developed.

Charles Powell has attempted to answer her questions attached at Annex E. I think before I hand them over to Woodrow Wyatt I ought to stipulate they are for ^{only} background and not for quotation.

Content with the answers?

As amended - and only on the above condition.



BERNARD INGHAM
24 November 1989

Annex - re reply attached as demanded by PM. Re return all this to me. Do let's have Wyatt as follows

You passed on Gail Sheehy's request for info abt. the PM's relationship with Gorbachev. I have managed to secure answers to her 6 questions in the understanding that they are solely for background and not for attribution or quotation. I hope you will not see such an undertaking for Mrs Sheehy.

Done - re type in Q's of Joan,
The questions are in the
attached letter from Lord Wyatt,
S

MR. INGHAM

Annex 1

I don't know whether the Prime Minister wants to help Gail Sheehy. My answers to the questions off-the-record would be:

Q1 -

A 1. No, Mrs. Thatcher had not met Gorbachev before 1984. But she was determined to break-through to meet the next generation of Soviet leaders in the post-Brezhnev and post-Andropov era. (It was clear that Chernenko could not last.) We identified two main contenders: Gorbachev and Romanov. To a degree it was luck that we netted Gorbachev rather than Romanov - we invited both. But good luck is an essential part of politics and diplomacy.

Q2

A 2. Mrs. Thatcher immediately spotted in Gorbachev an entirely different sort of Soviet leader: a strong personality, an open mind, a vigorous debating style. He didn't need notes, statements, briefs or advisers. He was prepared to argue freely, to question accepted policies and positions and probe what she could tell him about the West and the lessons it might have for the Soviet Union. This was a man you could talk to, not some-one who just talked at you. It was a meeting of two powerful minds and two very strong wills, each finding in the other a worthy opponent and debating partner. Mrs. Thatcher found for the first time a Soviet leader with whom you could actually have a proper discussion, like with a Western leader (~~indeed better than with most of them!~~), a man whom she could do business with.

Q3

A 3. There was not, ~~as I recall,~~ much discussion of the nationalities problem in the Soviet Union. But there was a great deal of talk of decentralisation of decision-taking: indeed I ~~think~~ it was the main subject discussed over lunch at Chequers, in particular its relevance to running an economy. There was no doubt that Gorbachev was probing Mrs. Thatcher's experience here, while she identified in his readiness to talk about extensive decentralisation of power the first signs of change in the monolithic Communism that we had know up to that point. This was the crucial evidence that he was a man of change.

Q4

A 4. When Mrs. Thatcher went to see President Reagan at Camp David shortly after the meeting with Gorbachev and told him about Gorbachev and what conclusions she had drawn, she also handed over a short paper about him, ~~which I had written~~, summarising her talks with Gorbachev and stressing her view that his increasing prominence within the Soviet system offered a unique opportunity to start to do serious business with the Russians. It is also relevant that a good deal of her talk with Gorbachev was devoted to persuading him that President Reagan was utterly straight and some-one he could trust to keep his word. So in a very real sense, she was godmother to the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship.

Q5

A 5. ~~I think Miss Sheehy is~~ ^{she} ~~is~~ ^{are} ~~reading~~ ^{Miss Sheehy is} too much into the quotes she uses. 'We' in Thatcher-speak ~~is~~ ^{is} the West. Nonetheless it is the case that Mrs. Thatcher was absolutely rock-solid on the need for effective verification on arms control agreements, and this did feature in her talks with Gorbachev during the Brize Norton stop-over (of which she ^{almost certainly} then sent President Reagan a prompt account, ~~I think~~). She was not consulted ~~as I recall~~ while the Reagan-Gorbachev talks were actually in prospect.

Q6

A 6. Mrs. Thatcher's views on the essential role of nuclear weapons in the West's defence have never wavered and she has always put them robustly and directly to Gorbachev in all their contacts. There are some signs that her strong views are having an effect. The experts are detecting the first signs in Soviet strategic thinking of acceptance of the need for SNF at equal ceilings and of the concept of minimum deterrence (rather than removal of all nuclear weapons). She has no misgivings at all about President Bush's ability to deal squarely and successfully with Gorbachev.

C.D.P.

C. D. POWELL

13 November 1989

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ANNEX I

Q1. In December 1984, when Mrs Thatcher selected Gorbachev for an invitation to Great Britain, it seems she picked him out as a future state leader. How did she know and why did she choose to help make his reputation? Indeed, didn't Gorbachev meet her earlier at a fuelling stopover at a British airport?

A. No, Mrs Thatcher had not met Gorbachev before 1984. But she was determined to break-through to meet the next generation of Soviet leaders in the post-Brezhnev and post-Andropov era. (It was clear that Chernenko could not last.) We identified ~~(two main contenders)~~^{Mr.} Gorbachev ~~(and Romanov)~~. [To a degree it was luck that we netted Gorbachev rather than Romanov - we invited both. But good luck is an essential part of politics and diplomacy.]

and he came and had a highly successful visit.

Q2. Mrs Thatcher herself, in an interview on Soviet TV, has said, "Right from the beginning, I found it easy to discuss and debate in a very animated way with [President] Gorbachev, neither of us giving an inch. The personalities are right for the times, and the times are right for us." What did she sense in his personality that allowed the two of them together to move the times forward? How did she react when he criticised the West? How did he respond when she gave him one of her famous "rockets"?

A. Mrs Thatcher immediately spotted in Gorbachev an entirely different sort of Soviet leader: a strong personality, an open mind, a vigorous debating style. He didn't need notes, statements, briefs or advisers. He was prepared to argue freely, to question accepted policies and positions and probe what she could tell him about the West and the lessons it might have for the Soviet Union. This was a man you could talk to, not some-one who just talked at you. It was a meeting of two powerful minds and two very strong wills, each finding in the other a worthy opponent and debating partner. Mrs Thatcher found for the first time a Soviet leader with whom you could actually have a proper discussion like with a Western leader, a man whom she could do business with.

Q3. Since Gorbachev talked to the Italian communists in 1984 about the need for decentralisation and more power

to the fifteen Soviet republics, he must have had the subject of "decolonization" on his mind. Did he and Mrs Thatcher discuss this subject and Great Britain's experience in pulling back from her Empire? Did she encourage him in his instincts for granting more autonomy to his republics and perhaps to think about independence for the Baltics and Eastern Europe?

A. There was not much discussion of the nationalities problem in the Soviet Union. But there was a great deal of talk of decentralisation of decision-taking: indeed it was the main subject discussed over lunch at Chequers, in particular its relevance to running an economy. There was no doubt that Gorbachev was probing Mrs Thatcher's experience here, while she identified in his readiness to talk about extensive decentralisation of power the first signs of change in the monolithic Communism that we had known up to that point. ~~(This was the crucial evidence that he was a man of change)~~

Q4. Sir Crispin, her ambassador here, acknowledges that the fact that Mrs Thatcher got along with Gorbachev, commended and trusted him, and told Reagan so, did make a difference in prompting Reagan to attempt personal diplomacy with Gorbachev. Since she was a broker of history, will she comment on how she commended Mr Gorbachev to President Reagan?

A. When Mrs Thatcher went to see President Reagan at Camp David shortly after the meeting with Gorbachev and told him about Gorbachev and what conclusions she had drawn, she also handed over a short paper ~~(about him)~~ summarising her talks with Gorbachev and stressing her view that his increasing prominence within the Soviet system offered a unique opportunity to start to do serious business with the Russians. It is also relevant that a good deal of her talk with Gorbachev was devoted to persuading him that President Reagan was ~~(utterly straight and)~~ some-one he could trust ^{and who would} to keep his word. So in a very real sense, she was godmother to the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship.

Q5. In Mrs Thatcher's interview on Soviet TV immediately following the signing of the INF treaty in Washington, she took credit for being a major partner in that treaty. She said, "Those matters of verification were difficult to negotiate, but because the will was there, because we both wanted it, we managed to get it right." Gorbachev made a stopover to talk with Mrs Thatcher before going on to the Washington summit. Did the two of them discuss verification measures which then became the basis for the Reagan-Gorbachev discussions? Did they call her during the Washington summit for her input?

A. Miss Sheehy is reading too much into the quotes she uses. 'We' in ^{the 'control'} ~~Thatcher speak~~ is the West. Nonetheless it is the case that Mrs Thatcher was absolutely rock-solid on the need for effective verification on arms control agreements, and this did feature in her talks with Gorbachev during the Brize Norton stop-over (of which she almost certainly then sent President Reagan a prompt account). She was not consulted ^{during} ~~while~~ the Reagan-Gorbachev ~~talks were actually in prospect.~~

Q6. Finally, Mrs Thatcher also said in that TV interview in December 1988, "Thanks to these very warm and sincere meetings, we're growing closer and closer in our positions [she and Gorbachev]." But Mrs Thatcher has been the strongest hold-out for the continued presence of nuclear weapons in Europe as the guarantor of peace for the last forty-five years. Is she apprehensive now that Gorbachev will win his way with personal diplomacy with President Bush? What are her views on Gorbachev's notion of a "common European home" without American nuclear weapons and vastly reduced conventional forces on all sides, given the fact that the Soviet Union would naturally, by its size and might, dominate the continent?

A. Mrs Thatcher's views on the essential role of nuclear weapons in the West's defence have never wavered and she has always put them robustly and directly to Gorbachev in all their contacts. There are some signs that her strong views are having an effect. The experts are detecting the first signs in Soviet strategic thinking of acceptance of the need for SNF at equal ceilings and of the concept of minimum deterrence

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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Press Secretary

November 27, 1989

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Yours sincerely

BERNARD INGHAM

Lord Wyatt of Weeford

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