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cc Master

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FILE
SLH

cc Mr. Ingham
Embassy

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

29 March 1987

Dear Tony,

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO MOSCOW:

SUPPER PARTY WITH MR AND MRS GORBACHEV AT THE BOLSHOI

During the interval of Swan Lake this evening, Mr and Mrs Gorbachev gave a small supper party for the Prime Minister at the theatre. Those present on the Soviet side were Mr Kovalev, Mr Zamyatin and the Chief of Protocol. The Foreign Secretary and Sir Bryan and Lady Cartledge were also present.

It was a very lively and friendly occasion, with both Gorbachevs in great good humour, and Mrs Gorbachev talking at least as volubly as her husband. One or two points are worth recording.

Mr Gorbachev said that, when he had been a Party official in Stavropol, he made a point of coming to the Bolshoi whenever he was in Moscow. The Prime Minister observed that Swan Lake, like many ballets, ended sadly. Mr Gorbachev replied that, whatever happened in drama and fiction, he and the Prime Minister had the task of making sure that life in the real world did not end sadly.

Mr Gorbachev commented favourably on the help which the Soviet Union had received from ICI in improving the quality of its bread-making wheat and rye. The rye bread in particular was now much better. Even so, it was difficult to please people. When the quality had been lower, it had been necessary to add salt. Now that the quality had improved, this was no longer necessary but the people still wanted salt in their bread. He had told the Minister of bread-making to go on television and explain to the people that they were now getting better bread, even if it was not what they were familiar with.

Mr Gorbachev lamented that the Soviet Union still had to import a fair amount of wheat. Even so, the situation was improving. He recalled that in 1984 he had asked Mr Jopling whether Britain or the Soviet Union produced more wheat per capita. The answer was that the Soviet Union did, and by quite a lot. One of the problems in the Soviet Union was that a great deal of grain was given straight to the cattle without any protein added. In the United States and Western Europe protein was added to feed grain in the proportion of 1:6. In the Soviet Union the corresponding figure was 1:24.

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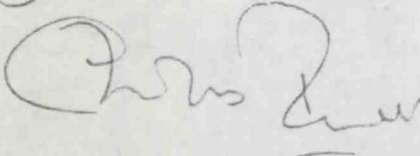
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Mr Gorbachev pointed out that he was serving the Prime Minister Georgian wine. It was excellent. Indeed it helped one to live to be 100. Unfortunately it did not travel very well and was not exported. His campaign against drinking was having some success although it was not exactly universally popular. The Politburo had considered total prohibition but had decided on balance against it. Nonetheless there had already been a steep decline in accidental deaths, both deaths at place of work and in road accidents (I think he mentioned a figure of 350,000). Thousands of letters were coming in from people who said that life was now much better without alcohol at work and without noisy drunks in the street. He was even being praised in Church these days for the moral aspects of his campaign against alcoholism. He added, obviously regarding it as a great joke, that people in the West were saying that restructuring was doomed because he had taken away alcohol from the people and privileges from Party officials.

Mr Gorbachev asked who the Prime Minister would be bringing to their talks the next day. He hoped that it could be a very restricted occasion. The Prime Minister said that she would bring only a Private Secretary and an interpreter. Mr Gorbachev said that he had thought Mr Uspensky would do the interpreting. He had done a good job with President Reagan. The Prime Minister said she thought it might be easier to have two interpreters: it was a lot of work for one. Mr Gorbachev said that it should be just as the Prime Minister wanted.

As coffee was served, Mr Gorbachev said that the protocol people were on the edge of their seats, so it was obviously time to go back into the theatre. It turned out that the audience had in fact been in their seats and the lights dimmed for at least five minutes by the time we got back.

Yours sincerely,


C. D. POWELL

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