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Prime Minister ②

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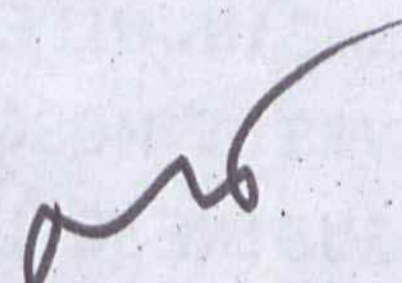
TELEGRAM NUMBER 804 OF 20 DECEMBER

INFO WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO, PARIS, MOSCOW

INFO SAVING OTHER NATO POSTS, UKDEL VIENNA, BMG BERLIN

PS TO PRIME MINISTER
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LRTNF: NATO DECISIONS: FRG VIEWS

1. MINISTER ASKED VON DER GABLENTZ (FEDERAL CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE) ON 19 DECEMBER HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AND IN PARTICULAR THE CHANCELLOR, ASSESSED THE OUTCOME OF LAST WEEK'S NATO MINISTERIAL DECISIONS ON LRTNF AND ARMS CONTROL. GABLENTZ SAID THAT THE CHANCELLOR'S REACTION COULD BE SUMMED UP AS QUOTE QUALIFIED SATISFACTION UNQUOTE. THE DECISIONS WHICH THE GERMANS JUDGE NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN STRATEGIC EQUILIBRIUM IN EUROPE HAD BEEN TAKEN. THE FRG HAD SUCCESSFULLY AVOIDED BEING SINGLED OUT AS THE ONLY CONTINENTAL COUNTRY WHERE THE NEW WEAPONS WOULD BE DEPLOYED. THE FACT THAT THE COMMUNIQUE HAD BEEN UNANIMOUS HAD PRESERVED THE COHESION OF THE ALLIANCE. THE DECISIONS REFLECTED THE EVOLUTION OF A NEW ALLIANCE PHILOSOPHY WHEREBY STEPS TAKEN TO MAINTAIN STRATEGIC EQUILIBRIUM WENT HAND IN HAND WITH PROGRESS ON ARMS CONTROL. THIS WAS CONSISTENT WITH THE HARMEL DOCTRINE AND PROVIDED VALUABLE GUIDANCE FOR THE FUTURE. THE PROCESS OF ARRIVING AT THESE DECISIONS (COMBINED OF COURSE WITH THE IRAN CRISIS) HAD BROUGHT BONN AND WASHINGTON CLOSER TOGETHER AND RELATIONS WITH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WERE NOW MUCH CLOSER THAN SIX MONTHS AGO. FINALLY, ALL THIS HAD BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT SERIOUSLY PREJUDICING RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

2. ON THE CONSEQUENCES FOR EAST/WEST RELATIONS, THE CHANCELLOR'S FEELING WAS THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOW IMPOSE A PERIOD OF QUOTE FREEZE UNQUOTE, DURING WHICH THEY MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT FEEL OBLIGED TO TAKE SOME COUNTER ACTION IN THE ARMAMENTS FIELD. THIS FREEZE WOULD HOWEVER BE OF COMPARATIVELY SHORT DURATION. AT THE END OF IT, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD COME ROUND TO NEGOTIATING ON THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN THE ALLIANCE'S ARMS CONTROL PACKAGE. THE RELATIVELY RESTRAINED AND CAREFULLY BALANCED SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN REACTIONS TO THE NATO DECISIONS WERE CONSISTENT WITH THIS ASSESSMENT.

3. THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GERMANS TO TEST THE WATER WITH THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE THE NEXT MEETING OF THE SOVIET-GERMAN

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JOINT COMMISSION IN BONN AT THE END OF JANUARY, AT WHICH TISHANOV (?) WOULD MEET LAMBSDORFF AND ALSO BE RECEIVED BY THE CHANCELLOR. MEANWHILE THE POSSIBILITY WAS STILL OPEN THAT THE CHANCELLOR MIGHT VISIT MOSCOW EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR AND THAT QUOTE SOME SERIOUS BUSINESS UNQUOTE MIGHT THEN BE DONE.

4. ASKED ABOUT COMMENT IN THE GERMAN PRESS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE ALLIANCE HAD NOW DIVIDED ITSELF INTO FIRST AND SECOND CLASS PARTNERS, GABLENTZ SAID IT WAS TRUE THAT THE CONDUCT OF THE SMALLER ALLIES RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO TAKE EFFECTIVE PART IN THE MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS BY THE ALLIANCE: EVEN GOVERNMENTS LIKE THE DUTCH, WHOSE PUBLIC OPINION FAVOURED NATO, HAD FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO GO ALONG WITH WHAT THEY RECOGNISED WAS NECESSARY. A DIVISION INTO FIRST AND SECOND CLASS ALLIES MUST OF COURSE BE PREVENTED. AT THE SAME TIME, IT WAS NOT UNHELPFUL THAT THE RISK OF SUCH A DIVISION SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF COMMENT. THE EXISTENCE OF THIS RISK HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN GETTING THE NETHERLANDS AND BELGIAN GOVERNMENTS TO FACE UP TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES. IT HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE WITH THE ITALIANS, WITH WHOM THE GERMANS HAD BEEN IN CLOSE AND INTENSIVE CONTACT SINCE COSSIGA'S VISIT TO BONN IN SEPTEMBER. THE ITALIANS WOULD NO DOUBT NOW SEEK TO CASH THIS PARTICULAR CHEQUE, STRESSING THEIR RIGHT TO BE TREATED AS FIRST CLASS PARTNERS.

5. ASKED WHETHER THE WHOLE EPISODE HAD NOT HAD THE EFFECT OF CONFIRMING THE FRG IN A POSITION OF DE FACTO LEADERSHIP AMONG THE EUROPEAN ALLIES, GABLENTZ SAID THAT THIS WAS TO SOME EXTENT TRUE BUT THAT THE CHANCELLOR HAD ALL ALONG MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE FRG WAS PRECLUDED FROM ASSUMING AN EXPLICIT LEADERSHIP ROLE. GERMAN INFLUENCE HAD BEEN EXERCISED INDIRECTLY AND OWED A GREAT DEAL TO THE CHANCELLOR'S OWN PERSONAL AND INTELLECTUAL AUTHORITY ON THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT. IF THE CHANCELLOR HAD BEEN A POLITICAL FIGURE OF MEDIOCRE OR QUOTE NORMAL UNQUOTE STATURE THE OUTCOME MIGHT HAVE BEEN VERY DIFFERENT.

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