



*Mr PM
cc PC*

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

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UK/SOVIET RELATIONS

I enclose a copy of a message to the Prime Minister from Mrs. Gorbachev, handed to me by Mr. Kossov last night. He drew my attention to Mrs. Gorbachev's hope to meet the Prime Minister "in the near future", but could not further elaborate.

I might add that we had a brief word about Afghanistan. Mr. Kossov said that the decision to appoint Mr. Vorontsov as Ambassador reflected the domestic political difficulties which Mr. Gorbachev faced on this issue. The military continued to grumble that, if they had been given their heads, they could have finished the job off without difficulty. They did not want withdrawal to be a humiliation. Their cause was receiving support from conservative forces in the Soviet Union. The policy of withdrawal from Afghanistan was very much identified with Mr. Gorbachev personally and he was under some fire. He had appointed Vorontsov, as the Soviet Union's ablest diplomat, to try to ease the final stages of withdrawal. There was no doubt that withdrawal would go ahead but the last phase had to be managed skilfully. Vorontsov's appointment to Kabul was only a short-term one and he would retain a 'role' in Moscow, where Bessmertnykh would take over most of his functions.

I asked Kossov about Zamyatin's future. He said that as far as he knew, there were no plans for Zamyatin to leave. Although he was getting on - 66 - it appeared that Gorbachev thought quite highly of him. He was certainly very active and energetic. We should realise he performed a valuable service for UK/Soviet relations. There was no organised lobby for these in Moscow, as there was for FRG/Soviet and Franco/Soviet relations. Much therefore rested on Zamyatin's personal commitment - and self-interest - in making a success of them.

C. D. POWELL

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.