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Reu

10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

10 November 1988

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO POLAND

I attach a revised answer to the Question from Sir Peter Blaker asking the Prime Minister to make a statement on her visit to Poland. I should be grateful for any comments by 1830 hours this evening.

Charles Powell

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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STATEMENT ON POLAND

I visited Poland on 2-4 November and had very full and useful talks with General Jaruzelski and with Prime Minister Rakowski. In Warsaw I met Cardinal Glemp and a large number of representatives of independent political groups. I also laid wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the grave of Father Popieluzsko. I unveiled a memorial to allied airmen who flew many sorties to drop supplies to the people of Warsaw during the Warsaw uprising.

I subsequently travelled to Gdansk, where General Jaruzelski and I laid a wreath at the Westerplatte Monument, marking the outbreak of the Second World War. While in Gdansk, I placed flowers at the shipyard workers memorial and met Mr Lech Walesa, the President of Solidarity, together with other members of the Solidarity leadership.

I am most grateful to the Polish Government for enabling me to carry out such a full and varied programme, and to meet spokesmen for so many different political points of view.

General Jaruzelski and Mr Rakowski informed me of the reforms being introduced in the Polish economy. They also expressed the hope that Round Table meetings with representatives of the opposition would soon be possible. They wished to see closer relations between Poland and Britain, and hoped for British help in overcoming Poland's foreign indebtedness. Our talks also covered East/West relations and other international issues.

Leaders of the various independent political groups explained to me their views on the way forward. Mr Walesa indicated that Solidarity would be ready to take part in Round Table discussions with the Government on the basis of good faith and fairness, and stressed the importance of legalisation of Solidarity.

I told General Jaruzelski that there was a very great interest and sympathy for Poland in this country. We shared the hope for closer contacts and were ready to support economic reform in practical ways. At the same time I stressed that economic reform could not, in our view, succeed unless accompanied by steps to give people greater political freedom. Such freedom would incur greater responsibility. I believed that the international community would be ready to provide the help which Poland sought once such reforms were introduced and an agreement with the IMF was in place.

This was an extremely interesting and valuable visit which I hope will lead to increased contacts in future and put Britain's relations with Poland on a firmer and more positive basis.