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TELEGRAM NUMBER 144 OF 10 FEBRUARY

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THE HAGUE LUXEMBOURG EAST BERLIN BMG BERLIN

UKREP BRUSSELS UKDEL NATO CONSULS GENERAL IN FRG CICC(G) CONSUL

HANOVER.

MY TELNO 112: THE FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

SUMMARY

1. THE FINAL DECISION ON HOLDING THE ELCTION ON 6 MARCH IS LIKELY TO BE TAKEN NEXT WEEK. MEANWHILE, THE CDU/CSU LOOK REASONABLY CERTAIN OF STAYING IN POWER. THE SPD MAY SHORTLY MAKE A NEW MOVE ON INF IN ORDER TO KEEP IT AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CAMPAIGN.

DETAIL

2. THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL COURT IS DUE TO ANNOUNCE ON 16 FEBRAURY ITS VERDICT ON THE COMPLAINT BY 4 BUNDESTAG DEPUTIES THAT THE FEDERAL PRESIDENT ACTED UNCONSTITUTIONALLY IN DISSOLVING THE BUNDESTAG AND CALLING ELECTIONS: SOME OF THE CURRENT RUMOURS SAY THAT IT WILL FIND AGAINST THE PRESIDENT. THIS COULD CREATE A MAJOR CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS. THE PRESIDENT'S CHIEF ADVISER TELLS ME THAT HE KNOWS NOTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE THE RUMOURS. THE CHANCELLOR'S STAFF TELL US THEY REMAIN CONFIDENT THAT THE COURT WILL RULE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S FAVOUR, AND EVEN ONE OF THE BUNDESTAG DEPUTIES INVOLVED IN THE COMPLAINT TO THE COURT, HAS EXPRESSED THE VIEW TO US THAT THEIR APPEAL WILL PROBABLY BE TURNED DOWN, ALBEIT WITH SOME DISSENTING OPINIONS. NEVERTHELESS THERE WILL BE WIDESPREAD RELIEF ONCE A FAVOURABLE DECISION HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED.

3. THE LATEST OPINION POLL IS ENCOURAGING FOR THE GOVERNMENT. IT PUTS THE CDU/CSU'S SUPPORT AT 48 PERCENT, 6 PERCENT AHEAD OF THE SPD. THE FDP REMAIN AT AROUND 5 PERCENT: THEY NOW TELL US THAT THEY SEE A REASONABLE PROSPECT OF STAYING IN THE BUNDESTAG AND THE GOVERNMENT. THE GREENS' SUPPORT, TOO, IS STILL SHOWN AT AROUND 5 PERCENT: BUT THEIR TREND IS DOWNWARDS AND THEY ARE INCREASINGLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT GETTING INTO THE BUNDESTAG.

4. INF, WHICH DOMINATED THE EARLY STAGES OF THE CAMPAIGN, HAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY GIVEN WAY TO ECONOMIC ISSUES. WITH UNEMPLOYMENT NOW AT 2.5 MILLION AND STILL RISING, AND AFTER A COUPLE OF TACTICAL MISTAKES BY THE GOVERNMENT WHICH HAVE RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT THE CONSISTENCY AND COHESION OF THEIR ECONOMIC POLICY,

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ONE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED THE SPD TO CONCENTRATE THEIR FIRE IN THIS AREA. BUT VOGEL'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER HAS ADMITTED TO US THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING NEW TO SAY. INSTEAD, HE EXPECTS THAT THEY WILL SHORTLY LAUNCH A NEW INITIATIVE QUOTE IN THE SOCIAL FIELD UNQUOTE. MORE OMINOUSLY, HE PREDICTS THAT VOGEL WILL TRY TO MAINTAIN INF AS AN ELECTION ISSUE BY CALLING FOR AN ARRANGEMENT IN WHICH BRITISH AND FRENCH SYSTEMS, AND FUTURE INCREASES IN THE NUMBERS OF BRITISH AND FRENCH WARHEADS, WOULD BE COUNTED, STATIONING OF PERSHING SHOULD BE ABANDONED AND ANY ESSENTIAL US STATIONING WOULD BE SEA-BASED. THE SPD WOULD NOT DENY THAT MOST ELECTORS ARE NOT MUCH INTERESTED IN THE DETAIL OF INF, BUT BELIEVE THAT IN PUTTING EMPHASIS ON THE NEGOTIATING HALF OF THE DOUBLE DECISION, THEY HAVE CAUGHT A PREVAILING MOOD OF WANTING TO STOP THE ARMS SPIRAL. REVIVING THIS THEME WOULD THUS GIVE THEM ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO CLAIM CREDIT FOR ACTING QUOTE IN THE GERMAN INTEREST UNQUOTE, AS VOGEL'S ELECTION CATCHPHRASE HAS IT.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING TO ABOVE ADDRESSES EXCEPT BMG BERLIN CONSULS GENERAL IN FRG CICC(G) AND CONSUL HANOVER.

TAYLOR

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

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