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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

16 December 1988

POSSIBLE VISIT TO THE UNITED KINGDOM BY
GRAF LAMBSDORFF

Thank you for your letter of 15 December about the possibility of inviting Graf Lambsdorff to visit the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister knows him quite well and I am confident that she would be willing to see him. You can refer to this in an invitation.

CHARLES POWELL

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SN

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15 December 1988

Dear Charles,

Possible Visit to the UK by Graf Lambsdorff

We have been giving thought to issuing an invitation to visit the UK to Graf Lambsdorff, the newly elected Chairman of the FDP. If we did, we expect that Lambsdorff would seek a short call on the Prime Minister, and we should like to be able to tell him that she was willing in principle to see him.

Lambsdorff is a powerful figure both within the FDP and at federal level. I enclose a personality note. His election has been widely seen as reinforcing the free-market philosophies of the FDP and reducing the chances of their swinging over to alliance with the SPD after the 1990 elections. Although likely to avoid conflict with Genscher on foreign policy issues, he will exert considerable influence in Bonn and he has long-standing private links with the UK. It would be desirable to take an early opportunity to put British views to him at a high level and on a wide range of issues. It is possible that an invitation might give rise to press criticism arising from Lambsdorff's conviction in 1987 for tax evasion, but we do not think that we should be deterred for this reason from developing contacts with such a prominent West German politician.

Yours ever,

(L Parker)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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LAMBSDORFF, DR OTTO GRAF

FDP Parliamentary Spokesman on the Economy.

Born 1926 in Aachen. Schooling in Berlin and Brandenburg/Havel. War service 1944-46. Lost a leg. POW. Studied law and political science at Bonn and Cologne. Doctor of Law 1952. Subsequently became a banker with directorships of a number of insurance companies. Joined the FDP in 1951. Helped write the Party's basic philosophical tract, the Freiburg Theses of 1971. Member of its Executive 1972. Member of the Bundestag since 1972. FDP spokesman on economic affairs until 1977 when he succeeded Friderichs as Economics Minister. Resigned in June 1984 when charges of corruption were laid against him in connection with allegations of malpractice in obtaining donations to the FDP during his time as Party Treasurer in North Rhine Westphalia (1968-78) and – more seriously – as Federal Minister. The verdict in February 1987 found him not guilty of corruption, but guilty of tax evasion.

Lambsdorff is outspoken, tough and industrious. Was generally reckoned a first class Minister. Deeply committed to the market economy and bitterly opposed to protectionism. Strong proponent of a market-orientated energy policy, industrial rationalisation and cutbacks in social security provisions. Stands on the right of the FDP. Made increasingly plain his opposition to the left-ward trend of the economic policies of Chancellor Schmidt's coalition government after the October 1980 election. His paper written in the summer of 1982 on the right way to restore growth and reduce unemployment brought these disagreements to a head and was a major factor in the final collapse of the SPD/FDP coalition. Played a leading role in the FDP's successful 1983 election campaign.

After his resignation as Minister he was elected the FDP Parliamentary Spokesman on economic affairs – in part to demonstrate the FDP's own confidence in the groundlessness of the corruption charges. His acquittal on this count has salvaged his reputation, but the verdict on the tax evasion charge may prevent him from ever regaining Ministerial office. Instead he has expressed interest in succeeding Bangemann as FDP chairman. Meanwhile he remains a forceful and respected commentator on economic issues, and one of the most prominent people in his party.

Lambsdorff has long-standing private links to the UK and is generally anglophile. Speaks fluent English. Appointed a trustee of the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society in 1984.

Married. Three children.

