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From the Private Secretary

10 March 1987

Dear Tony,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR

The Prime Minister saw the Soviet Ambassador this evening to discuss her forthcoming visit to the Soviet Union. Mr. Zamyatin was accompanied by Mr. Kossov.

The Prime Minister asked Mr. Zamyatin to convey her thanks to the Soviet Government for their message of sympathy about the Zeebrugge ferry disaster. This had been much appreciated. The Prime Minister continued that she had been pleased to meet the Soviet fireman who had received a 'Gold Star' award for his heroism at Chernobyl. Mr. Zamyatin said that the fact that the Prime Minister had received the fireman had created a very good impression in the Soviet Union.

Visit to the Soviet Union

The Prime Minister said that she was very much looking forward to her visit to the Soviet Union and was making thorough preparations for it. She had studied Mr. Gorbachev's recent speech to the Central Committee Plenum, as well as his earlier speeches, very carefully. It was clearly an exciting moment for a visit with a great deal of change and innovation being discussed. Mr. Zamyatin said that it was not easy to bring about change. In the late 1970s the Soviet Union had been handicapped by the age of its leaders who had failed to understand the need for new thinking. The Prime Minister said that she herself well understood the difficulties of change. She had been elected in 1979 to bring about change in the United Kingdom and it had taken over 7 years to achieve results. She hoped very much that Mr. Gorbachev would give her a very thorough and frank account of his reform plans. She would also wish to talk to him about the implications for the Soviet Union's external policies. Mr. Zamyatin said that Mr. Gorbachev had already been informed of the Prime Minister's wish to have a first-hand account of restructuring in the Soviet Union and had expressed his willingness to talk to her about this.

The Prime Minister said that she would also wish to discuss a broad range of international issues including Afghanistan, the Middle East and Southern Africa as well as

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arms control. Mr. Zamyatin said that he believed this would be welcomed by the Soviet leadership. He knew that Mr. Gorbachev would wish to raise with the Prime Minister the new Soviet initiative on INF. If good progress could be made on this at Geneva in the next few months, Mr. Gorbachev was ready for a Summit meeting with President Reagan to sign the agreement. The Prime Minister welcomed this, and added that she would hope to cover other aspects of arms control as well, notably the prospects for the START talks and the issues raised by the Strategic Defence Initiative. She did not exclude the possibility of setting down points of agreement. But this would depend on how the talks went.

The Prime Minister said that she would also propose to raise the issue of human rights. We were pleased with some recent developments, in particular the release of dissidents, and had publicly welcomed these. She would be ready to deal with the subject tactfully and sensitively, as she had done with Mr. Gorbachev at Chequers. She had a suggestion to make: the atmosphere for discussion of this issue would be much improved if it proved possible to settle a number of cases with which she and the United Kingdom Government had been personally concerned before her arrival in Moscow. Mr. Zamyatin said that Mr. Gorbachev was dealing with these issues by himself. He had learned from various sources in the Soviet Union that Mr. Gorbachev was encountering certain difficulties in this, but had nonetheless decided to take the necessary measures to settle the problem. But he wished to give the Prime Minister a word of frank advice. When the Soviet leaders talked of 'democratisation' we should not interpret it as an invitation to interfere in the Soviet Union's internal affairs. The Prime Minister said that the Helsinki agreements gave us a direct interest in these matters. As she had already said, she recognised the need to take account of the Soviet Government's sensitivities. Equally, they must realise how strongly she felt about these issues which were constantly being raised with her by people in this country.

Mr. Zamyatin said that he wished to mention two matters which he personally hoped would come up in the Prime Minister's talks in Moscow. The first concerned Anglo/Soviet trade. The Soviet Union was following a new policy on foreign trade and no longer insisted that all contracts should go through the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Rather they were allowing the industrial ministries to have direct contacts with firms and organisations in the West and were also establishing joint ventures. But progress was still hindered by bureaucracy on both sides. He himself was doing his best to increase Anglo/Soviet trade, and there were important contracts in the pipeline. But he needed the Prime Minister's help in Moscow in getting them unblocked. He found himself engaged in a battle with Soviet bureaucracy on this subject almost every day. The Prime Minister said that she certainly intended to raise the subject of trade in her talks.

Mr. Zamyatin said that the second matter concerned a proposal by his Embassy that representatives on the

Anglo/Soviet Joint Commission should be upgraded. On the Soviet side this would be to the level of deputy Prime Minister. The Prime Minister said that she would need to discuss this with Mr. Channon.

Visit to the Soviet Union: Programme

The Prime Minister said that she would be grateful to know how the planning of her programme was coming along. She attached particular importance to being able to hold at least two talks with Mr. Gorbachev in a very restricted circle indeed. This was the most important single aspect of the visit for her. There was a further point on which she would welcome the Ambassador's advice. When Mr. Gorbachev visited her at Chequers, Mrs. Gorbachev had come too. If it was appropriate, she would very much like to pay a courtesy call on Mrs. Gorbachev in Moscow. Beyond this, she had let the Soviet authorities have, through our Embassy in Moscow, a number of suggestions for the programme, including her wish to speak to the Soviet people on television, to be able to conduct a walkabout and to see something of the Soviet Union outside Moscow.

Mr. Zamyatin said that he did not yet have a final programme for the visit. The draft had been sent to Mr. Gorbachev for his approval but he had not yet given his views. He had, however, received from the Foreign Ministry, on a strictly personal basis, a number of indications of what would be in the programme. He would pass these on without commitment. There would be a short welcoming ceremony at the airport on the Prime Minister's arrival, where she would probably be greeted by Mr. Ryzhkov. National Anthems would be played and the Prime Minister would review an Honour Guard, after which she would shake hands with senior officials and meet Embassy staff. From there she would go straight to the Kremlin where she would be welcomed by the Soviet leadership. Mr. Gorbachev would be present and so would Mr. Gromyko. This meeting would last only some 15 minutes. Mr. Zamyatin continued that he understood that the Prime Minister wished to visit Zagorsk on 29 March. The Patriarch of Moscow would be there to greet her. Official talks would begin on 30 March with a meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. He believed that they would certainly start in a very restricted circle and might continue on that basis, or might subsequently be slightly expanded. In the evening there would be a dinner in the presence of Mr. Gorbachev and leading members of the Soviet Government. This would be an occasion for formal speeches. On 31 March talks would be held with Prime Minister Ryzhkov. Mr. Gorbachev might also wish to resume his talks with the Prime Minister in a restricted circle that day. On 1 April the Prime Minister would visit Tbilisi. Arrangements would be made for her to meet as many people as possible. The opportunities for the Prime Minister to speak more formally to the Soviet people would come in her speech at the official dinner, at her press conference and on Soviet television. He would pass on to Moscow the Prime Minister's suggestion of a meeting with Mrs. Gorbachev. His personal expectation was that Mrs. Gorbachev would be present at the welcoming ceremony

at the Kremlin. He stressed once more that this was only preliminary information.

The Prime Minister thanked Mr. Zamyatin for these indications which seemed generally satisfactory, in particular the amount of time allocated for her to hold discussions with Mr. Gorbachev.

As Mr. Zamyatin was leaving the Prime Minister said that she very much hoped that arrangements could be made for a small advance party to visit Moscow next weekend to finalise practical arrangements. Mr. Zamyatin expected this to be possible, provided the programme was by then finalised. I subsequently said to him that I hoped that we could use the Prime Minister's aircraft for the travel to Tibilisi so that we could return direct from there to the United Kingdom. Mr. Zamyatin thought that the Soviet Government might want the Prime Minister to use one of their aircraft for travel to Tibilisi, with her own aircraft following. But he saw no difficulty about departing direct from Tibilisi for London.

I am copying this letter to Timothy Walker (Department of Trade and Industry).

Yans diavch,
Charles Powell

C. D. POWELL

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