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LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

22 February 1990

See Stepler.

GERMANY: FOUR PLUS TWO

Mr Kossov of the Soviet Embassy came to see me briefly this morning and left the enclosed speaking note. As you will see, it makes the same point that Adamishin put to Sir Percy Cradock, namely that meetings of the Four plus Two might start at expert level straight away. It suggests that we and the Soviet Union might propose this in parallel to the Americans and the French, as well as the two Germanies.

I said that I would let him have a considered reaction. My personal view was that we would be ready to begin discussions among officials straight away, but that the Germans at least were most unlikely to agree, and there was little to be gained by having a confrontation about this. It would no doubt be open to us all to have multiple bilateral contacts in the period between now and 18 March.

We did not have time for much gossip about political developments in the Soviet Union. Kossov had clearly not thought much of Medvedev, whom he described as a country headmaster. The best thing about him was that he was so ineffective that he left the field free for Yakovlev. That led him in turn to speculate that Yakovlev might be elected as Chairman of the Party if Gorbachev achieved his aim of becoming Executive President. He talked rather gloomily of the likely difficulties of the next few weeks and months before the Party Congress. He expected the next meeting of the Central Committee to be the week after next.

I mentioned to Kossov that we had not yet made up our minds on whether the Prime Minister would see Yeltsin. Not seeing him could well lead to more public interest in his visit than seeing him would do. If the Prime Minister were to see him, I thought she would leave him in no doubt of her support for Mr Gorbachev and his policies. Mr Kossov simply noted that Yeltsin's public statements had become more stridently anti-Gorbachev in the last few weeks. We might consider waiting to see how he conducted himself during next Sunday's pro-democracy demonstration before reaching a decision.

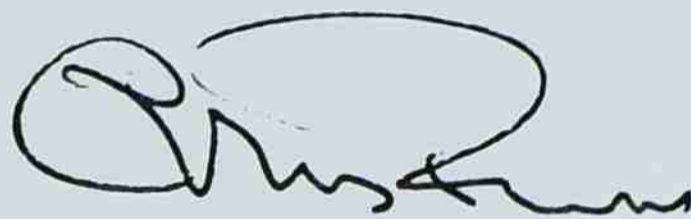
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- 2 -

11
I should be grateful if you could let me have some
comments on Kossov's speaking note which I can pass back to
him, preferably before the weekend.

Yours sincerely,



CHARLES POWELL

J S Wall Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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An attention was paid in Moscow to the assessments of the line of the FRG government in German affairs, which were expressed by Mrs. M. Thatcher in her talks with H.-D. Gensher. The considerations of the Prime-Minister in many respects coincide with ours. As well as the British side, we believe that it would be incorrect to artificially speed up the inter-German aspects of unification, while putting to a later stage the discussions of and solutions to the international aspects of the German problem, which, as it seems, is the aspiration of West Germans. We indeed cannot now take the position of temporizing and later consider the whole complex of these issues in the time-trouble.

In our view, the agreement reached in Ottawa on the creation of negotiating mechanism of the "six" provides a possibility to work in an appropriate direction, i.e. to start discussing external aspects of unification, without waiting for the Germans to take decisions on issues, relating not only to their own competence but also on those, which trespass the subjects to be discussed by the "six". If the development of events take the course, on which the West German side insists, then the four powers might find themselves in a position whereby they would be faced with faits accomplis. As well as the Prime-Minister, we consider such a situation unacceptable. Indeed, in such a situation we would have to work not within "2 + 4" formula, but "1 + 4" instead. In this respect we are interested to find out your opinion as to when and at what level the first meeting of experts of the "six" can take place.

In general we believe that we have all the grounds to insist on the priority of external aspects since the four powers bear special responsibility for the German settlement. Besides, it is called for by wider interests of European development.

Unless the Prime-Minister has any comments or additional observations to make, we would be prepared, acting in parallel with the British side, to stick to a corresponding line in our contacts with the USA, France as well as with FRG and GDR.