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From the Private Secretary

14 February 1990

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER

The Prime Minister had an hour's talk this morning with Herr Genscher, who was on his way back from the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa. Herr Genscher was accompanied by the German Ambassador and by his Private Secretary. The Foreign Secretary was also present.

The discussion was robust but basically good-humoured, and a positive line was agreed for the press at the end. You will be receiving separately a transcript of the remarks made by the Foreign Secretary and Herr Genscher outside No. 10.

The Prime Minister began by congratulating Herr Genscher and the Foreign Secretary on the agreement reached in Ottawa to establish a framework for meetings of the Berlin Four and the two Germanies. But before getting into that, she wanted to tell Herr Genscher how strongly Poland's Prime Minister felt about the need for a Treaty to confirm the Polish/German border. Herr Genscher indicated that he was aware of Mr. Mazowiecki's concerns, but gave the impression that he did not take them very seriously. There was no doubt about the substance of the German position on borders. Any problems could be sorted out in the CSCE framework. The Prime Minister said that Mr. Mazowiecki had been quite clear that there must be a Treaty. She thought he was justified in demanding this. Poland did not want to be side-lined and the border must be put beyond legal dispute. Herr Genscher said that Germany did not want to have to sign a Peace Treaty with everyone. They would clarify their position on the border and find a way to convince the Polish Government. He repeated that there was no difficulty on the substance. The Prime Minister said she could not see why, in that case, there was any difficulty about having a Treaty.

Discussion then turned to the subject of German unification. The Prime Minister said that it was very important that Germany should understand the anxieties of others about unification. She tended to speak up more openly than others. But she could assure Herr Genscher that the anxieties she expressed were widely shared in Europe. Her basic concern was that the German government seemed entirely pre-occupied with German unification and had not given sufficient attention to consultation with Germany's allies about its wider consequences. As a result the

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rest of us were feeling ignored or excluded, and problems were being dealt with piecemeal. We had played our full part in preserving Europe's and Germany's security for over 40 years. We had kept to our commitment under the Brussels Treaty to keep substantial forces in Germany, even though it might have suited our interests better to organise our defence differently. She was determined that German unification should not have the effect of undermining the stability and security which Europe enjoyed. Had the Germans been ready to accept from the beginning that the consequences of unification should be discussed in the Four Power Forum, there need have been no problem. As it was, we were simply told that such vital matters as the future of NATO would be settled in due course. We understood the emotion which unification generated in Germany: the Germans, for their part, should show more sensitivity to the no less genuine emotions of others. The agreement now reached to establish a forum of the Berlin Four plus the two Germanies was an important step forward. But it was a pity it had taken so long.

Herr Genscher said that he needed no convincing of the importance of dealing with the consequences of unification. He had dealt with these aspects fully in three recent speeches. The problem lay rather with the pace of events and that stemmed basically from the collapse of East Germany. It was possible that the situation could be held until the elections on 18 March. But people would expect the process of unification to start immediately thereafter: and if it did not they would simply unite Germany de facto, creating chaos. Herr Genscher continued that some people used to think that a divided Germany was in itself a contribution to stability. He had never accepted that: it was certainly not true now. To all intents and purposes, the GDR no longer existed as a state. Under these pressures, the FRG simply had to move forward. The Prime Minister interjected that Herr Genscher was constantly stressing the priority which had to be given to unification. But it was important that the wider issues should be sorted out before unification took place. By his own admission, unification could happen shortly after the elections on 18 March. In that case, it was urgent to get down to resolving the issues such as borders and the implications for NATO without any delay. It was not as though there were many options to be considered. We all accepted unification. But we felt hurt that our interests were simply being put on one side.

The Prime Minister continued that neutrality could not be an option for a united Germany. It was also vital that the United States should keep substantial forces and nuclear weapons in Germany. Herr Genscher interjected that there was no disagreement on these two points. Not even the East European countries wanted a neutral Germany. The Prime Minister said the main question was what should happen to Soviet forces in the GDR. In her view, they should be able to stay there, at least for a transitional period. Herr Genscher said there was no problem over this either. He had told President Gorbachev and Mr. Shevardnadze that if they wanted to keep Soviet troops on GDR soil, that was perfectly acceptable to the FRG. Soviet security interests had to be taken into account. At the same time it was clear that the Warsaw Pact was disintegrating. This was one reason why the Soviet Union attached so much importance to a CSCE

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summit, as an alternative means of providing security. The Prime Minister commented that such a summit should reaffirm existing borders all over Europe. Herr Genscher said that the principles of the existing Helsinki Final Act could be made legally binding.

The Prime Minister said that she was glad that she and Herr Genscher could talk frankly without causing any resentment. She hoped that she had made clear to him why she felt strongly about the way in which unification was being handled. It was this to which she objected, not to unification itself. Herr Genscher said that he hoped that he had persuaded the Prime Minister that Germany did not want anything to happen behind the backs of the Four Powers. They must be involved in the talks between the two Germanies from the beginning. The procedure which had been agreed in Ottawa was a good one. For his part, he wanted to say to the Prime Minister that it was important that the FRG's allies should not give the impression that they had reservations about unification. While the leaders of the three main political parties in the FRG were determined that Germany should remain in NATO and that American forces should stay, there were others on the extreme right and left who favoured neutrality. If the impression gained ground that the allies were putting obstacles in the way of unification, that would only strengthen extremists. He hoped, therefore, that the Prime Minister would take every opportunity to make clear that she favoured German unification. People in Germany must believe that they had the support of the allies. The Prime Minister said that she had no difficulty in giving such support, provided that German Ministers took every opportunity to make clear that they recognised the need to deal with the consequences of unification now, in full consultation with the allies. Until recently they constantly emphasised unification and neglected to talk about the consequences. These ought to be addressed now and if possible resolved before the elections were held in East Germany. Otherwise unification might just come about and no decisions would have been taken on, for instance, the position of Soviet forces in East Germany or Germany's role in NATO. She was worried that people were doing things for political reasons without working out the wider consequences. Herr Genscher said that there was no need to be alarmed about Germany's intentions on this. The Prime Minister responded that she would not be alarmed provided we got the wider framework sorted out. This could not be done by German unification alone. Nor without it, said Herr Genscher. The Prime Minister concluded that she was now much happier that a structure had been agreed in Ottawa.

Herr Genscher said that he had been struck when in Moscow by how Gorbachev, during his meetings with his German visitors, appeared to have no other preoccupation except the matter in hand. Shevardnadze, by comparison, appeared deeply preoccupied with some of the developments at the Central Committee Plenum, particularly the criticism of Soviet foreign policy.

Herr Genscher also referred to his own remarks in Ottawa of the importance of establishing better relations between the European Community and the United States. This would be absolutely fundamental to the future.

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Herr Genscher said that he would be addressing political meetings in East Germany later this week. His impression was that the SED would receive between 5 and 10 per cent of the votes in the elections on 18 March, mostly from party members who feared losing their jobs. The Social Democrats would do very well: the GDR had formerly been a stronghold of social democracy. He thought that the Liberals would also do well, perhaps better than in the FRG. The unknown was the likely performance of the various Conservative groupings. There were very few catholics in East Germany and it was catholics who made up the bulk of the CDU's support in the Federal Republic. He thought the most likely outcome would be an all-party government excluding the SED.

There was then a brief discussion of what should be said to the press. The Prime Minister said that we should welcome the agreement reached in Ottawa on a framework of the Berlin Four and the two Germanies to discuss the wider consequences of unification. It should be clearly stated that the United Kingdom supported unification in accordance with its previous undertakings. At the same time, it would be made clear that the German government agreed that unification must take place within a framework which guaranteed the continued stability and sure defence of Europe, and would be ready to consult fully to ensure this.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and to Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

(C. D. POWELL)

Stephen Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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GENSCHER'S VISIT TO LONDON: MEDIA COVERAGE

SUMMARY

1. EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN TODAY'S PRESS OF GENSCHER'S CALL AT NUMBER TEN. PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR GERMAN UNITY DESCRIBED AS A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE BONN GOVERNMENT. VISIT ALSO REPORTED PROMINENTLY ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA.

DETAIL

2. GENSCHER'S VISIT TO LONDON ON 14 FEBRUARY ON HIS WAY BACK FROM OTTAWA IS REPORTED EXTENSIVELY IN ALL LEADING WEST GERMAN NEWSPAPERS, FREQUENTLY ACCOMPANIED BY PHOTOGRAPHS OF HIS MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. THE GENERAL ANZEIGER (INDEPENDENT), PUBLISHED IN BONN AND WITH CLOSE CONNECTIONS TO GENSCHER'S OFFICE, REPORTS HIM AS BEING VERY PLEASED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT THAT SHE HAS NO RESERVATIONS ABOUT GERMAN UNITY, AND SUGGESTS THAT SUCH A 'MESSAGE OF HARMONY' SHOULD ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO FURTHER SPECULATION ON PERSONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MRS THATCHER AND CHANCELLOR KOHL. THE NEWSPAPER QUOTES GENSCHER AS SAYING THAT THE REMOVAL OF ANY DOUBTS ON THE BRITISH ATTITUDE TO THE QUESTION OF GERMAN UNITY WOULD GREATLY ENCOURAGE GERMANS IN EAST AND WEST. THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG (CONSERVATIVE) REPORTS THAT AFTER BEING TELEPHONED BY GENSCHER CHANCELLOR KOHL HAD EXPRESSED PLEASURE IN CABINET AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT. BILD ZEITUNG (RIGHT-WING TABLOID), WHICH HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY ANT-BRITISH IN RECENT DAYS, ADOPTS A POSITIVE LINE AND SEES GENSCHER'S VISIT TO LONDON AS A PERSONAL TRIUMPH FOR HIM.

3. IN SEPARATE REPORTS HOWEVER BOTH DIE WELT (CONSERVATIVE) AND THE FAZ DRAW ATTENTION TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT AT HER DINNER ON 13 FEBRUARY FOR THE POLISH PRIME MINISTER IN WHICH SHE EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING FOR POLISH CONCERN THAT SOME OF THE PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE COULD AWAKEN 'DEEP-ROOTED FEARS' AND THAT GERMAN UNIFICATION MUST BE ACHIEVED ONLY WITH THE ASSURANCE OF INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES. FAZ ALSO REFERS TO REPORTS OF A STATEMENT

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BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS THAT THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE GDR SHOULD NOT IMPOSE UNDUE COST ON BRITAIN.

4. THE VISIT TO NO 10 AND YOUR SUBSEQUENT BRIEFING WITH GENSCHER OF JOURNALISTS IN DOWNING STREET WERE REPORTED PROMINENTLY AND FACTUALLY ON THE MAIN TELEVISION AND RADIO BULLETINS.

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