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C: GERMANY, CDP

(MEM)

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cc PC

From the Private Secretary

10 November 1989

EAST GERMANY

The Soviet Ambassador came to see the Prime Minister at 2200 hours tonight with what he described as an urgent personal message from Mr. Gorbachev. I enclose the text which he handed over.

After reading the note, the Prime Minister said that she had spoken to Chancellor Kohl earlier in the evening. The impression she had received was that the situation in Berlin was cheerful but orderly and that the West German Government was determined that it should not get out of hand. In her own public statement she had been at pains to emphasise that matters should develop step by step and that the most urgent task was to establish a genuinely democratic government in East Germany. Her main concern was that the present leadership in East Germany had not sufficiently appreciated the need for political reform. Only if they could hold out hope for the future to their people would they be able to stop the exodus from East Germany. Her own view was that people should be encouraged to stay in East Germany, and build a better life there. But it all depended on the willingness of East Germany's political leaders to carry through the necessary reforms.

The Soviet Ambassador said that what worried Mr. Gorbachev most was that emotions might run high, leading to demonstrations and calls for reunification. There seemed to be some in West Germany who were keen to whip up such feelings. The Prime Minister said there had not been the slightest evidence of this in her talk with Chancellor Kohl. He had been at pains to emphasise the sober and cautious approach of the West German authorities. She thought he appreciated very well the sensitivities on the Soviet side. She had clearly understood Mr. Gorbachev's insistence during their talks in Moscow that, while the countries of Eastern Europe could choose their own course in their domestic affairs, the borders of the Warsaw Pact must remain intact.

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The Prime Minister continued that it would certainly be right for the Berlin Powers to keep in close touch. The Soviet Ambassador said that the key phrase in Mr. Gorbachev's message was the reference to the post-war realities, the co-existence of two German States. The Prime Minister repeated that her purpose had been to urge the need for a measured approach, with priority for establishing a genuine democracy in East Germany. She assumed that the Ambassador had reported the text of her various interviews earlier in the day. The Soviet Ambassador said that he had indeed done so and they had been noted with satisfaction. There were nonetheless worries in Moscow about public statements about reunification made by some of the other Western leaders.

I have subsequently spoken to General Scowcroft in the White House and given him an account of this exchange. He confirmed that the Americans had received a similar approach and had responded in very similar terms. They were not disposed to take at all an alarmist view of the Soviet approach, and were impressed more by its positive features. That said, there was certainly a risk that the situation would get out of hand. I said that I assumed that the Americans were making clear to the Russians that there was no intention of exploiting the present situation to the detriment of the Soviet Union's security. General Scowcroft confirmed that this was so.

I subsequently also informed Herr Never in the Federal Chancellery in Bonn.

You will no doubt want to take more formal action to draw this demarche to the attention of the Americans, French and Germans, and consider whether any further instructions are needed to our Mission in Berlin. The Prime Minister would also like the Foreign Secretary's advice on whether it would be appropriate for her to send messages to President Bush and President Gorbachev about the situation in the next few days.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

J. S. Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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I am instructed to convey to You, Mrs. Prime Minister, the following oral message from Mr. Gorbachev.

"Taking into account the rather extreme situation, which presently emerged in connection with the events in the GDR, its capital and West Berlin and also noting the drastic and, in my opinion, correct and worth-while character of decisions being taken by the new GDR leadership, I have just conveyed to chancellor Kohl an oral message, the content of which I consider necessary to disclose to You.

According to reports a meeting with the participation of FRG and West Berlin officials is to take place in West Berlin tonight. A parallel meeting is being planned in the capital of the GDR. In conditions of the present openness and mass movement of people in both directions a chaotic situation with unpredictable consequences may emerge.

I appealed to chancellor G.Kohl to take necessary and most urgent measures in order to prevent the deterioration of the situation, its destabilization.

Our Ambassador in Berlin is instructed to enter, without delay, into contact with representatives of the three powers' Administration in West Berlin. I hope that you, on your part, will give your representative appropriate instructions so that the events would not take an undesirable turn.

In general I consider it useful to emphasize the depth and seriousness of the changes occurring presently in the GDR. But when in FRG statements are made, aimed at stirring emotions, in the spirit of contradiction to the post-war realities - coexistence of two German states - these expressions of political extremism cannot be judged otherwise than aimed at undermining the processes in the GDR. These processes are developing dynamically towards democratization and renovation of all spheres of the society's life. And looking ahead - it could lead to destabilization of situation not only in the centre of Europe but on a wider scale.

I would like to express a hope for an understanding of all this on your part."