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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
GOVERNING MAYOR OF BERLIN, DR. VON WEIZSAECKER, ON WEDNESDAY,
27 APRIL AT 1000 HOURS

<u>Present:</u>	Prime Minister	Dr. von Weizsaecker
	Mr. Coles	Herr Pflueger

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Dr. von Weizsaecker said that the Prime Minister's visit to Berlin last year had been of special importance. Her concentration on the affairs of Berlin and commitment to its significance had left a deep impression. As a symbol of Berlin's gratitude, he wished to leave with the Prime Minister a small collection of photographs. The Prime Minister said that Berlin had made a considerable impact on her. She was still inclined to wonder why the West had ever allowed the Wall to be constructed.

Dr. von Weizsaecker said that a number of Germans also raised this question from time to time. But it had to be remembered that Herr Brandt, who was Governing Mayor when the construction of the Wall commenced, was then conceiving the policy of Ost-Politik. The conventional thinking during that period was that the aim should be to preserve peace in Europe by recognising spheres of influence. In retrospect, this was perhaps mistaken.

Chancellor Kohl would be speaking about East-West relations in the statement he would make on behalf of his new Government next week. The German Government was likely to put out a statement today about the recent incident on the transit route to Berlin following the death of a West German. This would probably take the line that the incident had been grave but that there was no evidence that the East German interrogation had contributed to the death of the person concerned. His own interpretation of this incident was that the deceased had had very high blood pressure. He had been caught handing money and transistor radios to relatives, had been interrogated and had died after an hour or so. He did not believe that physical force had been used. But the

/ East Germans

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But the East Germans did not keep in mind that almost anyone using the transit route probably had higher than normal blood pressure because of the strain of the experience.

Our aim for East-West relations in the long run should be the same as that of Konrad Adenauer, i.e. the achievement of a real improvement in those relations, but without making the two mistakes that the Socialists always made. First, we should not think in terms of an ideological foreign policy. Kreisky used to speak of the final battle between social democracy and socialism. But Adenauer had accepted that we would not convince the Soviet people ideologically. Therefore our aim should be good relations and a foreign policy firmly based on our own interests. The second Socialist mistake was pacifism.

The Prime Minister agreed that there was always an element of weakness in the Socialist approach. They tended to think, because of their political position, that there was a greater similarity between East and West than in fact existed. She took the view that it was necessary to have relations with countries whose politics we detested. But a problem which preoccupied her was how we could so arrange things that more people from Communist societies visited the West. Taking up Dr. von Weizsaecker's earlier remark, she said that she was interested, from an ideological point of view, in extending freedom to Communist societies in the long run. But in the short run we had to make the best of the situation that existed.

Dr. von Weizsaecker said that the result of ten years of rapprochement between East and West had been to induce greater changes in our own societies than in those of the East. We had tended to concede that there was no longer a real Soviet military threat and that therefore our defence needs were less imperative. The peace movement showed how our society had changed. That kind of approach to relations with the East was not sound. There would of course be repercussions from INF deployment. But those would be less costly than allowing the Soviet Union to think they could achieve their aims by pressure. Did the Prime Minister think that

/ nuclear

nuclear issues would affect the British election campaign, whenever that was held? The Prime Minister said that these issues would play their part. The anti-nuclear voices would be loud and the media would ensure that they were heard. But the broad mass of British people accepted the need for strong defences. There was, in this debate, a worrying degree of anti-Americanism. This was misplaced. Many people had not grasped that Cruise was simply a modernisation of older weapons. Some people were worried that the United States might use nuclear weapons from British territory without British consent. It was necessary to remind public opinion that the United States kept nearly a quarter of a million troops in Europe. No American President was going to sacrifice those troops by using nuclear weapons, unless there was absolutely no alternative.

Dr. von Weizsaecker commented that the one thing that influenced the Soviet Union was the knowledge that they would have to deal with certain personalities. As long as there was any doubt about the future leadership of the West, they would not move. It was worth recalling that before NATO had taken its dual track decision, the Russians had said they would never go to the conference table. Once the decision had been taken, they did so. By the same token, they would not begin to negotiate about INF until we began to deploy the weapons. Nevertheless, the West should not limit its relations with the Soviet Union to questions of arms control and defence. The Russians had publicly stated twenty years ago that by now they would have caught up with the West in all spheres. They had failed to do so in every field except that of defence. It was not sensible now to ask them to give up their gains in the one field in which they had been successful while offering them nothing in other areas. The Prime Minister replied that strong defence and a strong deterrent were a necessary basis for relations with the East in other fields. But she was inclined to think that the time was approaching when we should re-think East-West relations. If the Russians had not invaded Afghanistan, this problem could have been tackled earlier. Dr. von Weizsaecker commented that Poland was relevant too.

/ The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister agreed that events in Poland represented the fundamental crisis of Communism. She had been encouraged by her recent talk with the Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary, whose ideas, especially on economic policy, were refreshing. But she had heard since this conversation that the Hungarian Government appeared to have postponed further implementation of its economic policy. She would be interested to hear about the situation in East Germany.

Dr. von Weizsaecker said that relations between East Germany and Poland had never been good - those between West Germany and Poland were better. While East Germany was a faithful ally of the Soviet Union, the signs were that it was trying to achieve a little more independence. East German leaders were showing rather more confidence than in the past. East Germany was tending to take over Poland's position of prominence in the Warsaw Pact. There were small indications of an Eastern version of the peace movement within East Germany. It took a great deal of courage for people in that country to oppose nuclear weapons. But he did not see any signs of Solidarity's influence spreading into East Germany. The Prime Minister commented that the appearance of an incipient peace movement in East Germany could be a different manifestation of the Polish phenomenon. The crisis of Communism came when alternative sources of power developed.

Dr. von Weizsaecker said that the church was the only national non-Communist organisation in East Germany. It was nothing like as strong as the Polish church. One interesting development was that the East German Government was trying to make propaganda capital out of this year's 500th Martin Luther anniversary. They were expecting one million visitors for the event. But it was not possible to summon up Luther as an ally without reminding people of his real significance. He believed that the church in East Germany could now obtain rather more room for manoeuvre.

It was always worth talking to the Hungarians - indeed they were the only Warsaw Pact Government with whom discussion was invariably rewarding.

/ He believed

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He believed that East-West relations should be broadened beyond the concept fostered by the U.S. Administration latterly. The only condition was that we should make clear that our policies of strong defence and deterrence would continue. The Prime Minister agreed, but said that we must not forget Afghanistan or Poland. She considered that, when they looked back at recent history, the Kremlin leaders must be worried that their system might crack. They would probably be more wary now than earlier of permitting a greater flow of people to the West.

The conversation ended at 1045 hours.

A. J. C.

27 April 1983

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FILE

JSG

ce MASTER

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 April 1983

Dear Brian,

VISIT OF THE GOVERNING MAYOR OF BERLIN

Thank you for your letter of 26 April.

I enclose a record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and Dr. von Weizsaecker.

I am copying this letter and its enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

Yours are

John Gales

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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