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From the Private Secretary

8 December 1989

Dear Stephen,

SITUATION IN GERMANY

The Prime Minister had some discussion this morning with the Netherlands Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, at which the Foreign Secretary was also present, about developments in Germany. A good deal of common ground emerged. Subsequently the Prime Minister spoke to Signor Andreotti and the Foreign Secretary to Herr Genscher. This letter summarises those discussions. You will want to ensure that Sir John Fretwell sees it as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister and Mr. Lubbers were both concerned about the speed of developments in East Germany, the risk that the situation might rapidly get out of hand, and the signal which should issue from the European Council. They took the view that it would be useful for a meeting of the four Berlin powers plus Germany reasonably soon, to anchor all the main participants and classify their intentions. The Prime Minister recalled that she had floated the idea of a Berlin Four meeting at the time of the NATO Summit but the United States had thought it risked being divisive. However the situation had moved on since then. Mr. Lubbers thought that such a meeting would be useful but suggested it might be best to persuade the Germans to ask for it, so it did not look as though it was imposed upon them. It was agreed that the Foreign Secretary would mention this to Herr Genscher.

The Prime Minister subsequently mentioned the idea to Signor Andreotti who expressed support, provided that it was clear that the technical grounds for summoning the meeting was the responsibility of the powers concerned for Berlin (so as to avoid the appearance of a directoire) and that broader matters continued to be considered within NATO. Herr Genscher's reaction when the Foreign Secretary raised it with him was more cautious. He confirmed that the Russians were worried about developments in East Germany, particularly the risk to the families of Soviet soldiers. But he thought that summoning such a meeting could increase the sense of crisis. It was something which should be kept in reserve. The Prime Minister intends to take an early opportunity to discuss this further with President Mitterrand, possibly at lunch-time.

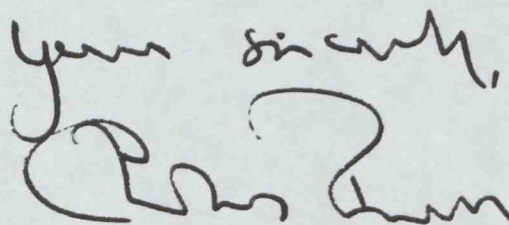
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Meanwhile Mr. Lubbers and Mr. van den Broek also expressed great concern about the sentence which the Germans had proposed on German reunification for the draft political declaration. The Dutch would be very unhappy with any such sentence, which they thought would give quite the wrong signal. They would prefer to omit it altogether or, less satisfactory, have an expanded reference which hedged any statement with qualifications and conditions. The Prime Minister said that we shared these doubts and did not want to see the declaration contain the sentence proposed by the Germans. One alternative would be to have a much more general reference simply recalling existing statements, precedents and legal obligations affecting Berlin and Germany. The Prime Minister subsequently mentioned this point to Signor Andreotti who agreed that the present sentence was unacceptable. I understand that the French Presidency have now proposed a much blander reference, but the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have not yet seen this.

I am copying this letter to Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C.D. Powell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

(C.D. POWELL)

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

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