

SUBJECT CCMASGA



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From the Private Secretary

19 February 1991

PRIME MINISTER'S TALK WITH CHANCELLOR KOHL

The Prime Minister had a talk on the telephone with Chancellor Kohl this morning. I have written separately about the Gulf aspects. This letter records other points.

The Prime Minister began by thanking Chancellor Kohl for the meeting in Bonn last week. It had been a splendid occasion, and he had been delighted to come to Bonn. Chancellor Kohl said the Prime Minister could be sure that he had a very good friend in Bonn on whom he could rely. He just wanted the Prime Minister to know that. The Prime Minister said that we felt the same way here. He believed there was a great deal which he and Chancellor Kohl could do to build a closer relationship. Chancellor Kohl agreed that the two of them could achieve great things.

Chancellor Kohl said that, in addition to his conversation with President Gorbachev the previous day on the Gulf, he had spoken to him at much greater length the preceding Friday, when they had discussed the internal situation in the Soviet Union very frankly. Gorbachev absolutely refuted the suggestion that he was abandoning perestroika. At the same time, he laid great emphasis on the very real difficulties which he faced. He had become rather bitter about some people in the West who seemed actively to want the disintegration of the Soviet Union. He did not seem so worried by the Baltic Republics as by the drive for independence on the part of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Too many people in the West seemed to believe that the Soviet Union was ripe for the taking. Chancellor Kohl added that Gorbachev's diplomatic activities in the Gulf were a chance for him to show that he was still a major factor on the world scene. We had to take account of this psychological aspect in our dealings with him. He was totally certain of one thing: we knew what we had in Gorbachev but not what might come later.

The Prime Minister said he was grateful for this assessment and agreed with much of it. He had been talking the previous day to President Zhelev of Bulgaria who had been freely predicting the break up of the Soviet Union. The indications were that other Eastern European leaders were talking in similar terms. Gorbachev was probably hearing this and becoming unsettled. The Prime Minister continued that he did not believe that chaos in the Soviet Union was in either our short or our longer term interests. He would try to

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reassure Gorbachev when they met in early March. He had clearly been in quite an emotional state when he had seen the EC Troika.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and to Sir Robin Butler.

CHARLES POWELL

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