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From the Private Secretary

20 March 1990

Joe Q-ident,

SOVIET UNION

I had a short talk yesterday with Mr. Kossov of the Soviet Embassy on the usual basis. Kossov said that his Ambassador had returned from Central Committee meetings in Moscow, where he had met Mr. Gorbachev who had been very grateful for the Prime Minister's prompt and warm message of congratulations on his election as President.

The Ambassador had also brought back a message to the effect that Mr. Gorbachev would very much like to talk to the Prime Minister on the telephone at some stage. Kossov said they envisaged a talk on the "hot line". I pointed out that we did not actually have a telephone hot line, only a teleprinter and facsimile link. This seemed to surprise Mr. Kossov, who claimed that Chernayev had assured the Ambassador there was a hot line, with a telephone in the room next to Mr. Gorbachev's office! Still, it did not alter the fact that Mr. Gorbachev would very much like to talk to the Prime Minister, in particular about aspects of German unification.

I have subsequently discussed this with the Prime Minister. She would be perfectly ready to speak to Mr. Gorbachev on the telephone, although she does not enjoy it as an instrument of diplomacy. She thinks the best time might be early in the week that she goes to Bermuda to see President Bush. She will then be in a position to report to the President whatever latest thoughts Mr. Gorbachev may divulge to her.

I think it would be helpful if you would report the above to Rodric Braithwaite in Moscow and suggest that he say to Mr. Chernayev the Prime Minister will indeed be happy to talk to Mr. Gorbachev on the telephone, even though it would be an open line. She suggests that a good time would be the week beginning 8 April, shortly before she travels to Bermuda to see the President. Mr. Chernayev might like to suggest a day and a time in that week which will be convenient to Mr. Gorbachev (although you will want to steer him from the day of the drugs conference).

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and to Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

You sir,
C. Powell

(CHARLES POWELL)

Richard Gozney, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.