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*From the Private Secretary*

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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO MOSCOW

My letter of 6 February recorded some points put to me by Mr. Kossov of the Soviet Embassy about the 'political content' of the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union and the possibility of some form of joint statement.

I think that we are all sceptical about whether it is feasible or desirable to have a conventional communiqué. I would certainly see no advantage in getting locked into tedious negotiation of a text in advance, with the risk that it would either end up utterly bland or, more likely, with disagreement and reports of 'failure'. But we shall want to be in a position to exploit any opportunity which may arise when we are in Moscow to come up with a useful text. Such a text might deal with only one or two specific issues. This points to having some building blocks ready, in the form of language on the principal issues likely to arise, especially arms control. You are probably doing some work on this already.

It would be useful to have some ideas to put to the Prime Minister in early March, to leave time for discussion and further refinement. Meantime, our line with the Russians might be that we should like the visit to have political content but will only be able to judge in the light of the Prime Minister's talks with Mr. Gorbachev how far this can be expressed in terms of an agreed text.

(C. D. POWELL)

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