

STRICTLY PERSONAL



SUBJECT cc MASTER  
OPS

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

REF No. T163/90

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 July 1990

Dear Helmut-

Your remarks at your press conference today about Nicholas Ridley's unfortunate interview were most generous and I should like to thank you for them. The problem should never have arisen, but he took the honourable course and I hope we can regard that as closing the matter - as indeed you did this morning.

I hope we can make contact when you return from your holiday and we can arrange to meet.

Yours  
Ranger

His Excellency Dr Helmut Kohl

STRICTLY PERSONAL

## RETURN TO C/F

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KOHL COMPARES RIDLEY COMMENTS WITH HIS OWN 'GOEBBELS' GAFFE

BONN, TUESDAY - WEST GERMAN CHANCELLOR HELMUT KOHL TODAY COMPARED A BRITISH CABINET MINISTER'S ANTI-GERMAN OUTBURST WITH HIS OWN GAFFE LIKENING SOVIET LEADER MIKHAIL GORBACHEV TO NAZI PROPAGANDA CHIEF JOSEF GOEBBELS.

TRADE SECRETARY NICHOLAS RIDLEY RESIGNED ON SATURDAY OVER A MAGAZINE INTERVIEW IN WHICH HE CALLED EUROPEAN MONETARY UNION 'A GERMAN RACKET TO TAKE OVER EUROPE', AND SAID CEDING BRITISH SOVEREIGNTY TO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WAS LIKE SURRENDERING TO HITLER.

KOHL SAID HE HAD NEVER BELIEVED THAT RIDLEY'S COMMENTS REPRESENTED THE VIEWS OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT OR PEOPLE. 'IT DID NOT CAST A SHADOW OVER GERMAN-BRITISH RELATIONS AT ALL,' HE TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE. 'IT WAS REALLY A COMPLETE FAUX PAS, BUT AS IT WAS PRETTY SILLY, THAT WAS CLEAR TO EVERYBODY.

'YOU KNOW, AS WE GERMANS DO NOT ALWAYS SPEAK ANY MORE PRUDENTLY, MYSELF INCLUDED - I NEED ONLY REMIND YOU OF THE SUBJECT OF GORBACHEV - THEN I THINK ONE SHOULD NOT BE TOO HARD ON HIM,' KOHL ADDED WITH A SMILE.

KOHL CAUSED A BITTER ROW WITH MOSCOW IN 1986 AFTER BEING QUOTED IN A MAGAZINE INTERVIEW AS SAYING OF GORBACHEV: 'HE IS A MODERN COMMUNIST LEADER WHO KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT PUBLIC RELATIONS. GOEBBELS, ONE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRIMES OF THE HITLER ERA, WAS AN EXPERT IN PUBLIC RELATIONS, TOO.'

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PERSONAL

PRIME MINISTER

GERMANY

Chancellor Kohl's comments about Mr Ridley at his press conference were unexpectedly generous. He said in effect that it could have happened to anybody: and he recalled his own gaffe comparing Gorbachev to Goebbels some time ago.

I think it would be right to send a short personal note of appreciation. I attach a draft.

e.d.p

Charles Powell

17 July 1990

c: Germany (MJ)

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OF 171217Z JULY 90  
AND TO DESKBY 171300Z PARIS

PARIS FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY

MR RIDLEY'S RESIGNATION

SUMMARY

1. COMMENTS FROM KOHL.

DETAIL

2. IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS AFTER A PRESS CONFERENCE THIS MORNING KOHL MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

(A) WHILE IT WAS TRUE THAT THERE WERE RESERVATIONS AND FEARS HERE AND THERE, NONETHELESS ALL GERMANY'S NEIGHBOURS WERE IN FAVOUR OF GERMAN UNIFICATION.

(B) HE UNDERSTOOD THE CONCERNS, ESPECIALLY ON THE PART OF THE BRITISH, OF THOSE WHOSE ENTIRE NATIONAL EXISTENCE HAD BEEN AT STAKE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HITLER.

(C) MR RIDLEY'S REMARKS HAD BEEN RATHER SILLY, BUT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF HIS VIEWS BEING SHARED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

(D) HE HAD NOT TAKEN MR RIDLEY'S COMMENTS AMISS. QUOTE THE MAN HAS BEEN PUNISHED ENOUGH. HE HAS LOST HIS JOB, AND THAT IS RIGHT AND PROPER UNQUOTE.

BUDD

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