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*From the Private Secretary*

4 November 1987

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DR. KORYAGIN

The Prime Minister received Dr. Koryagin this evening. Mr. David Atkinson M.P. was also present.

The Prime Minister said that, when she had first read of Dr. Koryagin's plight, she would scarcely have dared hope that one day she would be able to welcome him to No. 10 Downing Street. She recalled the article which he had written in The Times after his release in which he had said that he could never forgive the Soviet Union for what they had done to him and his family, and was still doing to countless others. She could well understand this feeling. Nonetheless, we were very interested in the changes which were taking place in the Soviet Union. We recognised that progress was likely to be slow and that there were many obstacles. We welcomed with joy every person allowed to leave the Soviet Union. We recognised that these releases were made primarily to impress people in the West rather than because the Soviet Union had been converted to observance of basic human rights. She would very much like to hear about Dr. Koryagin's own experiences and any advice which he had to offer about the way in which we should deal with the Soviet Union.

Dr. Koryagin said that he was extremely grateful to the Prime Minister for her personal efforts to secure his release and that of his family and for the firmness shown by the British Government in human rights' matters. The Prime Minister was right to imply that the steps being taken by the Soviet authorities had been forced upon them by pressure from the West and by the courageous actions of dissidents and defenders of human rights in the Soviet Union. What we were seeing was in effect a stage by stage release of hostages which the Soviet Union tried to present as evidence of a steady trend towards improving the human rights situation. It was vital that the West should go on working for the release of all those in the camps, prisons and psychiatric hospitals, and to prevent repetition in the future of what had happened in the past. A special effort should be devoted to persuading the Soviet Union to change its laws, in particular Articles 70 and 192 of the Constitution which were used to send people to prison for

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their religious and political beliefs. The Soviet authorities should be urged to bring in new legislation to guarantee basic human rights. In his talks at the Foreign Office he had found officials impressively well versed in the real human rights situation and the action which was needed. Human rights issues should always be raised when western leaders met their Soviet counterparts. He particularly wanted to stress the inhuman nature of punishment in the Soviet Union, above all the isolation which could be imposed at will on prisoners. He himself had been deprived of any human contact for four years. His wife and children had tried again and again to see him and had always been driven away. The most horrifying aspect was the helplessness. There was nothing you could do to help yourself. You had to find the strength within yourself to resist and not be broken. The Prime Minister asked whether Dr. Koryagin's colleagues had made representations on his behalf. Dr. Koryagin said it was very difficult for people to act when they were afraid. But one should remember that what a totalitarian regime feared most was people who were capable of overcoming fear.

The Prime Minister said that at least we had known Dr. Koryagin's name. What worried us was all the people we did not know. Dr. Koryagin said that at least 600 people were known to his organisation to be still in prison for their beliefs and 120 in psychiatric wards. But these were only the ones they could count. Often they heard of people who had been released whom they had never known had been in prison.

Dr. Koryagin said that no agreements should be reached with the Soviet Union without their being linked to progress on human rights issues. The Prime Minister gave an assurance that we always raised such issues in the context of any negotiations or agreements. She had consistently done so in her own meetings with Mr. Gorbachev.

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