



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Rine Austin

1 June 1990

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Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's Visit to the Soviet Union: 7-10 June:
Biological Weapons

The Prime Minister will be aware of:

- Our recent information and JIC assessment.
- The joint demarches by the US and UK Ambassadors in Moscow on 14 May to Chernyayev (Gorbachev's Foreign Affairs Adviser) and Deputy Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh.
- The claim by the Defence Minister, Mr Yazov, to the Defence Secretary on 18 May that all Soviet work was defensive or public health oriented.

Points the Prime Minister might make to Gorbachev are:

- We and the Americans have firm information, based on a range of sources, about the Soviet Union's large covert biological weapons programme.
- This programme is incompatible with the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.
- We look to Soviet Government to terminate its BW programme and destroy its BW weapons.
- We hope the issue can be resolved quickly and privately without causing wider problems.

Gorbachev may well reply:

- The UK's defector source is tainted.
- The Soviet programmes are all defensive or medical.
- Raising the issue at this delicate moment is irresponsible.
- Experts should sort out this misunderstanding.

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The Prime Minister might respond:

- Our concern is not based on any single source. But it would be irresponsible to suppress or ignore the recent corroborative evidence which we have. This confirms our view that the defensive/medical programmes are a cover for activities banned by the BW Convention.

- Important for our mutual confidence that this problem is taken seriously. Its resolution is a matter for political decision rather than technical discussion. But we are ready for experts meeting.

We hope to have a read out of any exchange between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev on this issue before the Prime Minister leaves for Moscow.

Yours ever,
R. H. T. Gozney

(R H T Gozney)
Private Secretary

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