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From the Private Secretary

19 March 1990

MEETING AT CHEQUERS ON 24 MARCH

I promised to try to let you have a rather fuller idea of the matters which the Prime Minister would like to discuss at our meeting at Chequers on 24 March.

Basically the Prime Minister's objective is to use our knowledge and experience of Germany's past to help shape our policy towards Germany and Europe for the future. She will want to tap the wisdom of each individual participant for this. I suggest, therefore, that we should devote the first half of the afternoon to Germany's past and the lessons to be learned from it: and the second half to wider questions about Germany's future role in Europe, and what changes this may require in our diplomacy.

For the first part of the discussion, the following are some of the questions which we might consider (although the list is neither comprehensive nor exclusive):

- what does history tell us about the character and behaviour of the Germany-speaking people of Europe? Are there enduring national characteristics?
- have the Germans changed in the last 40 years (or 80 or 150 years), either as a result of some mutation in their national character or because of changes in their external environment?
- what is the key to German economic success? Is it something deep in their character and psyche, a natural sense of discipline and order? Or is it 'simply' sound policy?
- what will be the tendency of a united Germany? Despite all protestations to the contrary, will it lurch inevitably and as often in history, towards geographical and territorial dominance? Or will it find satisfaction in the creation of something broader than Germany?

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- how strong is the drive to unite all the German-speaking peoples, either within the existing borders of Germany or by extending those borders?
 - in the light of history, how can we 'satisfy' the Germans? Is there something they want and we can give them, which will neutralise their drive to extend their sway, whether politically or territorially?
 - how strongly German do the remaining Germanic minorities in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union feel? Is an ambition to protect them likely to re-surface as a factor in German policy?
 - will German national ambitions be subsumed in the internationalist appeal of a European Community as they claim? Can the sense of German nationhood be supplanted by the sense of being part of a European nation? Or is this wishful thinking on their - and our - part?
 - how deep-rooted is the German mission in Central and Eastern Europe? Is it part of their instinctive and historic restlessness? Or is it merely a current calculation of economic and political advantage?
 - can we deduce from history how the Germans as a nation will respond to certain sorts of treatment? Is it better psychologically to 'stand up to Germany'? Or to pursue a friendly approach, based on understanding of their needs and ambitions?
 - looking back through history, are there traits in Germany's relations with Britain which have been particularly positive and on which we can try to build in future? Are there some particular aspects of the German character or of German national interests to which we can appeal, to forge a co-operative relationship?
 - to what extent do we need to take account of the growing influence of people of Germanic origin in the United States, as a factor affecting American policy towards Europe?

In the second half of the discussion, the Prime Minister would like to range more widely and consider some of the broader consequences of German unification. We might look at some of the following questions:

- one might say that in the past, history was determined largely by the personalities and ambitions of the rulers of peoples. In future it may be determined more by the character of the people themselves. What will the implications be, given the resurgence of national feeling in Eastern Europe in particular?
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- given worries about the dominant influence which a united Germany might exercise, what sort of framework should we build in Europe, into which a united Germany would fit comfortably (for future economic, political and defence co-operation)? Is the European Community sufficient? Or should we look for something wider?
 - to what extent should such a framework provide also for the Soviet Union, as the only power in Europe capable in crude terms of balancing a united Germany?
 - is there still a use for some of the concepts familiar from history such as spheres of influence, geographical alliances and balance of power? Or should we be looking at something much broader, for instance an 'alliance for democracy' which would stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond?
 - how are we going to cope with the return of national feeling in Eastern Europe, now that events of recent months have shown that forty years of communist oppression failed to suffocate it?

These are just illustrative questions - and formulated by me rather than by the Prime Minister. But I hope you will find them of some help in preparing your thoughts.

I look forward to seeing you on Saturday.

Charles Powell

Timothy Garton-Ash, Esq.

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