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Party meeting
18 May 1981
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Ian Gow

My Dear Ian

I have just been to Finland for the Finnish Conservative Party Conference. Also there was Helmut Kohl, the leader of the German CDU in the Bundestag. He and his entourage were in a very confident mood, particularly following the Berlin and French elections. "The Schmidt era is over. The death agony will last 12-15 months."

Kohl said very strongly to me that he thought that there should be Party to Party contact as well as Government to Government. This seemed to me to reflect his desire to make maximum use of his meeting with the Prime Minister later in the summer. He complained that Giscard d'Estaing helped Schmidt, his SDP opponent, in elections although the CDU were d'Estaing's natural allies and Kohl is personally close to France. (His constituency is on the border, his wife studied in Paris, etc.) I suspect he may also have been worried by the reporting of Schmidt's visit here recently. Particularly if his party is going to win, it seems to me important to establish the best possible understanding at an early stage and avoid his pro-French sympathies recovering.

Frau Kohl should, if possible, be included as she seemed important and her English is of a high standard, whereas her husband's is halting. He seemed to be in the business of travelling, presumably to build up contacts and his image. It was his first visit to Finland, and a visit to Reagan has been postponed because of the shooting.

I promised to report the importance he attached to party contacts to the Prime Minister.

Yours ever
John Hope

18 May 1981.