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LONDON SW1A 2AA

2 July 1986

From the Private Secretary

Dear Tony,

**STATE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF GERMANY: MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER**

The Prime Minister had a brief meeting with President von Weizsaecker following the lunch in his honour today. The President was accompanied by Herr Genscher. The Foreign Secretary was also present.

East-West Relations

The Prime Minister complimented President von Weizsaecker warmly on his thoughtful speech to the two Houses of Parliament. She had been particularly impressed by his comments on East-West relations. She would be interested to hear more how he thought one could keep hopes alive in Eastern Europe, given that it was unrealistic to expect any real change in the Communist system in her lifetime at least. Was there nothing we could do to enlarge the freedom of those in the satellite countries? She found it difficult to make up her mind whether it was right for Western leaders to visit East European countries. She always feared that ordinary people in these countries would feel let down at the sight of Western Heads of Government hobnobbing with Communist leaders. This was one reason why she hesitated to visit countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, she had received a very warm reception from ordinary people in Hungary. What were the President's views on this dilemma?

President von Weizsaecker said that he agreed with the Prime Minister's basic premises. Communism would not change significantly and would maintain its grip in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. Yet we had to find ways of easing the lives of ordinary people in Eastern Europe. We had to remember that these countries felt part of Europe. For the Poles, for example, Eastern Europe started on their eastern, not their western, frontier. In his own contacts with East Europeans, he found that they passionately wanted Europe to become a force to be reckoned with. That gave them hope. If offered a choice between short-term destabilising activities and a long drawn out process of adaptation, they would certainly opt for the latter. That was why the outcome of the recent CSCE meeting in Berne had been such a deep disappointment to East Europeans. As he had said in his speech, it was they who had to pay the price

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for failure to reach agreement on issues such as improved human contacts. It was all very well for the West to stand pat on its principles. But the consequences fell on the shoulders of the people of Eastern Europe. The West must always bear this in mind when deciding whether to accept compromises on any issue which held out some prospect of improving the life of these people. As to the Prime Minister's question about visits, he was in no doubt at all that such visits were desirable and welcome to ordinary people in Eastern Europe. They were a way of showing how much we cared. Moreover it was easier for British than for German Ministers to pay such visits. He hoped that we would continue and indeed increase them.

Relations between Europe and the United States

President von Weizsaecker asked how the Prime Minister saw the prospects for relations between Europe and the United States. His own feeling was that the Americans did not have a policy of divide et impera. Rather they were frustrated by Europe's inability to act together.

The Prime Minister said that she had some sympathy with American frustration. There was no question of developing the same political structures in Europe as in the United States. As President von Weizsaecker had said in his speech, the national character of individual European nations must not be submerged. But even where Europe was supposed to have got together, for instance to create a single market, it had failed. In political co-operation there were very disparate views. She instanced Mr Papandreou's comments about Turkey at the recent European Council. Of course, there would never be complete identity of views on political co-operation questions. She recalled some wise words of Lord Stockton. It was a mistake for politicians always to talk in terms of problems, because it gave the impression that there were always solutions available. In practice many problems, particularly in relations between countries, could never be solved. You just had to do the best you could. In the end one had to acknowledge the basic differences between the United States and Europe. The American people were self-selected, pioneering and self-reliant. The Europeans had become enervated and accustomed to rely on subsidies. The result was that the United States always found itself in the role of leader, while Europe was the follower. This was not a healthy relationship and the root cause of much of the friction in European-United States relations.

President von Weizsaecker said that the United States was sometimes insensitive towards Europe's interests. For instance, in the CSCE process they wanted to concentrate only on Basket One, without appearing to realise that Europe had important interests in Basket Two. Europe needed to consult more with the United States and explain itself better. The United Kingdom was particularly well placed to help with this.

The Prime Minister recalled that it had been the custom

for the Berlin Four to meet regularly at Head of Government level, for instance in the margins of Economic Summits. She regretted that the habit seemed to have lapsed. We needed a forum to discuss European concerns in which the Americans were present. In her view the Quadripartite Forum was by far the best and she would like to see it revived at Head of Government level, perhaps in the context of the celebrations of the 750th Anniversary of Berlin. President von Weizsaecker agreed and urged the Prime Minister to follow up this approach.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Howe (Ministry of Defence) and to Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
Charles Powell

Charles Powell

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.