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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

22 February 1990

De Simon,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE FEDERAL GERMAN DEFENCE MINISTER

The Prime Minister had a talk in her room in the House of Commons this afternoon with the Federal German Defence Minister. Herr Stoltenberg was accompanied by the German Ambassador.

The Prime Minister said that the agreement reached in the margins of the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa to establish the Four plus Two framework had been enormously important. She had been determined to see that the consequences of German unification for NATO and for European security were properly thought through before unification took place. Some of Herr Stoltenberg's colleagues had been curiously reluctant to accept this. But now we had a framework, although it was a pity that there seemed to be resistance to starting discussion until after the elections in the GDR. At the same time, there was agreement to hold a special meeting of the European Council to discuss the consequences of unification for the European Community. These would be very substantial. She understood there was also agreement to hold discussions and consultations in NATO. At last things were getting on the right track. It was important that no-one should feel excluded, above all adjacent states like Poland, which had a particular concern about its border with Germany. Herr Stoltenberg agreed there was now a very reasonable framework for consultation where all international security aspects of unification could be considered. Germany's allies and neighbours had a legitimate right to be consulted. He thought there was a good prospect of bringing such consultations to a successful conclusion by the end of the year. He hoped the most sensitive questions would be handled in the Four plus Two forum. The Prime Minister said that we ought also to develop the CSCE framework. Herr Stoltenberg said he fully shared this view.

The Prime Minister continued that she had also been rather concerned about piecemeal developments affecting Europe's defence. There had been the American proposals to reduce the numbers of stationed forces, with which we had had to deal at short notice. Countries like Belgium appeared to want to pre-empt any reductions agreed in the CFE negotiations. We had also been a bit worried by the attitude in the Federal Republic to issues such as low flying and tank training. She hoped that in future all these problems would be dealt with in a more

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coordinated manner. We were all bound by our Treaty commitments to NATO and must stand by them. Once reductions were agreed in the CFE talks, it might become necessary to review Britain's commitment under the Brussels Treaty to keep specific numbers of our forces in Germany. Herr Stoltenberg said that Chancellor Kohl had undertaken that Germany would stay in NATO after unification, even though this might cause electoral difficulties for him. The German Government had every intention of standing by that commitment. The Prime Minister said that she assumed it extended also to keeping the American forces and nuclear weapons in Germany. Herr Stoltenberg assented, although with less conviction.

The Prime Minister then said that we had been very disappointed not to get support from the Federal Republic in relaxing some of the voluntary sanctions against South Africa. She knew that Chancellor Kohl was much preoccupied with the problems of unification and with the elections in East Germany. He had been stalwart in joining her to resist sanctions against South Africa. Both Government's had given President de Klerk assurances that the release of Mandela and other steps would meet with a positive response. Consequently she found it rather hard to understand why the Federal Republic have not joined us in relaxing some of the measures in response to de Klerk's bold steps. Indeed she had mentioned this to Herr Genscher during his visit to London, as they were walking downstairs at Downing Street, and he had seemed to agree that the Community should take some positive action. The German Ambassador said it was simply a matter of time. The German Government took the view that any action should wait until the state of emergency had been lifted and political prisoners released. A decision had been reached in Dublin to send a troika to South Africa. The Prime Minister said this was a weak answer. Of course there was a danger that countries which took action to relax sanctions would be misrepresented. But that was not an argument for doing nothing. Our view was that we should proceed step by step. It would be absurd to treat President de Klerk in exactly the same way as we had treated President Botha. Herr Stoltenberg said that he entirely agreed that President de Klerk had taken courageous decisions and deserved support. He thought the German position different from ours only on the question of timing. But he would mention the matter and the Prime Minister's strong views to Chancellor Kohl next Monday.

I am copying this letter to Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Martin Stanley (Department of Trade and Industry) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).


(CHARLES POWELL)

Simon Webb, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.