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From the Private Secretary

4 November 1988

New sign

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF  
WALESA'S BRAINS TRUST

The Prime Minister met members of Walesa's Brains Trust in the Ambassador's Residence in Warsaw on 3 November. The members of Walesa's Brains Trust present were Professor Andrzej Stelmachowski, Mr. Jan Josef Lipski, Mr. Marcin Krol, Mrs. Janina Zakrzewska, Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz and Mr. Stefan Bratkowski.

The Prime Minister began by saying how glad she was to be in Poland, and how grateful she was that so many people had given up time to see her. She had only ever known a system of freedom under the rule of law impartially applied. She was therefore very interested in how Poland might make the transition to such a system. She had met already people who said the round table process was dead. How did her guests today see the prospects? It seemed to her to be not so much a question of seeking power-sharing as limiting the power of government.

Professor Stelmachowski said that Poland enjoyed today the best international climate since the war, which offered the potential to enlarge the area of freedom. The opposition did not want to share power. Society was pulverised. It was important to start at the bottom, and the first requirement was for freedom of association. The problem was that the authorities feared the emergence of an organisation as powerful as Solidarity had been in 1980. Therefore a trade union must be only a trade union. It could only be this if there was real freedom of association for others. Of course the government required certain guarantees. But society was pluralistic and its structures must be pluralistic. The government still believed that economic reform could be introduced without society's support. This was a mistake and could lead to conflict. In Professor Stelmachowski's view the spirit of the time was one of conciliation.

Mr. Bratkowski was unhappy about the term opposition, since he regarded himself as simply fighting for the rights of citizenship. The country was in a mess. The economy, as the Prime Minister knew, was appallingly run. He cited the example of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk which was forty-fifth in the list of five hundred largest enterprises in Poland, exporting 75 per cent of its production. The fact that it suffered from a negative added value arose purely because of a false exchange rate implied

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in calculating the value of the rouble against the dollar. Mr. Krol, endorsing this, said the opposition could not share power, and propositions so far made by the authorities had been totally false. If, like him, you had been anti-socialist all your life you could not participate in a Communist system. The purpose of the round table talks had been to create the possibility of sharing power. The opposition were ready to accept responsibility. But co-optation into the system was totally undemocratic. It was true that there had been some liberalisation in the last seven years, in allowing wider expression of views. But this did not amount to democracy. Indeed, he had not observed a single real step towards democratisation. Structural changes were essential and the authorities must give up a large share of their power, especially in the economy.

Mr. Czaputowicz wished to talk about Europe. On the one hand Western Europe was aiming at integration, and on the other there were the beginnings of integration in Eastern Europe. This had been clear from Gorbachev's visit to Poland earlier this year. For example, he wanted to create 200 joint Polish-Soviet enterprises, an extremely dangerous prospect for Poland. The need was to overcome the divisions in Europe not to promote them. On another point, Mr. Czaputowicz criticised the decision by the Presidents of West European Parliaments to accept the invitation from the President of the Polish Parliament to participate in a conference in Warsaw in November. It implied that East European Parliaments were similar to those in the West. This was simply not the case. Lastly, Mr. Czaputowicz said that young people were very radical. There had been a change of mood recently, exemplified by the current boycott of military training classes in universities.

Mr. Lipski confirmed that the opposition did not wish to take over power. But without social control, no reform was possible. This was particularly true in a system where political criteria always had priority. The Lenin Shipyard decision exemplified this. The Prime Minister asked what Mr. Lipski meant by social control. He replied that a parliamentary system would serve this purpose. But in Poland what was called a Parliament was not a Parliament at all. It could become a more useful instrument of control if reformed so that candidates could be put forward by genuine organisations. Lastly Mr Lipski asked what means should be employed to carry out economic reform. Experience to date showed the capacity of the present system for wasting everything. Only far-reaching democratisation could ensure economic reform. In this context he attached great importance to effective social insurance to avoid social conflict at times of economic hardship.

Finally, Mrs. Zakrzewska spoke, as a representative of the Polish Helsinki Committee. She recalled the Prime Minister's opening words about the freedom under the rule of law impartially applied. The Helsinki Committee had been founded in 1982 but it was important to understand why it continued to operate after the lifting of martial law. This was because Poles did not enjoy freedom under the rule of law. It was true that there were greater areas of freedom now. But these were not based on law. Rather, they were arbitrarily assigned and could be as easily withdrawn. Her Committee's struggle was for a law equal for all citizens and a law which would be obeyed.

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At this point the meeting had, unfortunately, to be broken off as the Prime Minister was already late for her next appointment, a meeting with the Consultative Council.

I am copying this letter to Alex Allan (H.M. Treasury), Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence), Neil Thornton (Department of Trade and Industry) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*your diary.*  
*Charles Powell*

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