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Netherlands

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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 327 OF 03 DECEMBER

INFO SAVING EC POSTS, UKDEL NATO

Useful summary. Read
in full.

SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS

1. YOU MAY FIND IT USEFUL TO HAVE ON THE EVE OF YOUR VISIT A SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT MOOD HERE AS THE DUTCH GIRD THEIR LOINS FOR THE ASSUMPTION OF THE PRESIDENCY.
2. THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE WAS DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IN HERVEY'S LETTER TO FERGUSSON OF 26 NOVEMBER. FIRM LEADERSHIP IS NOTICEABLE BY ITS ABSENCE. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CARRY ON UNTIL THE GENERAL ELECTION NEXT MAY. BUT THE COALITION'S RECORD HAS BEEN MARRED BY INTERNAL DIVISIONS: BY UNEASY RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT (WHERE IT HAS SURVIVED BY VERY NARROW MAJORITIES); BY PEDESTRIAN PERFORMERS IN KEY POSITIONS; AND BY VAN AGT'S TENDENCY TO PLACE GREATER WEIGHT ON SHORT-TERM SURVIVAL AND CDA PARTY UNITY THAN ON THE NATION'S LONG-TERM INTERESTS
3. THE ABSENCE OF A STRONG LEAD FROM THE GOVERNMENT HAS MEANT THAT THE MORALISTIC APPROACH TO AFFAIRS OF STATE SO TYPICAL OF THE NETHERLANDS HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO GET THE UPPER HAND OVER MORE REALISTIC APPRAISALS OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST; THIS PROCESS INVOLVES NOT ONLY OUTSIDE PRESSURE GROUPS BUT ALSO THE PARLIAMENT WHICH IS INDEPENDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE AND THIS BEHAVES A BIT MORE LIKE THE U.S. CONGRESS THAN LIKE THE BRITISH OR GERMAN PARLIAMENTS, SOMETIMES PASSING RESOLUTIONS THAT ARE CONTRARY TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AIMS. OPPOSITION TO THE COUNTRY'S NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAMME AND, MORE IMPORTANT, TO ITS NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES IN NATO (TNF STATIONING AND NUCLEAR TASKS) HAS BEEN COUNTERED ONLY SPASMODICALLY AND INEFFECTIVELY. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I HAVE FELT IT NECESSARY TO RECOMMEND THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE UP WITH VAN DER KLAUW ON A PERSONAL AND INFORMAL BASIS THE SLOW DRIFT TO THE LEFT ON NUCLEAR ISSUES, AND THE NEED TO STEM THE CURRENT EFFECTIVELY. PERHAPS FORTUNATELY FOR US, THE OUTSIDE PRESSURES MENTIONED ABOVE DO NOT EXTEND TO EC QUESTIONS.
4. VAN DER KLAUW IS ADMITTEDLY A LESS THAN IDEAL INTERLOCUTOR FOR THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT RESOLVE. YET HE RETAINS THE SUPPORT OF HIS OWN PARTY (VVD - THE SECOND PARTNER IN THE COALITION) AND THERE IS EVERY REASON TO THINK THAT HE WILL SURVIVE UNTIL THE END OF THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY. (THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE AS A CARETAKER UNTIL THE LENGTHY PROCESS OF CABINET FORMATION AFTER THE ELECTIONS IS COMPLETE). HE REMAINS A KEY FIGURE WHERE GENERAL ISSUES

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AFFECTING THE PRESIDENCY ARE CONCERNED, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ON SOME QUESTIONS OF SUBSTANCE (INCLUDING EC MATTERS) HIS VOICE CARRIES LESS WEIGHT THAN THAT OF MOST OF HIS PREDECESSORS.

5. THE DUTCH CONTINUE TO LOOK TO THEIR PRESIDENCY AS A CHANCE TO PLAY A MORE SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY THAN THEY HAVE DONE FOR SOME TIME (PLEASE SEE MY DESPATCH OF 16 OCTOBER). WHATEVER MAY BE SAID ABOUT VAN DER KLAUW HIMSELF, THEIR TEAM INCLUDES SOME FORMIDABLE FIGURES AND CAN IN GENERAL BE EXPECTED TO PERFORM WELL. AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE NETHERLANDS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AS A FOUNDER MEMBER AND AS THE LEADING PARTNER IN THE BENELUX SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.

6. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY AN ADVANTAGE THAT THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD NOW PASS TO A COUNTRY WHICH REMAINS (DESPITE DISAPPOINTMENT OVER SOME ASPECTS OF OUR PERFORMANCE AND A SOMETIMES LEGALISTIC OR DOCTRINAIRE APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ISSUES) A STRONG SUPPORTER OF UK MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY. THE STRESS YOU AND OTHER BRITISH MINISTERS HAVE LAID IN RECENT SPEECHES ON THE STRENGTH OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THE EC HAS BEEN NOTED HERE WITH APPRECIATION AND SATISFACTION. YOUR VISIT WILL PROVIDE A FURTHER OPPORTUNITY TO REINFORCE AND BUILD ON THESE FEELINGS (AND OF COURSE ON TRADITIONAL SYMPATHY FOR THE UK IN GENERAL) AND THUS GET CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN 1981 OFF TO THE BEST POSSIBLE START.

FCO PLEASE PASS TO SAVING ADDRESSEES.

TAYLOR

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]
[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]
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