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cc: Pro

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

20 August 1986

**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE**
SERIAL No. T153/86

My dear Helmut

Thank you for your letter of 21 July about Rudolf Hess.

As you know from our correspondence in 1984, I share your concern about Hess' continued imprisonment. Successive British (and indeed French and American) Governments have pressed the Soviet Union to agree to release him on humanitarian grounds. After you wrote in 1984, the three Allies made parallel demarches to the Russians in London, Paris, Washington and Moscow. As on all previous occasions, the Russians refused to contemplate releasing Hess. The most they have been willing to do is to agree to some modest improvements in the conditions of his imprisonment.

Particularly in view of Hess' recent illness, however, we did discuss with the French and Americans whether it would be worth making a further approach to the Russians. Our conclusion was that a further approach at this stage was bound to be rejected. But we shall, as ever, be keeping the issue under constant review with the aim of seizing the earliest suitable opportunity to approach the Russians again.

I imagine you would agree that it would be a mistake for the United Kingdom to put at risk the Four Power Agreements on Berlin, which have preserved the security and freedom of

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some two million Germans in the Western sectors of the city,
by unilaterally releasing Rudolf Hess.

Yours ever

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—

His Excellency Dr. Helmut Kohl

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

8 August 1986

Dear Tim,

RUDOLF HESS

Thank you for your letter of 7 August enclosing a translation of Chancellor Kohl's letter of 21 July. Kohl asks the Prime Minister to pardon Hess and release him to his family. Kohl has also written to Presidents Reagan and Mitterrand.

Decisions about Hess have to be taken by the Four Powers (UK, US, France, Soviet Union) which originally imprisoned him. If Britain unilaterally released Hess we would put at risk the agreements by the Four Powers on Berlin which have preserved the freedom and security of two million Germans in the Western sectors of the city for over 40 years. It is not in the wider British or indeed German interest for us to do this. There can therefore be no question of complying with Kohl's request for unilateral action.

/ The enclosed draft reply nonetheless expresses sympathy for the reasons behind Kohl's approach, restating the view of successive British governments and referring to our repeated approaches to the Russians on Hess' behalf. Of the three Western Powers Britain has, in fact, been by far the most active over Hess. After Kohl had written to the Prime Minister on 14 March 1984, for example (I enclose a copy of his letter and the Prime Minister's reply for ease of reference), Lady Young called in the Soviet Charge and handed

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Tim Flesher Esq
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over a statement pressing for Hess' release. Largely at British initiative, parallel action was taken with the Russians in Paris, Washington and Moscow. As on all previous occasions, the Russians refused to contemplate releasing Hess. We would be very surprised if they were to change their minds now.

Kohl's present letter refers to the illness which required Hess' transfer to the British Military Hospital. Hess is now in fact back in Spandau Prison. In view of his illness and Kohl's approaches we considered with the French and the Americans whether it would be worth making yet another approach to the Russians. But we jointly concluded that the Russians would be bound to refuse to agree to release Hess, and would merely say (correctly) that they had recently allowed some improvements to be made in the conditions of Hess' imprisonment. We therefore decided that the timing was not right for a further demarche to the Russians.

I am copying this letter to John Howe at the Ministry of Defence.

Yours sincerely

David Reddaway

David Reddaway
Private Secretary to
Baroness Young

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DRAFT: ~~minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note~~
~~XXXX~~

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

Reference

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

His Excellency
Dr Helmut Kohl
Chancellor of the Federal Republic
of Germany

Your Reference

~~Top Secret~~~~XXXXXX~~~~SECRET~~

Confidential

~~XXXXXX~~~~Restricted~~

Unclassified

~~XXXXXX~~

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PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

Thank you for your letter of 1 August about
Rudolf Hess.

CAVEAT.....

As you know from our correspondence in 1984
I share your concern about Hess' continued imprisonment.
Successive British (and indeed French and American)
governments have pressed the Soviet Union to agree
to release him on humanitarian grounds. After you
wrote in 1984, the three Allies made parallel demarches
to the Russians in London, Paris, Washington and Moscow.
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to contemplate releasing Hess. The most they have
been willing to do is to agree to some modest
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Particularly in view of Hess' recent illness,
however, we did discuss with the French and
Americans whether it would be worth making a further
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a further approach at this stage was bound to be rejected.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

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But we shall, as ever, be keeping the issue under constant review with the aim of seizing the earliest suitable opportunity to approach the Russians again.

I imagine you would agree that it would be a mistake for the UK to put at risk the Four Power agreements on Berlin, which have preserved the security and freedom of some two million Germans in the Western sectors of the city, by unilaterally releasing Rudolf Hess.

I do hope you are enjoying your holiday and look forward greatly to our meeting in Bonn and with the Forces in September.



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

1 August, 1986.

HB
I enclose a copy of a message to the Prime Minister from Chancellor Kohl about Rudolf Hess. I should be grateful for a draft reply.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to John Howe (Ministry of Defence).

(C.D. Powell)

C.R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

MS