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SPECIAL EPC MINISTERIAL: HOSTAGE POLICY

SUMMARY

1. GERMAN ATTEMPT TO SWING A PROPOSAL ON THE TWELVE TO APPROACH IRAQ THROUGH ALGERIA, TUNISIA, AND JORDAN TO RELEASE HOSTAGES. BLOCKED BY UK, WITH SCANT SUPPORT. PRESIDENCY CONCLUDES THAT ACTION WITH THE UN SHOULD TAKE PRIORITY. PRESIDENCY DEMARCHE AT UN TO TAKE PLACE ON 6 NOVEMBER, FOLLOWED BY MEETING OF POLITICAL DIRECTORS AND FURTHER MINISTERIAL DISCUSSION ON 12 NOVEMBER.

DETAIL

2. DE MICHELIS SAID HE HAD CONVENED THE MEETING AT DUTCH, BELGIAN AND GERMAN REQUEST. BUT HE HIMSELF ALSO THOUGHT IT USEFUL TO DISCUSS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HOSTAGE SITUATION. THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS TO IRAQ IN THE LAST FEW DAYS: JOERGENSEN, THE FORMER DANISH P.M., BRANDT, DE CLERQ WITH A BELGIAN RED CROSS DELEGATION, THREE IRISH PARLIAMENTARIANS, NAKASONE, THE FORMER JAPANESE P.M. AND A GROUP OF ITALIAN GREEN PARTY MPS. HE THEREFORE THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT THAT THE TWELVE EXCHANGED OPINIONS PRIOR TO THE REGULAR FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL ON HOW TO MAINTAIN UNITY AND TO PRESS FOR THE RELEASE OF ALL HOSTAGES.

3. VAN DEN BROEK RECALLED THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE ROME EUROPEAN COUNCIL: NO GOVERNMENT MISSIONS AND PRIVATE MISSIONS TO BE DISCOURAGED. SADDAM HUSSEIN MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO WEDGE-DRIVE. EVERYONE WANTED THEIR HOSTAGES RELEASED: BUT SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS PUT PRESSURE ON OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE NATIONAL INITIATIVES. HE HIMSELF HAD TO MEET THE FAMILIES OF HOSTAGES TOO. DELEGATIONS LED BY PROMINENT POLITICIANS HAD CERTAINLY BEEN IN THE MINDS OF THOSE DRAFTING THE ROME CONCLUSIONS. HE DID NOT DOUBT THE HONOURABLE INTENTIONS OF THOSE SUCH AS BRANDT: BUT THEIR MISSIONS WOULD BE ABUSED BY SADDAM HUSSEIN FOR HIS OWN PURPOSES. SO HE HOPED

THE MEETING WOULD REAFFIRM THE COMMITMENTS AGREED IN ROME, AND PERHAPS RENEW THE APPEAL TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL TO INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF THE HOSTAGES: ONLY HE COULD ACT ON BEHALF OF ALL. BUT IF SADDAM WAS ALLOWED TO DAMAGE WESTERN UNITY THROUGH EXPLOITING PRIVATE MISSIONS, THE END RESULT WOULD BE TO BRING THE MILITARY OPTION CLOSER.

4. GENSCHER ARGUED THAT THERE WERE TWO MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION: WHAT COULD BE DONE FOR THE HOSTAGES, AND WHAT COULD BE DONE TO ACHIEVE A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS. ON THE FORMER, THE ROME SUMMIT HAD AGREED TO ASK THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO SEND A SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE. HE HAD SINCE SPOKEN TWICE TO PEREZ DE CUELLAR, WHO HAD SAID THAT SADDAM HAD REFUSED TO RECEIVE THE UN REPRESENTATIVE. THE TWELVE NOW HAD TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES. HE HAD NO OPINION TO OFFER ON VISITS BY SPECIAL MISSIONS FROM OTHER STATES. THE IMPORTANT POINT WAS THAT ALL COMPLIED WITH EC DECLARATIONS. THE HOSTAGES WERE NOT A MATTER FOR NEGOTIATION. ON THIS POINT, BRANDT WAS CLEAR: HE WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE, JUST REQUEST THE RELEASE OF ALL HOSTAGES INCLUDING, OF COURSE, AMERICANS.

5. GENSCHER CONTINUED THAT HE HAD A NEW PROPOSAL. HE THOUGHT THE ITALIANS AS PRESIDENCY, OR THE TROIKA, SHOULD ASK THREE ARAB STATES WHO HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH IRAQ BUT SUPPORTED THE WESTERN POSITION TO INTERVENE WITH SADDAM ON BEHALF OF THE HOSTAGES: NAMELY JORDAN, TUNISIA AND ALGERIA. THIS WOULD SHOW WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION THAT GOVERNMENTS WERE STILL WORKING ON BEHALF OF THE HOSTAGES. AS FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT, HE SUGGESTED THAT POLITICAL DIRECTORS MEET BEFORE THE NEXT FAC TO CONSIDER OPTIONS.

6. MOLLER (DENMARK) ALSO RECALLED THE TEXT OF THE ROME CONCLUSIONS. THE DANISH GOVERNMENT HAD NOT (NOT) ENCOURAGED JOERGENSEN TO GO: INDEED HE WAS STILL STUCK IN AMMAN, WITHOUT A VISA. ON THE GERMAN PROPOSALS, HE SUPPORTED AN EARLY MEETING OF POLITICAL DIRECTORS. THE OTHER IDEA, CONCERNING A MISSION TO THREE ARAB STATES, MERITED FURTHER STUDY, AND COULD ALSO BE EXAMINED BY POLITICAL DIRECTORS. BUT THE COMMITMENTS REACHED IN ROME SHOULD BE MAINTAINED.

7. MR GAREL-JONES ENDORSED VAN DEN BROEK'S COMMENTS. SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS USING THE HOSTAGES TO UNDERMINE WESTERN UNITY. THE ROME CONCLUSIONS HAD BEEN GOOD: THE EC SHOULD HOLD TO THEM. OTHERWISE THE CREDIBILITY OF THE EC WOULD BE UNDERMINED: SADDAM'S DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION WOULD BE COMPROMISED: AND THE IRAQIS WOULD BE HANDED A MAJOR PROPOGANDA COUP. THERE HAD BEEN NO LESS THAN TEN UNSC

RESOLUTIONS, REPRESENTING CUMULATIVELY A POWERFUL RESPONSE TO SADDAM'S AGGRESSION. THE PROBLEM WITH THE GERMAN PROPOSAL WAS THAT IT OUTFLANKED THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S EFFORTS: THE WEST SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK THROUGH HIM. THIS WAS THE FIRST REAL TEST FOR THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY REMAINED FIRM, RESOLUTE AND UNITED.

8. FERNANDEZ-ORDONEZ (SPAIN) AGREED THAT THE ROME CONCLUSIONS SHOULD BE UPHELD. BUT HE SAW MERIT IN AN EARLY MEETING OF POLITICAL DIRECTORS TO DISCUSS OPTIONS FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION, AND FURTHER WAYS OF HELPING THE HOSTAGES.

9. PINHEIRO (PORTUGAL) ENDORSED VAN DEN BROEK'S STATEMENT BUT ALSO THOUGHT THAT GENSCHER'S IDEAS SHOULD BE STUDIED CAREFULLY. THIS MIGHT BE THE LAST CHANCE TO FIND A POLITICAL SOLUTION.

10. DE BEAUCE (FRANCE) SAID THAT THE RELEASE OF FRENCH HOSTAGES HAD NOT ALTERED FRENCH PERCEPTIONS. THE PROBLEM CONCERNED ALL HOSTAGES. HE AGREED WITH VAN DEN BROEK'S SUGGESTION THAT THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL BE ASKED TO TRY AGAIN. IF HE FAILED, THE GERMAN PROPOSAL SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

11. COLLINS (IRELAND) SAID THAT THE OCCURRENCE OF THE MEETING WAS PROOF THAT SADDAM WAS SUCCEEDING IN DESTABILIZING THE COALITION. HE WAS DISTURBED BY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. IN LINE WITH THE ROME CONCLUSIONS, HE HAD DISCOURAGED IRISH MPS FROM UNDERTAKING MISSIONS TO BAGHDAD. BUT VISITS SUCH AS THOSE BY BRANDT, CHEYSSON AND HEATH MADE THIS LINE HARD TO EXPLAIN TO THE FAMILIES OF HOSTAGES. THE EC HAD TO STICK TOGETHER AND DO SOMETHING: HENCE HE WELCOMED GENSCHER'S PROPOSAL.

12. GOEBBELS (LUXEMBOURG) STRESSED THAT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD NOT ENCOURAGE PRIVATE MISSIONS. THE EC SHOULD WORK THROUGH THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL AND ASK HIM TO TRY AGAIN TO SEND A SPECIAL ENVOY. PAPOULIAS (GREECE) REAFFIRMED THE ROME CONCLUSIONS AND WELCOMED BOTH THE DUTCH AND THE GERMAN PROPOSALS. ROELANTS (BELGIUM) CLAIMED THAT BELGIUM MPS HAD BEEN DISCOURAGED FROM VISITING IRAQ. DE CLERQ WAS NOT GOING. POLITICAL DIRECTORS SHOULD DISCUSS THE GERMAN PROPOSALS.

13. DE MICHELIS ATTEMPTED TO DRAW FOUR CONCLUSIONS, FOR PRESIDENCY USE ORALLY AFTER THE MEETING:

- THE OBJECTIVE WAS THE RELEASE OF ALL HOSTAGES. ATTEMPTS TO

DRIVE NATIONAL DEALS ON HOSTAGES BROUGHT THE MILITARY OPTION CLOSER

- ALL ELEMENTS OF THE ROME CONCLUSIONS SHOULD BE REAFFIRMED. PRIVATE MISSIONS SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED: THE HOSTAGES WERE NOT A MATTER FOR NEGOTIATION

- THE TWELVE AGREED TO ASK THE PRESIDENCY TO PRESS THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO SEND A SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO IRAQ

- POLITICAL DIRECTORS WOULD CONVENE SOON TO CONSIDER THE PROSPECTS FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION AND TO EXAMINE POSSIBILITIES FOR NEW INITIATIVES ON HOSTAGES, INCLUDING THE GERMAN PROPOSAL - WHICH SOME HAD WELCOMED, BUT OTHERS HAD DOUBTS ABOUT.

14. GENSCHER REITERATED THAT BRANDT WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE ON HOSTAGES ('THE NON-NEGOTIABLE'). HE WAS OTHERWISE CONTENT WITH THE CONCLUSIONS. VAN DEN BROEK WARNED AGAINST SUGGESTING THAT SOME MISSIONS WERE ACCEPTABLE BECAUSE THEY WOULD NOT 'NEGOTIATE', WHILE OTHERS WERE NOT. A BETTER VARIATION OF THE GERMAN PROPOSAL WOULD BE TO ASK THE THREE ARAB COUNTRIES TO PERSUADE SADDAM HUSSEIN TO MEET THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPRESENTATIVE.

15. MR GAREL-JONES SAID THAT IT WAS ALL VERY WELL TO REITERATE OUR COMMITMENT TO THE TWELVE DECLARATION. BUT WHAT WAS BEING PROPOSED WAS THAT WE SEND SUCH A MISSION OURSELVES. THE COMMUNITY WOULD BE IN DANGER OF BEING A LAUGHING STOCK. FURTHERMORE, ALGERIA, TUNISIA AND JORDAN HAD ADOPTED AN EQUIVOCAL ATTITUDE TO THE CRISIS. HE EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN ABOUT THE GERMAN PROPOSALS WHICH NOT ONLY SEEMED TO SHORT-CIRCUIT THE UNITED NATIONS BUT WOULD HAND A PROPOGANDA COUP TO SADDAM HUSSEIN. HE PROPOSED THAT A DEMARCHE BE MADE TO THE UN BUT THAT NO ACTION BE TAKEN ON THE GENSCHER PROPOSAL UNTIL THE PRESIDENCY HAD REPORTED BACK ON HIS EFFORTS AT THE UN.

16. MOLLER SUGGESTED THAT GERMAN IDEAS SHOULD NOT BE MENTIONED TO THE PRESS. GENSCHER DISSENTED: HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT WHATEVER ANYBODY ELSE MIGHT DO HE CERTAINLY INTENDED TO MENTION THEM TO HIS PRESS. HE WAS NOT PROPOSING NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH ALGERIA ETC. WITH IRAQ, ONLY PRESSURE. MR GAREL-JONES SAID THAT IF THE PRESIDENCY PRESENTED THE MEETING AS AGREEING TO THE CONCEPT OF NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH THESE THREE COUNTRIES, THE UK WOULD HAVE TO SAY PUBLICLY THAT IT DISAGREED.

17. DE MICHELIS DREW DISCUSSIONS TO A CONCLUSION BY SUGGESTING THAT

HE SAY TO THE PRESS THAT, IN ADDITION TO A PRESIDENCY DEMARCHE AT THE UN, THERE WOULD BE CONTACTS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS (UNSPECIFIED) TO GET THEM TO PRESS SADDAM TO ACCEPT A VISIT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERALS' SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE.

COMMENT

18. WE WERE NOT FACED WITH A GERMAN/ITALIAN FAIT ACCOMPLI ON EC COVER FOR THE BRANDT MISSION. NEVERTHELESS GENSCHER WAS IMPATIENTLY DETERMINED TO BE SEEN FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION TO SECURE AGREEMENT ON A GERMAN INITIATIVE MOVING FORWARD EC DIPLOMATIC ACTION ON THE HOSTAGES. MR GAREL-JONES WITH DUTCH AND SOME DANISH SUPPORT MADE CLEAR THAT WE REGARDED ANY QUASI-DIPLOMATIC OVERTURE TO IRAQ WITH GRAVE DISQUIET. DE MICHELIS, SUMMING UP, CONCENTRATED SATISFACTORILY ON GIVING PRIORITY TO SUPPORT FOR UN ACTIVITY. MR GAREL-JONES SPOKE WITH HIM AFTER THE MEETING TO CONFIRM THAT HE WOULD BRIEF THE PRESS IN THIS SENSE. THERE IS NEVERTHELESS A CLEAR DANGER THAT GENSCHER, AND PERHAPS SOME OTHERS, WILL LEAK REPORTS OF THE PROPOSALS FOR INVOLVING ALGERIA AND OTHERS.

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