

CONFIDENTIAL

B.041

MR REEVES

cc Mr Powell, No 10
Mr Woolley

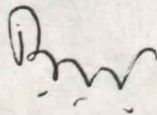
Communications between Heads of Government

When the German Ambassador called on me today for a preview of the Anglo-German Summit, I raised with him his remark to Sir Robin Butler on 19 December that "Chancellor Kohl attached particular importance to the establishment of a secure telephone link between his office and No 10" (Patrick Turner's Note for the Record of 21 December). I said we had been slightly puzzled by this because a secure telephone link between No 10 and the Federal Chancellery had been in existence for a number of years and was regularly tested by telecommunications staff on both sides. We had been wondering what more the German side intended. The German Ambassador admitted that he had spoken to Sir Robin Butler on the basis of a misapprehension. He was now aware of the existence of the secure telephone link. But he also knew that as often as not telephone conversations between the principals or their private offices took place not via this but on the open line. I said I understood that there was a practical difficulty about the secure telephone link in that if provision was to be made for an interpreter there were sometimes too few handsets available for those who needed to be party to such calls. Nodding assent, the German Ambassador said he thought that all he was saying really was that it might be a good thing if (a) the

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Chancellor and the Prime Minister resorted rather more easily to telephone conversations with one another from time to time, and (b) we were to give joint thought to whether when this did occur it should be by secure link, and not over an open line.

2. I thanked the German Ambassador for his clarification and said we would reflect on this.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'P J Weston', with a stylized, wavy line for the surname.

P J Weston

14 February 1989

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Mr Powell



CABINET OFFICE

with compliments

P J WESTON

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