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From the Private Secretary

5 November 1988

Dear Lyr.

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH GENERAL JARUZELSKI
IN WARSAW ON 4 NOVEMBER

The Prime Minister had a final round of talks with General Jaruzelski after returning to Warsaw from Gdansk on 4 November. General Jaruzelski was again accompanied by the Polish Foreign Minister and officials.

General Jaruzelski began by saying that people in Gdansk had been most impressed by the Prime Minister's visit. He was grateful to her for agreeing to lay a wreath at the monument at Westerplatte. Next year would be the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War and he wondered whether it might not be an idea to mark it in some special way, perhaps a conference or a seminar. He would like to hear the Prime Minister's impressions from her visit.

The Prime Minister said that she had found her visit to Gdansk moving. She had learned so much and understood so much. She was grateful to General Jaruzelski for putting no obstacle in her way. She had much appreciated his decision to join her in laying a wreath at Westerplatte. She had been greatly impressed by the old town of Gdansk. It was almost impossible to conceive how people had summoned up the courage and spirit to reconstruct it from the terrible devastation of the Second World War. The people of Gdansk had given her a very warm reception as she walked through the old quarter to the City Hall.

The Prime Minister continued that she had subsequently gone to meet Mr Walesa and other Solidarity leaders. There had been huge crowds but they were very orderly, peaceful and cheerful and made up of people of all ages. She had talked at length to Mr Walesa and his advisers. If she had to sum up what they had said, the strongest emotion that came through was their resentment that Solidarity was illegal. They had considerable achievements to their credit. They wanted to take part in the life of the country and in restoring Poland's economy. They were willing to talk. But they did not like the notion that the invitation to attend round table discussions was a favour or privilege which could be withdrawn

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at any moment at the Government's whim. They wanted to be treated as a legal organisation which had a right to be consulted. They had talked a great deal about a plural society and political system. They recognised this was only a long term aim and she had encouraged them to focus on immediate steps. She had also posed the question, what was the alternative to dialogue. Solidarity were fairly upset about the timing and manner of the decision to close the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk. They recognised that there were considerable problems with the yard and in her view might have accepted closure had the matter been handled differently. As it was, they were convinced that the decision was a political one. She had found it difficult to draw them out on a specific agenda for round table talks. Her understanding was that they would meet later in the day to decide how to reply to the Government's latest invitation to talks. She felt they wanted to talk but needed an assurance that the talks would be genuine and in good faith and that they would be treated fairly. In short they would probably say yes but attach riders to their acceptance. She had not found Walesa or the others bitter although they claimed to have been let down by the Government many times in the past. She had been impressed by their commitment to peaceful discussion and their moderation.

General Jaruzelski said that, before dealing with these points, he would like to revert to one of the broader issues he had raised with the Prime Minister the previous day. He had read her Bruges speech and found it impressive. He had been particularly interested by her insistence that Europe extended beyond the bounds of the European Community. He would like to see Britain and Poland play a role in bridging the gap between the two parts of Europe. He hoped that relations could develop in that direction as a result of her visit. He could declare with great sincerity that this was Poland's intention.

Turning to Poland's domestic affairs, he could acknowledge that the Prime Minister had an interest in Poland's stability. He also wanted Poland to be a stable country and a constructive element in Europe. He wanted to accomplish the reforms which he and Prime Minister Rakowski had outlined, drawing on Britain's experience as well. He was convinced this was the only way for Poland and did not want more disappointments. He was 65, he had covered a long hard road and was now nearer the other side. He had no desire for more honours or decorations. His only objective was the good of Poland. If he talked about reconciliation, it was because he saw it as the most important objective. But Poland's affairs were very complex and the difficulties would only be solved if all sections of society were willing to act responsibly. There were certain realities which could not be denied. Solidarity had been a legal organisation, indeed it had virtually ruled Poland. But it had wanted to be the only ruler. It had sought a monopoly of power. To be made a legal organisation once more, it must demonstrate responsibility. Poland had to restore its economy. That would mean redundancies, tough measures to curb inflation and so on. But

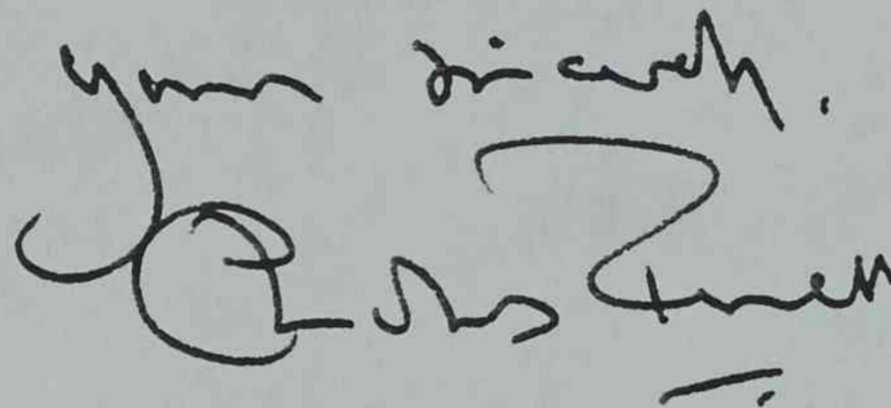
there was no indication that Solidarity was willing to call on people to tighten their belts and work. Solidarity went far beyond the normal concept of a trade union. It had its own political goals. The Government were ready to discuss a model for de-politicised trade unions in Poland, in which a major role would of course be played by Solidarity. But he wondered whether Solidarity itself would be satisfied with this, given its political ambitions. He agreed with the Pope who had said that Solidarity should be treated as an idea. One possible course might be to form a new body which embraced Solidarity's ideas and included Walesa himself, but not all those associated with him. General Jaruzelski continued that Poland's recovery was gravely hampered by strikes. These were organised by a very small minority of workers. They imposed their views by pressure, picketing and even by violence. The same people who had cheered the Prime Minister earlier in the day at Gdansk had a short while previously carried banners reading "hang the Communists". If this continued, Poland would descend once more into anarchy. This was one reason why the Government insisted that the Solidarity delegation at round table talks should not include the extreme element.

General Jaruzelski said that the Prime Minister had referred to the closure of the Lenin shipyard. Contrary to Solidarity's assertion this had not been a political decision. Other closures would follow, indeed closure of a major steel works in Poznan was imminent. He had talked to a number of workers from the Lenin shipyards that morning in Gdansk. They had told him that the decision to close the yard was painful but not unexpected. Indeed it had been a surprise to them that the yard had been kept open so long. This suggested that Solidarity were misrepresenting the views of the people who actually worked in the yard. He hoped they were not using the decision to close it as a pretext for blocking the round table talks. The Prime Minister should not be misled into thinking that Solidarity had universal support in Poland. No doubt she had been impressed by large crowds which had turned out to welcome her in Gdansk. But then one million people had gone on to the streets for Mr Gorbachev. Opinion polls indicated that support for the Polish Government had risen sharply. He wanted to reassure the Prime Minister once more that he was sincere in seeking a platform for reconciliation. Changes would be made both in the Party and the Government, and the more calm there was, the further he would be able to go. He wanted to have round table talks. But their purpose must be to reach conclusions on the basis of discussion. Solidarity wanted agreement on the results before the discussion started. Poland could only advance by consensus. In spite of all, he was optimistic. He would follow the Prime Minister's example and keep his nerve through difficult times.

The Prime Minister said that she had fought strikes and insisted that people must be able to go to work even during a strike. She knew what it was like to restructure an economy. She had respect for what General Jaruzelski was trying to achieve. She had told him frankly how the prospects seemed to her, based on the discussions she had held and her own experience. Only he could decide what to do. But her views

had been offered in friendship and from a desire to see Poland restored. She could only say that she did not believe that Solidarity could be ignored, indeed that an attempt to ignore them would court disaster. She agreed with General Jaruzelski on the need to work to overcome divisions in Europe. She would consider on her return how this might be taken further and how Britain should respond on other matters which General Jaruzelski had raised with her, including the idea of an event to mark the 50th anniversary of the start of the last War. General Jaruzelski said that the Prime Minister's visit had created a bridgehead for future results. He had a better understanding of her policies and objectives. That had been valuable, indeed inspiring. He hoped she would be ready to use her great influence for Poland's benefit.

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

Your sincerely,


Charles Powell

Lyn Parker Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.