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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

7 March 1990

SOVIET UNION

The Soviet Ambassador came in to see me this morning prior to his return to Moscow for the renewed Central Committee plenum. He read me some rather turgid notes about current Soviet views on German unification, arising from Herr Modrow's visit to Moscow. Mr. Gorbachev had made clear the Soviet Union did not object to unification, but it should be implemented steadily and step by step. There should be no anschluss or attempt to incorporate one territory into another. The Soviet Union was opposed to assimilation. Mr. Gorbachev had also made crystal clear that the Soviet Union would not accept the idea that a united Germany should be a member of NATO. Rather, unification should proceed apace with progress in the Vienna negotiations and the CSCE summit, the aim of which should be to transform NATO and the Warsaw Pact from military into political organisations. The Soviet Union would be agreeable to seeing these negotiations speeded up. Mr. Gorbachev had also laid stress on the importance of recognising existing borders. Frontiers should be settled in the interests of all those concerned.

I gave the Ambassador a copy of the Prime Minister's recent message to Mr. Gorbachev. I suggested that there was not much we could do about the pace of unification. It was increasingly likely that it would come about through resort to Article 23 of the Federal German Constitution, which envisaged a rapid process. Our main concern was to ensure that the consequences were discussed and resolved in parallel. We very much welcomed the agreement to hold an early meeting of the Four plus Two group. We were also well satisfied with the Federal German Government's statement yesterday on the German/Polish frontier: this was an important step forward. As regards NATO, the Prime Minister's message made clear that we believe that a united Germany should be a member of NATO, although there should be special security arrangements for the former GDR which take account of Soviet interests. We were anxious to remain in very close touch with the Soviet Union on all these issues. We had been taken a bit by surprise by the speed with which the Soviet position had evolved at the time of Chancellor Kohl's visit to Moscow. The Ambassador merely noted that many of these issues would need to be discussed in the Four plus Two group. I said there would of course be parallel discussions within the EC and NATO on matters affecting them.

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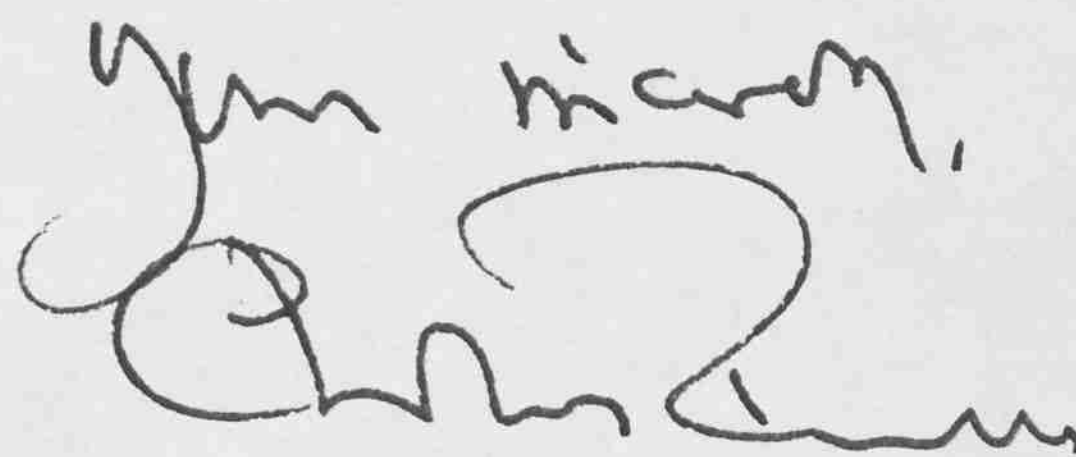
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I referred to Mr. Shevardnadze's message to the Foreign Secretary and observed that it had been a bit opaque. The Ambassador said that Soviet authorities feared uncontrolled reactions in East Germany after the elections. These might include demands for Soviet forces to withdraw immediately, attacks on Soviet forces and property, attempts to change the status of East Berlin unilaterally, efforts by West Germany citizens to re-possess property in East Germany which they regarded as rightly their's. There was a whole range of possibilities which could give rise to disorder and it was necessary to have arrangements in hand to deal with them. The Soviet side would wish to discuss this in the Four plus Two group.

The Ambassador said that he would be seeing Mr. Gorbachev at the weekend and would let me know the outcome of their discussion.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and to Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

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(C. D. POWELL)

Stephen Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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