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Kent Simpson (m.o.d.);
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BONN.

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12 February 1990

✓ P. Sporn
CS
Mr. Fraser
Mr. Lidington
Mr. Rafter
Mr. C...
Mr. Keen
Research Dept

Dear John,

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OSKAR LAFONTAINE

1. After his resounding victory in the Saarland elections on 28 January, Lafontaine is virtually certain to become the SPD's Chancellor candidate for the Federal election in December. With so much riding on the outcome, and increasing optimism in the SPD that in a unified Germany they would be the largest party, his personality and policies are a matter of great interest. Few people ever felt that Vogel was the man to lead the SPD back to power. Lafontaine could be.

Personality

2. I saw a good deal of him in the early 1980s, and have seen him again from time to time over the last two years. He is 47 this year, short, plump and fresh faced; and through his confident bearing he is a striking figure - once described by Willy Brandt as a cross between Napoleon and Mussolini. A considerable orator, capable of real warmth and even passion, he is very much the unpredictable individualist. To his enemies he is a clever but light-weight opportunist, prone to shooting from the hip; to his friends he is an intelligent strategist, whose sometimes abrupt changes of course reflect his keen sense of the popular mood and his readiness to listen to criticism. Something of a hedonist, he enjoys good food and art (a Turner enthusiast). Twice divorced, his personal

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life is viewed with distaste by the more conservative parts of German society; but with his distinctly modern image he has appeal for the young. His whole approach is very much *con brio*: he displays an energetic confidence which at its best is attractive, though it can look brash or arrogant. He is in many ways a striking contrast to Kohl: one might say that Lafontaine is agile, brilliant and changeable, while Kohl is solid, dull and consistent.

Principles and Policies

3. Julian Hartland-Swann, who has studied Lafontaine for four years, commented recently on the difficulty of determining whether he has any deep or long-term principles. Many political observers here would agree with that. Part of the problem is that Lafontaine is always ready to declare new positions in order to strengthen his appeal or secure tactical advantage. He certainly is an effective political tactician. In the Saarland over the past ten years he has skilfully undermined the support first of the Greens and then of the Republikaner, not least by stealing some of their clothes. It was masterly political campaigning, but opportunism rather than sincere espousal of the ideas in question.

4. It would therefore be unwise to read too much into his current positions on policy. But you may nonetheless find it helpful to have the following snapshot of where he stands right now, before becoming Chancellor-candidate, on the main issues of interest to us.

5. An up-to-date idea of the flavour of his views can be gained from the "Ten Point Plan" he announced on 12 January:



- (1) Reduce military spending and cancel EFA.
- (2) End low flying by military aircraft.
- (3) Renounce the modernisation of short range nuclear weapons.
- (4) Reduce the length of military service.
- (5) Recognise the Polish Western border.
- (6) Change or abolish the law on pensions for foreigners....
- (7) (and) the law on aliens....
- (8) (and) the law on reception of refugees.
- (9) Conclude a social security agreement with the GDR.
- (10) (and) an economic support programme for the GDR.

6. In three policy areas in particular his views deserve closer study; the German Question, defence and the European Community.

The German Question

7. Official SPD policy on this subject, set out in the Berlin declaration of December 1989, calls for a confederation and "finally even a union of Federal States". More recently, as the situation in the GDR has continued to deteriorate and the SPD (East) have come out clearly in support of unity, the Federal SPD have concentrated on pressing for early economic and monetary union. A majority in the party, led by Brandt, now believes that the time for confederation has passed, and that unification in federation is inevitable. Lafontaine's own position is not clear. He is much less of a nationalist than Brandt, and there is evidence that his sympathies have been very much with those who wanted confederation. But he has deliberately kept a low profile, confining his public remarks on the German Question (see Annex A) to the issue of resettlers. (For the last fortnight

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or so he has been off the scene completely - in the south of France, allegedly considering whether to accept the offer to be Chancellor candidate.) With typical prescience, he decided, getting on for a year ago, that popular resentment about resettlers from the GDR and the favourable treatment meted out to them in the FRG would be a major electoral issue in 1990. Last autumn he started to speak out in favour of a more restrictive approach, arguing that it was misguided to encourage GDR citizens to emigrate to the FRG, and much better to give them incentives to stay at home. He was sharply criticised at first for this line of argument, even inside the SPD; but, with the rate of immigration from the GDR bidding fair to become increasingly controversial as 1990 wears on, he looks well placed to capitalise on the resentment that it can be expected to provoke. The best bet on his eventual position, given his readiness to move with public opinion, is that he will espouse unity and play on people's fears here about too many resettlers and the costs of saving the GDR economy.

Defence

8. INF stationing and defence was the subject which Lafontaine in the early 1980s used to break into national prominence from provincial politics - he was then Mayor of Saarbrücken (Annex B). His calls for the FRG to leave the integrated military structure of NATO were embellished by emotive references to the superpowers as nuclear terrorists and criminals. By 1987 he had toned down his position, and was calling for the nature of the integrated military structure to be changed to give the FRG a greater say in the use of systems based here. This was seen as trimming in preparation for his bid for the SPD leadership. He is now saying that the first thing an SPD Government would do is abolish low

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flying training by military aircraft over the FRG. He expects Soviet troop withdrawals from Europe to be matched by "the other Superpower". And he intends to redirect funds from defence to environmental protection. His reference to "the other Superpower" is characteristic of the anti-American stance he has taken over the years, as well as representative of the general tendency within the SPD to treat the USSR and USA as morally equivalent. He remains a committed opponent of nuclear weapons.

European Community

9. Lafontaine is Francophile and speaks good French, as one would expect of someone from the Saarland. He says his position on European integration is based on the 1924 Heidelberg programme of the SPD; the goal is a United States of Europe. He is convinced that the idea of a nation state has been overtaken by the process of European integration (see Annex C). He sees cooperation between Paris and Bonn as the nucleus of this process. He has stressed that the FRG's commitment to the EC has not been weakened by recent events in the GDR. He says that the SPD is for a European unification which includes Poland and the areas East of the Oder-Neisse as well as the GDR.

Conclusion

10. Lafontaine so far remains an enigma. His success in building up a position of national leadership from the slender base of the Saarland reflects his driving ambition and his undoubted skills as a politician. He has made several severe errors of judgement in his career, eg his premature bid for the party leadership after Brandt's resignation. But his talent for spotting a political

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trend and exploiting it with energy and results cannot be denied. He is likely to be a dangerous opponent for Kohl in the elections in December. If he won, the process of fusing the two German states and determining the new Germany's stance and policies would be led by a Chancellor far more unpredictable, and for us more problematic, than Kohl. And even if he loses he may well, given his youth, be a major figure in Germany throughout the nineties: possibly a crucially important figure if, as is possible, the SPD has a natural majority in a united Germany.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

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cc:

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QUOTES FROM LAFONTAINE ON RESETTLERS

1989:

My goal is that before they come they find a flat and a job ..
The GDR is in danger of becoming an old peoples home.
Unemployment and the housing shortage is rising here.

The special arrangements for resettlers (Aus + Über) are no longer justifiable after the breaching of the wall. Why should GDR citizens be entitled to social security as if they had been paying contributions for 40 years.

Removing the housing shortage here and in the GDR, reducing unemployment here and in the GDR, improving the family situation - these are more attractive themes than flags and songs.

There has always been discussion within the SPD on how to cooperate with the regime in GDR ... Over the years it has been proved that the only policies which are worthwhile are those which achieve something for the people, ie disarmament, a reduction in tension, the Helsinki process, a dialogue with the SED and the reform groups in the GDR.

1900:

There is still a series of laws which before the wall fell were justified, eg the pension law for foreigners, the refugee law, the emergency reception law. These laws contain huge incentives for GDR citizens to come here Kohl (because he has not changed these laws) is responsible for the continuing stream of refugees, the rise in unemployment here, the housing shortage and the increased difficulties in the GDR.

QUOTES FROM LAFONTAINE ON DEFENCE

1982

Unilateral disarmament is more promising than the negotiating ritual so far.

1983

I'm getting closer and closer to pacifism.

Employers are no longer called upon today to work in the production of war equipment. The old idea of production strikes must be resurrected. The political strike is a legitimate means against arming.

The FRG must dare to leave the military integration of NATO and become nuclear free.

I describe both superpowers, the USSR and the USA, as nuclear terrorists.

1984

We must leave the military integration of NATO. It is unbearable that the American President can ignite nuclear weapons on our territory.

1985

We call on both so-called superpowers to finally give up their backyard mentality which makes them stumble from one crime to another.

1988

Margaret Thatcher's view that a German-French Defence policy damages the unity of NATO is false. President Kennedy developed his two-pillar concept of a European and American pillar in NATO in 1962. This idea is being revived now, the Jean-Monnet Committee spoke in favour of it this week. But we still do not have a conception of how a joint German-French strategy would look and how it can be bound in a European defence policy ... Without a joint European defence there will be no united Europe. A joint European defence is also a question of self-determination and freedom. It was a bitter lesson for the Europeans that during the negotiations on medium range missiles both superpowers sat alone, although they were deciding first and foremost about the fate of Europe. This can not be accepted for any length of time. We must remove the danger of European NATO countries being dragged into conflicts with third countries by the USA ... One does not know what steps Libya might have taken if it had had access to long range weapon systems. The new NATO structure in Europe must exclude such a case. A first step would be to hand over the Supreme Command in future to a

European while the Secretary General could be from the United States ... As long as there is no united Europe these weapon systems (British and French nuclear weapons) will remain under national control. A European defence concept must define the role of these weapons. As a German Social Democrat I add: The British and French nuclear weapons must also be included in arms control negotiations ... We are for a defensive conventional defence in contrast to our French neighbours. We are for a nuclear weapon free corridor. It will be our task to develop a concept with the French which takes into account more than before our suggestions which aim for the dismantling of nuclear weapons which the Americans have stationed in Europe and the Europeans have at their own disposal .. (Discriminate deterrence)... such a concept is totally unacceptable for Europe. Even the NATO strategy of "flexible response" corresponded more to American interests ... than European. The use of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe would mean the destruction of Europe. The concept of limited nuclear war in Europe is madness and contempt for mankind.

1989

"My generation is of the opinion that the FRG has proven itself as a democratic state and that we can expect in this situation from the Allied powers that they give us the same sovereign rights as the others ... The presence of Allied forces in the FRG has nothing to do with this question. Our partners should hang their national flags a little lower We do not want to be an occupied country I have never demanded we leave NATO, but the FRG must be able to ensure that they are not let into a conflict with third countries (eg Libya) without being consulted. The Western Integration of the FRG is undoubted and self evident ...

Short range nuclear weapons have become unacceptable for the Germans since the last NATO manoeuvres. The flow of information, peace policies, destruction of the environment, the economy: are all pushing us in the direction of a world society, many national themes such as low flying, immigration, voting rights for foreigners are also European themes. That strengthens my view that the national level has been overtaken.

NATO is not an end in itself. It is to do with overcoming the bloc confrontation and giving up this old idea of balance in a totally overarmed world....

Unilateral steps away from atomic overkill are also possible. That is why I think the planned modernisation of short range nuclear missiles is wrong, as it would provoke a reaction from the other side.

Money spent on armaments is for every environment politician the greatest waste. Anyone who is serious about environment policies must begin by reducing defence spending.

Just as the speed limit is a credibility test for me so is reduction in aircraft noise or low flying. Either one does it or one doesn't. I would be strongly in favour of reallocating resources previously directed at defending against a supposed threat from the Warsaw Pact skies to fighting the

much more serious dangers like climate catastrophe. My vision: environment defence instead of federal defence.

EFA costs 50 Mrd Marks, or according to the experts 100 Mrd Marks. This money could be used for investment and rebuilding the GDR.

We can not aim rockets at our fellow Germans in the GDR... In the present situation in Europe low flying is totally superfluous. The first thing an SPD government would do is abolish low flying ... We want reductions in forces, we want disarmament. Just as the USSR withdraws its troops from the GDR and Eastern Europe so must the other superpower withdraw its troops from the FRG and Europe ... We must see that today our life and our future are in much more danger from the destruction of the environment than from the confrontation of blocs in central Europe.

QUOTES FROM LAFONTAINE ON EUROPE

1988:

The economic, technical and military developments make it even clearer that the historic role of the nation state has been overtaken. One must come to international concepts. Such a concept for us is Europe and Europe can never just be Western Europe. The Europe of nation states and blocs as a result of the Second World War can only be removed in a united Europe which overcomes the national borders and blocs ... We can only create a united Europe when everyone joins in. Of course a nucleus must take shape and this nucleus is the cooperation between Paris and Bonn.

1989:

My goal is a United States of Europe ... Everything which fits into this goal is for me conceivable. Everything which contradicts this goal is not. A coming together of both German states in whatever contractual form including the form of a state would be conceivable. But this state I'm talking about is not a nation state in the old form. The European unification process is ordered in such a way that more responsibilities of the nation state are passed on to the European Community... Nobody is thinking of uncoupling the FRG wagon (from the EC train), of coupling it with the GDR train and then bringing it back to the train of West European unification.

I would like to see a German cultural nation united only within the framework of a United States of Europe this is a goal that the SPD formulated in 1924 in their Heidelberg programme.

The SPD is for a European unification which includes Poland and the areas East of the Oder-Neiße as well as the GDR.

The nation state on the old model is becoming increasingly meaningless. This is because we and the other EC members are constantly handing over authority to the EC.

A cultural and social process of change is underway. The times are demanding that the social state idea, which was always the necessary complement to the market economy, is now completed by the idea of ecological restructuring of the industrial society.



With the compliments of

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