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*From the Private Secretary*

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR GORBACHEV

The Prime Minister has briefed President Reagan personally on the outcome of her talks with Mr Gorbachev and I have briefed the US Embassy here. Points on which Sir Antony Acland can draw in Washington, and Mr Alexander can use in briefing Permanent Representatives in NATO are:-

- (i) the Prime Minister found Mr Gorbachev in lively and confident form. There was nothing in his manner or in what he said to suggest that he was in any sort of difficulty at home. He was very clearly determined to press ahead with internal reforms. His enthusiasm for these seemed in no way diminished.
- (ii) Mr Gorbachev was obviously very pleased about the INF agreement. The Prime Minister told him of her full support for it. She also warned him of the possible difficulties over ratification by the United States' Senate. The best way to overcome these difficulties would be for Mr Gorbachev to be as forthcoming as he could on human rights and Afghanistan. She herself raised both matters with him, underlining that the impression he made in the United States would depend crucially on what he could offer on these two points. His reaction had been quite touchy.
- (iii) the Prime Minister found Mr Gorbachev optimistic on the prospects for a START agreement. She spoke of the need for the Soviet Union to come forward with credible proposals for verification of limits on mobile ICBMs. Mr Gorbachev had left a clear impression that he believed the problems over this could be overcome.

- (iv) Mr Gorbachev gave high priority to negotiations for reductions in conventional forces. He would also press hard in Washington for an agreement to eliminate chemical weapons. He suggested that British enthusiasm for this had been dampened by the United States. The Prime Minister made clear the very real problems of verification, but had repeated her commitment to seek agreement.
- (v) it was noteworthy that, in discussing SDI, Mr Gorbachev made no linkage with the START negotiations. The Prime Minister renewed her proposal that there should be agreement on a period of several years during which neither party would withdraw from the ABM treaty and each side would spell out the nature of the research which it intended to pursue. This would give the reassurance of predictability, which should allow START negotiations to go ahead. Mr Gorbachev asked how such an arrangement could be verified. The Prime Minister replied that there was no way in which research could be verified or constrained. But a combination of a commitment not to deploy strategic defences without negotiation, a lengthy period during which both sides committed themselves not to withdraw from the ABM treaty and mutual information on research plans should provide adequate assurance against unexpected developments or a break-out.
- (vi) the Prime Minister stressed the continuing role of nuclear weapons in defence, and made clear that the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons would not be included in any of the current negotiations. They were an irreducible minimum for effective deterrence.
- (vii) the Prime Minister welcomed progress in the Soviet Union on human rights, but pressed Mr Gorbachev to step up the Soviet Union's performance, citing in particular permission for greater numbers of Jewish people to emigrate, family reunification and changes in repressive laws in the Soviet Union. Mr Gorbachev was prickly in response but said that the Soviet Union would continue to proceed on the lines which they thought right.
- (viii) the Prime Minister also raised Afghanistan urging the Soviet Union to withdraw in 1988. Mr Gorbachev accused the United Kingdom and the United States of making Soviet withdrawal more difficult by supplying arms to the rebels. If that ceased, all the components of a solution would be to hand.
- (ix) the Prime Minister's dominant impressions were

of Mr Gorbachev's commitment to continue the process of perestroika and glasnost, his optimism about the prospects for a START agreement, his acceptance of the step by step approach to arms control, and the degree to which he seemed to be looking for ways to manage the problem of strategic defence rather than making it a bar to reductions in strategic nuclear weapons. Mr Gorbachev seemed genuinely ready for further arms control agreements. There was no signs of diminished self-confidence or vigour on Gorbachev's part. He was clearly looking forward to his visit to Washington.

I am copying this letter to John Howe (Ministry of Defence) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Charles Powell

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