

PERSONAL

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PRIME MINISTER

SIR GORDON WHITE

You will remember that Sir Gordon White wrote to you about what he calls "the Russian matter" (letter attached). I went to see him today to discuss it upon your behalf. His line was that Hanson industries had no real commercial interest in doing business with the Soviet Union which they expected to be tedious and unprofitable. Their suggestions were intended to be politically helpful to you, to enable you to have something to offer Mr. Gorbachev. Should Mr. Gorbachev take up the offer, they would of course deliver.

I said that I was sure you would appreciate this. You thought the idea was a sensible one and would in principle be ready to mention it in conversation with Mr. Gorbachev. I was sure that it was only worth launching at the highest level. If it was pursued at lower levels it would in all probability get lost in the bureaucracy. That said, I was far from certain that it would be followed up even if launched at the highest level. But at least you would have made the political gesture.

Sir Gordon was entirely content with this and we left it that I would come back to him if and when you had been able to raise the matter with Mr. Gorbachev.

CHARLES POWELL  
13 January 1989

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