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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE  
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

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Dear Tony

The new Soviet Ambassador, accompanied by Mr Krasnov, paid a call on the Lord President last Thursday, 8 May. They had a friendly and relaxed discussion, from which you may wish to be aware of the following points.

Several times over the Soviet Ambassador stressed how pleased the Soviet authorities were at the high level of representation in the delegation, and the fact that, although it was a Parliamentary group, it had proved possible for the Lord President to be its leader. This was especially pleasing in Mr Zamyatin's view, given that the delegation was in return for the visit led by Mr Gorbachev in 1984.

The Lord President expressed sympathy to Mr Zamyatin over the Chernobyl disaster. Mr Zamyatin in responding expressed concern that the scale of the problem should have been exaggerated by the media in this country, especially as there was no evidence of contamination of any foreign nationals, in or outside the Soviet Union. As to allegations of secrecy on the part of the Soviet authorities, the accident had happened in a reactor which had operated satisfactorily for two years, and during the night. (Mr Zamyatin said the "night of 27 April"; it was not clear whether this was inadvertent or not.) Moreover, the first priority had been to reduce the emissions of radiation and treat those affected. Two hundred people who had been contaminated were undergoing treatment in Moscow and Leningrad clinics. The Western media had also exaggerated the scale of casualties: Mr Zamyatin repeated that the number of people killed was two; and that only about 18 people were in a serious condition as a result of injuries attributable to the incident.

In reply, the Lord President stressed that it was not part of our Government's wish to talk up the seriousness of the incident. The Government's view remained that nuclear power had an essential contribution to make to our energy requirements, subject to the continuation of the nuclear industry's very good safety record.

Tony Galsworthy Esq  
Private Secretary to the Secretary of State  
for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

The Lord President, concluding the meeting, stressed that he was very much looking forward to the visit, and invited Mr Zamyatin to get in touch if there were any further points he wished to put to him. There will be an opportunity for further discussion on 20 May, when Lord Whitelaw and others have been invited to lunch at the Soviet Embassy. I will let you know of any further points of interest.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Charles Powell.

Yours sincerely  
Nick Gibbons



JOAN MACNAUGHTON  
Private Secretary