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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 June 1985

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Dear Charles,

Category I Visit by Dr Vogel, 1-4 July 1985

The Prime Minister has kindly agreed to receive Dr Vogel, Leader of the SPD, at 1130 on 2 July. I enclose briefing.

Dr Vogel last visited Britain as a guest of HMG in February 1982. At that time he was Opposition leader in the Berlin Senat. President von Weizsaecker was Governing Mayor. His programme on this occasion includes dinners hosted by Sir Geoffrey Howe on 1 July and by Mr Kinnock on 3 July, a lecture on security policy at the IISS and a visit to Scotland from 3-4 July.

Political Background

Last year the SPD were unable to capitalise on the series of gaffes which marred Chancellor Kohl's government's good performance on the economy and defence. In 1985 they have done better. The CDU's dismal electoral performance, particularly in the Land elections in North Rhine Westphalia in May, have thrown into rather sharper relief the weaknesses of the Kohl/Genscher/Strauss coalition, notably as regards the presentation of policy and personalities, and above all the deficiencies of Kohl's loose style of management.

We doubt if the SPD will succeed in translating their Land performance in 1985 into success in the federal election of 1987, though they may put up a better fight than at one time seemed likely. Their problems are numerous. These include less than charismatic leadership (Vogel) and policies on defence and the economy which do not have the confidence of the majority. There is also the complication that the SPD would need a coalition partner, whereas the FDP is unlikely so quickly to transfer its allegiance back to the SPD.

Vogel is not in the same class as a leader as Schmidt or Brandt. He has managed the Party quite well in opposition, but lacks mass appeal. If the SPD do seem to have a real chance in 1987, he could be replaced by the personable Johannes Rau, victor in North Rhine Westphalia. Sir J Bullard's despatch of 7 June (copy enclosed) looks at these questions in more detail.

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The SPD remain however a significant element in German politics, and Sir Geoffrey Howe believes it is in our interest to stay in touch with them. Even in opposition the Party can directly affect our interests, particularly through its activities in East/West relations and arms control. The possibilities for wedge-driving afforded by Brandt's recent visit to Moscow are a case in point. SPD contacts can also have a positive effect (eg on human rights in the GDR). The Prime Minister might concentrate on these areas, which are covered in more detail in the enclosed briefing.

You will no doubt also wish to consider, in the light of Milan, how far the Prime Minister should raise with Vogel the FRG's behaviour in the run-up to the European Council.

Vogel could raise topical regional issues, but I judge this unlikely as they have not been a major focus of his concern. Aside from predictable differences on South Africa and Central America, the SPD position is in general similar to that of the ruling coalition.

Participation

Dr Vogel is being accompanied on his visit to the UK by an SPD MP, Frau Antje Huber, MEP Herr Klaus Häntch, and Herr Bernard Zepter, a career diplomat seconded to the SPD as an adviser. If the Prime Minister received this delegation as well, Vogel would certainly appreciate the gesture. Frau Huber is a former Federal Minister (and good value), and it might seem invidious to exclude the others. The German Ambassador also wishes to attend.

If the Prime Minister would prefer a more restricted meeting I would recommend that she receive Vogel, the Ambassador and a note-taker. Please let me know your decision by telephone, so that we can alert the visitors.

Vogel does not require an interpreter.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Andy Renning (Dover House) and Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

* PS We have since heard from Bonn that V. would be content for the meeting to be tete-a-tete, if that would be your preference.

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

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PRIME MINISTER

Meeting with Dr. Vogel

You are seeing Dr. Vogel, Helmut Schmidt's successor as leader of the German SPD, for half-an-hour tomorrow morning.

The SPD's economic, foreign and defence policies are all in some degree unsound. You might glance at the passages which I have underlined in Julian Ballard's despatch (attached). But you will note that he expects Vogel to go on being a key player in the SPD for a long time to come.

You will probably want to say something to him about the German performance in Milan, and our resentment of the way in which our efforts to work with the Germans have been rebuffed (bearing in mind, though, that he is quite capable of using anything you say to attack Kohl in the Bundestag).

The other main subject might be East/West relations. Brandt was in Moscow recently and saw Gorbachev. He appeared to be unhelpfully sympathetic to Soviet views in public comment. Vogel himself has recently seen Honecker.

Vogel may raise chemical weapons. The SPD have proposed a chemical weapons free zone in Europe. They are also opposed to the SDI.

Some briefing is attached.

Charles Powell

1 July 1985

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 July, 1985

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Dear Charles,

Visit by Dr Vogel

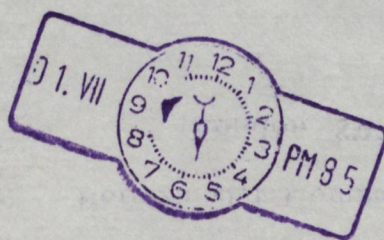
In connection with Dr Vogel's call on the Prime Minister tomorrow you may be interested to learn of Willi Brandt's reaction to the outcome of Milan, as reported in the German press. Brandt is still SPD party chairman. He said that Milan had simply put off the resolution of urgent problems: time had been lost, and Kohl's Government bore much of the responsibility for this.


Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street





CATEGORY I VISIT BY DR VOGEL, 1-4 JULY 1985

BRIEFING

1. Brief on East/West relations, inner-German relations and arms control issues.
2. Sir J Bullard's despatch of 7 June: "The SPD in the Federal Republic"
3. Personality notes.



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PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DR VOGEL: 2 JULY

OUR OBJECTIVES

- East/West Relations - To encourage caution in the SPD's attitude to the Soviet Union.
- Inner-German Relations - To support a bipartisan FRG policy towards the GDR as the best long-term safeguard for the Allied position in Berlin;
- To seek views on the prospects for change in the GDR.
- Arms Control - To explain our position and encourage SPD moderation; to discourage initiatives which could damage Alliance cohesion on Geneva talks.

EAST/WEST RELATIONS

Arguments to Use

- Brandt's impressions of Gorbachev? (Brandt met him on Moscow visit 26-29 May).
- Recent evidence confirms impression in London last year that he is effective performer, with some idea of how to use media.
- Politically adept. Quick consolidation of power in Politburo. Only question is whether he is offending too many interests too quickly (Ministries and party have been criticised).
- Preoccupied with domestic economy; June 11 speech stressed making existing system more efficient, not introducing radical reforms.
- On foreign policy, packaging titivated but substance unchanged. No sign of any new directions. No expectation of rapid improvement in East/West relations.
- Important in circumstances for West to remain solid. Russians will hope to create dissension by sitting tight and thereby avoiding making any concessions.

His Objective

- May argue for new initiatives/offers to demonstrate Western



sincerity in seeking improved East/West relations.

Your Response

- West has consistently stressed desire for genuine and lasting improvement. Gorbachev preoccupied with internal affairs. Need perseverance with present strategy, not new initiatives.

INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS

Arguments to Use

- Continuity necessary in Federal German policy towards GDR. Otherwise GDR given opportunities for mischief-making, hope for more favourable treatment from an SPD Government may encourage negative line now
- Better inner-German relations good for Berlin too: an interest which the Western Allies share with the Federal Republic, on condition that Berlin status is not affected. Preserving a free, democratic Berlin is a prime factor in determining UK attitude to GDR.
- Vogel's latest meeting with Honecker (East Berlin, 16 May) and enhanced party contacts indicate growing GDR self-confidence in foreign policy - at behest of or in spite of USSR?
- GDR régime's ultimate loyalty to Moscow. Any signs of evolutionary change eg in GDR human rights/issue of exit visas? Can Western economic magnet eventually draw GDR further than Moscow would wish?

His Objective

- May be to convince that cultivation of the GDR pays off for the West; and that SPD is a stable, discreet interlocutor.

Your Response

- Dialogue fine; but beware Alliance wedge-driving by GDR.

ARMS CONTROLArguments for Use

- Geneva talks: top priority for Alliance. Russians clearly not yet ready to negotiate. But early days: patience, perseverance needed.
- Vital to build on Alliance cohesion demonstrated in Lisbon. Western negotiating approach receptive to German concerns. Must not appear to be encouraging Soviet propaganda proposal (eg moratorium) unacceptable to Alliance.
- INF/START: no doubt about US flexibility or sincerity (eg welcome SALT II decision). Confident US will act with concrete proposals when Soviet immobility ceases. US 1983 proposals offer possible ways forward. Important for Alliance not to be wedge-driven or tempted into making pre-emptive concessions.
- SDI: without ducking key issues, should get any differences with US in perspective. Only prudent US should counter-balance Soviet efforts. No advantage in simplistic proposal (eg space "demilitarisation", ban on research). Camp David four points sound guide to future policy.
- SPD Defence Policy: dangerous for Western security if major parties espouse defence policies, which would undermine proven NATO strategy. eg central European Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) No First Use of Nuclear Weapons (NOFUN).

HIS OBJECTIVE

- SDI Participation: may argue that this would entangle Allies in support for wider SDI concept.
- Chemical Weapons: may seek sympathetic hearing for SPD/SED proposals for a chemical weapon-free zone in Europe.

YOUR RESPONSE

- SDI Participation: UK expects to share in SDI research, but any deployment a matter for negotiation. Distinction accepted by US at Camp David, basis of UK policy.
- Chemical Weapons: share commitment to abolition. But regional ban would remove pressure for global ban. Some key verification issues not addressed.



PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DR VOGEL: 2 JULY

BACKGROUND

East/West Relations

1. Willi Brandt visited Moscow from 26-29 May (report in Moscow telno 750 is attached) and met Gorbachev on 27 May. Appears to have been conciliatory and sympathetic to Soviet views throughout.

Inner-German Relations

1. During the formal hiatus after Honecker called off his first visit to the FRG last September, the SED (GDR ruling Communist party) intensified its contacts with the SPD partly to show Kohl what he was missing on the political front; FRG/GDR economic/commercial relations are good. Kohl caught up with Honecker in Moscow on 12 March.

2. Some SPD politicians (not Vogel) have argued for amendment to the FRG Constitution deleting the German aspiration to reunification. This would suit the GDR - but such radical change would leave West Berlin looking like a passing phenomenon rather than a permanently democratic city.

3. At their meeting in East Berlin on 16 May, Vogel invited Honecker to improve the GDR's poor human rights record: as a rule, only GDR pensioners are allowed to visit the FRG. (The Foreign Secretary made the same point in East Berlin on 8-10 April). Honecker and Vogel also discussed the SED/SPD draft agreement on chemical weapons (see below) and Honecker raised again the demands he made in a speech at Gera (GDR) in 1980 as conditions for normal relations with the FRG:

- (a) FRG recognition of separate GDR nationality;
- (b) up-grading the permanent representations in Bonn and East Berlin to Embassies;
- (c) delimitation of the GDR/FRG border, where it follows the course



of the river Elbe;

(d) closure of the Salzgitter centre for observing GDR human rights violations (eg shootings at the Wall).

Honecker may calculate (rightly) that the chances of GDR success on (c) and (d) would improve if the SPD were in power. (a) and (b) would require a major amendment of the FRG Constitution - unattractive to any likely government in 1987.

4. Berlin UK has 4000 soldiers and airmen committed to defence of Berlin. Prime Minister's visit 1982; HM The Queen 1978. As an ex-Berlin politician, Vogel should appreciate importance of maintaining Berlin status, with attendant Allied supreme authority.

Arms Control

1. SDI: subject of intense domestic debate in FRG. SPD strongly opposed on strategic, arms control, technical and resource grounds, both to SDI concept and to Allied participation in research.

2. Chemical weapons: proposals agreed in June between the SPD and SED (GDR ruling party) for a Chemical-Weapon-Free-Zone in Europe technically inadequate: do not address destruction of stocks, non-production, or Soviet (stand-off) threat.

3. INF: SPD are committed to negotiate withdrawal of INF deployed in FRG. Have called for moratorium on deployment while Geneva talks in progress.

4. NWFZ: SPD believe negotiations to reduce nuclear weapons in Europe should explore the Palme Commission's call for limited nuclear free zone 150 km wide on each side of the inner German border within a framework of a "security partnership" between the two military blocs. SPD may seek framework agreement on NWFZ in central Europe with GDR governing party - the SED.

5. NOFUN: SPD believe should be agreement on renunciation of use of force - both nuclear and conventional - which should include

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declaration of no first use of nuclear weapons (NOFUN). This sits rather oddly with Vogel's address to NATO Council in February when he stated that the policy of flexible response must remain until there is valid and convincing alternative.



THE SPD IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC

Summary

1. Current speculation about the SPD's possible return to power in the 1987 Federal Election, together with the visit to London in July of their present leader, Dr Hans-Jochen Vogel, provide an opportunity for an assessment of the party's prospects. (Para 1)
2. The SPD's recent successes in regional elections have boosted morale, but at Federal level the party lacks policies, a Coalition partner, and good leadership. These gaps make it unlikely that it will recover strongly enough to pose a serious threat by 1987. (Paras 2-4)
3. The policy problems are deep-seated. The Party has no credible economic policies, and little prospect of developing any. There are doubts about the soundness of their foreign and security policies, especially the commitment to NATO. If the Government can stick an anti-American label on the SPD, it would be severely damaging to their electoral prospects. (Paras 5-12)
4. In some Länder the SPD can govern alone, but they have never secured an absolute majority at Federal level. To govern in Bonn they need a Coalition partner. The chances of the FDP switching back to them in the immediate future are slight. The Greens are no alternative, despite earlier illusions that they might be. (Paras 13-15)
5. An outstanding leader might overcome these problems. But the SPD have none. Schmidt's departure has left a huge gap. For all his qualities, Vogel is not the man to lead the party back to power in Bonn. The rest of the 'old guard' are discredited: the young blood very short on experience. (Paras 16-17)

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6. If the SPD cannot realistically expect to win the 1987 Federal election their time will surely come again, perhaps in 1991. Meanwhile they remain the only significant opposition party, and it is in our interest to maintain contact with them. (Paras 18-19)

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BRITISH EMBASSY,

BONN.

7 June 1985

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The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign &
Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
London SW1

Sir,

THE SPD IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC

1. Recent victories by the SPD in Land and district elections, the continued clumsiness of the Bonn Coalition and the notion that the CDU/CSU might dump Chancellor Kohl have raised the question whether the SPD might after all win the Federal election in February 1987. I think this is unlikely. But with Dr Hans-Jochen Vogel, the leader of the SPD Parliamentary Party and at present a front runner as their candidate for Chancellor in 1987, due to visit London next month for talks with the Prime Minister and yourself, this may be a good moment to assess the SPD's prospects in detail.

2. When Chancellor Schmidt's Coalition collapsed in September 1982, Herbert Wehner - arguably the politician to whom, with Adenauer, post-war democracy in the Federal Republic owes most - said that the SPD faced 15 years in the wilderness. Its crushing defeat in the Federal election in 1983 (its support then was the lowest for 20 years) and a string of poor showings at the polls over the subsequent two years, culminating with a dismal result in the 1984 European Parliamentary election, seemed to bear out that judgement. During this period the SPD lost support

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steadily to the Greens. It failed to extract any advantage from the numerous mistakes made by the Federal Government. Its leadership looked weak and ineffective. As I said in my Annual Review for 1984, the Zeitgeist did not seem to favour a party with the style and traditions of the SPD.

3. Then, in March this year, the SPD produced a minor sensation by winning an overall majority in the Land election in the Saar, ousting the CDU there for the first time in 30 years. On the same day it made substantial gains in the district elections in Hesse. It polled very badly in Berlin but could argue special circumstances. Last month it achieved a massive increase in its majority in North Rhine Westphalia, the largest Land of the Federal Republic, where the CDU showed its worst ever results. Brandt promptly claimed that the SPD were back with a serious chance for the Federal elections in 1987. What had changed?

4. I think myself that little had changed. Chancellor Kohl had always warned the public that his government's economic policies would initially be painful, and his party that they would be unpopular; and so they have proved. The swing away from the CDU to the SPD was thus predictable. It has been magnified by a decline in support for the Greens, leading to a natural return of votes from them to the SPD. Even so, the SPD's recent successes are mainly mid-term protest: this has always been a marked feature of the political cycle here. The real surprise is that they took so long to achieve. They have put the Bonn Coalition on to the defensive and led to squabbling between and within the Coalition partners on what to do next. They have put intense pressure on Chancellor Kohl personally, and he might yet be dropped by his own party in favour of a more decisive leader. But the SPD too remain in a difficult situation. Their main problems are: lack of credible

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economic and security policies; lack of a Coalition partner; and lack of adequate leadership. Despite their current revival, I think it unlikely that the SPD will recover strongly enough at Federal level to pose a serious threat to the Government by 1987.

SPD policies

5. The SPD's policy problems are deep-seated. In the last years of the old Coalition the SPD had lost its way. The euphoria which had swept Brandt to power in 1969 had long since evaporated. Bitter rivalries had emerged between the left and the right of the party, in particular over economic policy and defence. The left were impatient with the slow pace of economic reform: the right were anxious not to lose touch with the middle ground, without which the modern Federal Republic cannot be governed. These rivalries were aggravated when the second oil price shock and the inflation that followed reinforced the need for financial consolidation. The left wanted to combat growing unemployment through massive state-financed employment schemes, without compensatory cuts in government expenditure elsewhere. The right, and the FDP, opposed any further escalation in government borrowing which had already grown by 450% in 10 years.

6. In security policy, the left of the SPD still hankered after the neutralist option which the party as a whole had seen in the 1950s as the best way to achieve German reunification and ease East/West tension. Anti-Americanism was a powerful element in their make-up. In the NATO Double Decision and the campaign against INF deployment the left found a focus for these attitudes. By early 1982 it had become clear that Schmidt had lost the support of the SPD as a whole for his security policies. Had not the Coalition collapsed in 1982 over economic policy, it would have done so over INF in the following year.

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7. In the 1983 Federal election the SPD's programme was decisively rejected. Since then, the party has been casting about for credible alternative policies. It has launched a 4-year project to modernise its Bad Godesberg Programme of 1959. It plans to complete a review of its economic policies by 1986. There is a major debate on alternative alliance strategies: a policy document is due later this year. So far, all this activity has merely underlined the continuing divisions within the party.

8. In economic policy the SPD remains formally committed to the ideas which were so categorically rejected by the electorate in 1983: state intervention, government-financed employment schemes, a shorter working week. (Nationalisation is missing from this list; it has never had much appeal in the modern SPD.) The Party Conference last year tried to begin the process of updating, but the old rifts between left and right were immediately apparent. The result was an unhappy compound of demands for stronger government intervention and control of investment; support for the social market economy; and calls for a new "third way" between capitalism and a bureaucratically planned economy to achieve "ecological re-structuring" and full employment. Whatever such formulae may mean, they have not shaken the general belief that the SPD remain a poor second to the CDU/CSU in economic competence.

9. How then should one explain the SPD's success in 2 out of 3 recent Land elections? In the Saar and North Rhine-Westphalia, the SPD won, despite their lack of credible economic alternatives, because they were able to present the structural problems of both Länder as the responsibility of the Bonn government, not of the Land. They also capitalised on short-term discontent with the impact of the Federal Government's consolidation policies, which have cut the average family's income by some DM 200 per month.

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And in the two Länder where they won, they had the more attractive candidates. (The same factor accounted for their failure in Berlin, where the boot was on the other foot.) Neither Rau's victory in North Rhine-Westphalia, nor certainly Lafontaine's in the Saar, was an endorsement of the Federal SPD's economic alternatives.

10. As the SPD presses on with its attempt to rethink its economic policy, the underlying divisions are bound to re-emerge. In a Federal election, where the SPD's policies are subject to much closer scrutiny, these will be ruthlessly exposed. The CDU/CSU will benefit accordingly. But the government cannot afford to be complacent. Unemployment is a critical issue. As NRW showed, it is beginning to cost the CDU votes. The CDU/CSU rank and file are already calling for reflation. The Cabinet itself is split between "wets" and "dries". The result has been a damaging impression of disunity. It might yet cost the Chancellor his job. But even if it does, Stoltenberg - his most likely successor - will continue to determine economic policy and I would not expect any major U turns, although there will be some trimming at the margin to contain rank and file unrest. (CDU HQ are already talking about large scale Federal aid to boost the construction industry in Lower Saxony in time for the Land elections there next spring.) If growth falls this year well below expectations (currently 2.5%), or if unemployment rises sharply, more substantial measures are likely. But with fiscal measures already taken due to have a reflationary effect next year, I see no reason for believing that in 1987 the electorate will decide that the SPD are better placed than the CDU/CSU to solve the country's economic problems.

11. In foreign and security policy, too, the SPD remain vulnerable. These issues play little part at Land level: in Federal elections they are important. The SPD's rejection of INF stationing in 1983 opened

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the prospect that the party would go on to question other key aspects of NATO strategy. Formally they have not done so. SPD leaders have stressed that rejection of INF deployment was linked to firm support for NATO itself and for the Bundeswehr. A small minority in the party is neutralist, but the clear majority believes that FRG membership of NATO is necessary. I see no reason to think this majority will change. But there has been some worrying fringe activity. Lafontaine, the victor of Saarbrücken, is a real pink: he advocates the FRG's withdrawal from the integrated NATO military structure. The debate on alternative strategies has thrown up some ideas (on no first use, chemical weapons and disarmament) which are markedly at odds with current NATO thinking. More generally, the SPD still give the impression of putting the US and USSR on a moral par. They view the policies of the present US Administration with a deep suspicion which men like Brandt and Ehmke have made extremely plain. Many in the SPD regard NATO itself as a necessary but unwelcome complication in the main business of East/West detente and rapprochement between the two Germanies. As a result, the man in the street shares the CDU/CSU's view that the SPD's defence and foreign policies are unsound.

12. This is dangerous ground for the SPD. One constant in this country ever since the formation of the FRG has been the huge and steady majority in favour of the Western Alliance and the EC. The SPD's opposition to both in the 1950s condemned it to permanent opposition. It was only by changing its stance in 1960 that the SPD paved the way for its return to Federal power. By now enabling the government to reawaken doubts about its commitment to NATO the SPD has opened a vulnerable flank. Its leaders recognise the electoral danger, but the mistakes have already been made and the CDU/CSU will exploit them. In the run-up to 1987 I expect the government to do everything possible to portray the SPD as inherently anti-American, gullible about the Soviet Union and a threat to the FRG's security.

/if these



If these labels could be made to stick, the SPD's prospects would be seriously hurt: "anti-Americanism" in particular is a real disqualification in this country, and one not easy for the SPD to repudiate.

The need for a Coalition partner

13. The SPD's policy problems therefore cast real doubts over its electability in 1987. Even more serious is its present lack of a coalition partner. In some Länder the party is strong enough to govern alone, but its strength is unevenly distributed. It is predominant in NRW, Hamburg and Bremen. But in Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland Palatinate - three of the largest Länder - it can barely count on 30%. At Federal level, the SPD has never secured an absolute majority. Its best result was 45.8% - a freakishly high figure obtained in 1972 when Brandt's very popular Ostpolitik was under crude assault from the CDU/CSU. Its average since 1960 has been a mere 40%. To govern in Bonn, therefore, the SPD has always needed a Coalition partner, usually the FDP.

14. The chances of the FDP switching back to the SPD are currently negligible. The FDP has only just recovered from the traumas caused by the switch to the CDU in 1982, and will not want to repeat the experience in a hurry. In any case, it has formed itself into a party of strict financial orthodoxy well to the right of the CDU. Differences between the FDP and the SPD are far wider now than when the old Coalition broke up. This is personified in the replacement of Genscher by Bangemann as party chairman.

15. The SPD had hoped that the Greens might provide an alternative. The majority in the party now see that they do not. Admittedly, the Greens and the SPD have been able to work together at local and, briefly, at Land level. But the differences between the two parties, both on specific policies and on the philosophy of government, are enormous even at local level: higher up the Federal ladder they become unbridgeable. In any case, the SPD have come to realise

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that a deal with the Greens would be counter-productive. It might give the SPD the left. But it would lose it the middle, and every Federal election since 1949 has shown that a party needs to control the centre to govern the FRG.

16. In time the Greens may develop along more orthodox lines as discussed in my despatch of 18 January. Things could then change and SPD/Green cooperation might then be possible. But this is a distant vision. At present it seems more likely that the Greens will disappear at Federal level, and their support return to the SPD (from where it has mainly come). Were this to happen, however, the resultant total would still not be enough to enable the SPD to govern alone. As I say, the left-of-centre potential in the FRG is barely 45%. With the Greens or without, the SPD at present have little hope of a majority.

Leadership

17. These problems might conceivably be overcome by an outstanding leader. But the SPD does not have one. Schmidt's departure has left a huge gap: his open letter to Kohl last month was a telling reminder of what the party lost when he retired to Hamburg. Vogel ran a good personal campaign as Chancellor-candidate in 1983. His leadership of the Parliamentary party since then has been efficient, but he inspires neither enthusiasm nor affection. You will find him serious, thoughtful, modest, measured and illuminating. He will be a key figure in the SPD leadership for a long while yet; but he is not the man to lead the SPD back to power in Bonn.

18. Rau's success in North Rhine-Westphalia has led to speculation that he might replace Vogel as SPD Chancellor-candidate for 1987. He is obviously reluctant to run, preferring to keep his powder dry for 1991. He has charisma but no Federal experience. His weaknesses will show up in the Federal ring, just as Kohl's have

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done since he moved from Mainz to Bonn. Brandt looks increasingly old, vain and cantankerous. Apel has been discredited by his defeat in Berlin. Börner, the Minister-President in Hesse, has got stuck over his attempts to do a deal with the Greens. Koschnick, the Mayor of Bremen, is neither physically well nor the force he once looked like becoming. Of the younger blood, von Dohnanyi's intellectualism is well suited to his present job in Hamburg but it lacks broader appeal. Lafontaine's unorthodox views on NATO probably rule him out for the top position. The rest of the field look very short on experience.

Conclusion

19. As things stand, the SPD cannot realistically expect to win the 1987 Federal election. For all their public claims to the contrary, almost all in the party privately accept this. Their recent successes in regional elections have given morale a boost which it certainly needed. But the party still has a long way to go before it can look like a credible alternative government of the country.

20. Yet the SPD is the largest and oldest Social Democratic party in Western Europe. Its time will come again, perhaps in the next election but one in 1991. Meanwhile it remains the only significant opposition party. We must therefore maintain our contacts with it, and especially with its present and possible future leaders. Our aim should be to encourage them to develop moderate and sensible policies. This is in any case their only possible route back to power in Bonn.

21. I am sending copies of this despatch to HM Ambassadors at NATO and EC posts, Moscow, Washington and East Berlin; to the UK Permanent Representative to NATO and the EC; and to the British Commandant in Berlin and HM Consuls-General in the Federal Republic.

I am Sir,
Yours faithfully

J L Bullard

J L Bullard

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VOGEL, DR HANS-JOCHEN

Leader of the SPD Parliamentary Party. SPD Chancellor candidate in 1983.

Born in 1926 in Gottingen but in all other respects a Bavarian. Military Service 1943-45, wounded and imprisoned briefly. Read law at Marburg and prefers to be called 'Dr'. Engaged in legal work in Bavarian Civil Service 1952-58. Became a Munich City Councillor 1958 and was Oberbürgermeister (Mayor) from 1960-72. He was responsible for the arrangements for the Olympic Games and is still proud of his achievement in building the Munich underground.

Elected to the Bundestag 1972 and appointed Federal Minister of Town and Country Planning in the Brandt Government. Minister of Justice under Schmidt in 1974. Acquired increasing influence in the Cabinet as one of the few Ministers whose horizon extended beyond his own department. When Stobbe fell from power in Berlin in January 1981, Vogel was the only man of sufficient stature the SPD could find to lead a rescue action in Berlin. In his six months as Governing Mayor from January to June 1981, Vogel made a strong impact. But public disillusion with his party and the rioting associated with the squatters, cost him the election. As Parliamentary leader in opposition he was tough but fair. His main aim was to cleanse and reform the Berlin SPD.

When Schmidt decided not to stand as the SPD Chancellor candidate for the Federal elections in March 1983, the only possible alternatives were Rau or Vogel. Rau quickly gave way to Vogel although he was regarded by his enemies as something of an opportunist for having shifted steadily left-wards in step with the changing power pattern in the party.

As Chancellor candidate, Vogel's main concern was to present the SPD as a united and convincing alternative to the government. Although the result of the election was the worst for the SPD in over 20 years, Vogel was not thought to have managed the campaign badly and he was unanimously elected as leader of the SPD parliamentary party in the new Bundestag. Vogel now has the difficult task of trying to hold

the SPD together in parliament and in the country. He has played a difficult hand well. Yet, although none doubt his competence or abilities, he fails to carry conviction as a possible alternative Chancellor. If it was felt that the SPD had a fighting chance in the 1987 Federal elections, Rau (victor in the recent North Rhine Westphalia Land elections) would be likely to replace Vogel as Chancellor candidate.

HUBER, FRAU ANTJE

SPD MP, former Federal Minister.

Born 1924 and brought up in Berlin. Studied Political Economy. Subsequently worked as a journalist. Elected to the Bundestag in 1969. Served as Federal Minister of Youth, Family and Health 1976-82. Now Deputy Chairman and senior SPD representative on the Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee (equivalent to our Select Committee on Foreign Affairs).

Married to a journalist.

HANTCH, HERR KLAUS

SPD MEP.

Born 1936. PhD in Political Science from Free University, Berlin. Personal Assistant to Minister President of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) in 1969. 1970-76, Spokesman for NRW Science Ministry. Lecturer at Duisburg University 1976. Elected in 1979 to European Parliament where he is SPD Spokesman on Foreign policy and EC affairs.

ZEPTEK, HERR BERNARD

Born 1948. Career Diplomat.

Seconded since late 1984 to SPD Parliamentary Party as Foreign Affairs Adviser covering East/West issues and relations with the US and Western Europe.

Regularly accompanies Vogel abroad.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

31 January, 1985

CCPC CSP

①

Prime Minister
Agree to
see him?
COP
3/1

Dear Charles,

Possible Visit by Hans-Jochen Vogel

Our Embassy in Bonn have informed us that Hans-Jochen Vogel, Leader of the SPD, the main German opposition Party, wishes to visit Britain on 1-4 July.

The Foreign Secretary plans to issue an official invitation, and to see Vogel during his visit. Vogel has expressed interest in seeing the Prime Minister, and Sir Geoffrey hopes that the Prime Minister will be able to agree to this.

Yes
no

Although the SPD's immediate prospects are uncertain, Vogel is by virtue of his position an influential politician who cannot be ruled out as a future Chancellor. The party's priorities and concerns help to determine the agenda of foreign policy debate in Germany.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

31 JAN 1967

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C





10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 February 1985

Visit by Hans-Jochen Vogel

Thank you for your letter of 31 January about the visit by Hans-Jochen Vogel between 1 and 4 July.

BFI The Prime Minister agrees in principle to see Mr. Vogel. You will wish to talk to Caroline Ryder about a possible time.

(C.D. Powell)

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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