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13 March 1989

From the Private Secretary

BE filing

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Dear Lord,

MR. GORBACHEV'S VISIT: INTERVIEW

Mr. Kossov of the Soviet Embassy telephoned this morning to say that the Embassy had received a message from Moscow to the effect that since Mr. Gorbachev would be giving a major speech at the Guildhall, it was not considered necessary for him also to give the newspaper interview in advance of his visit. Mr. Gorbachev would not wish to repeat himself and preferred to reserve his main message for the speech. I expressed surprise. There had been a clear understanding that the Prime Minister would give an interview to Izvestia and Mr. Gorbachev to The Times and we would want to stick to that.

After consulting Simon Hemans, I telephoned Mr. Kossov this afternoon. I said that after taking soundings here, I thought that the Prime Minister's reaction to the news would be one of great disappointment. There would be only a limited amount of time for the speech at the Guildhall, perhaps some 40 minutes. There were many aspects of Soviet policy both domestic and foreign which would be of interest to the British audience and which could be covered in an interview. The Prime Minister hoped that, on reflection, Mr. Gorbachev would agree to abide by the original plan, allowing him to go ahead with the Izvestia interview. I asked Mr. Kossov to report this. He said that he would do so.

The Editor of The Times has subsequently telephoned me to say that he had also been contacted by the Soviet Embassy. He was very concerned. I told him of the action I had taken.

you said.

C. D. Powell

(C. D. POWELL)

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