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LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

25 November 1988

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE FEDERAL GERMAN AMBASSADOR

The Prime Minister received the Federal German Ambassador for a farewell call this morning.

The Prime Minister complimented the Ambassador on the achievements of his five years in London, referring in particular to the very successful visit by President von Weizsaecker. She spoke of the importance of close Anglo-German co-operation and of her great confidence in Chancellor Kohl, who was absolutely firm on crucial issues of defence and East/West relations. She looked forward to her meeting with the Chancellor in Rhodes. They always managed to get through a great deal of business on these occasions. She would hope to hear at first hand about his experiences in Moscow and Washington and to discuss her own forthcoming meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. The Prime Minister continued that she attached the greatest importance to NATO reaching decisions on the modernisation of its nuclear forces by the middle of 1989 and had been encouraged by Chancellor Kohl's reported statements in Washington.

The German Ambassador recalled that, at his first meeting with the Prime Minister some five years earlier, he had raised the subject of WEU and she had been very dismissive. That no longer seemed to be the British view. The Prime Minister said that the WEU was quite useful for issuing statements and offered the means of involving France and Spain more closely in Europe's defence. But NATO was the executive agency. The WEU was not, and must not become, in any sense an alternative to NATO. She was worried that some countries might see it as an alibi for not co-operating more closely in or with NATO.

The Prime Minister said that she understood that the Ambassador was intending to run for the European Parliament. It was not a body on which she had a very high opinion. Indeed, she did not consider it a real Parliament. The Ambassador supposed that its powers would increase gradually and its sense of responsibility in parallel. The Prime Minister remained sceptical, but stressed the importance of avoiding a socialist majority in the Parliament.

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The Ambassador said that there would have to be agreement on a comprehensive concept of arms control before the Federal Republic could agree to modernisation of SNF. The Prime Minister said there was no difficulty in principle over this. What worried her was that certain people seemed determined to drag out the discussion of the comprehensive concept so as to block decisions on modernisation. That was unacceptable.

The Ambassador said that he noted from the press that the Prime Minister continued to have reservations about Herr Genscher. The Prime Minister said that she and Herr Genscher had their differences. She was very glad that we did not have a coalition government in this country.

The Prime Minister thanked the Ambassador once again for his work in London. She looked forward to meeting his successor.

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