

GR 848

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

FM WASHINGTON 242325Z NOV 80

TO ROUTINE F C O

TELEGRAM NO 4678 OF 24 NOVEMBER

INFO SAVING PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO, MOSCOW, C-GS IN USA.

PRESIDENT-ELECT REAGAN

- USA
- Read i full,
- MI
1. WE ARE IN REGULAR TOUCH WITH THE TRANSITION TEAMS THAT ARE BEING FORMED HERE IN WASHINGTON, BUT I THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO MAKE CONTACT WITH SOME OF REAGAN'S CLOSEST ASSOCIATES IN CALIFORNIA. MY POLITICAL COUNSELLOR HAS ACCORDINGLY SPENT THE LAST WEEK THERE.
 2. AMONG THOSE WHOM THOMAS MET WERE WILLIAM FRENCH SMITH (REAGAN'S PERSONAL LAWYER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PANEL WHICH DREW UP THE SHORT LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR SENIOR GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION), HOLMES TUTTLE (LIKE SMITH, A MEMBER OF REAGAN'S "KITCHEN CABINET" OF OLD AND TRUSTED FRIENDS, AND ALSO ON THE SELECTION PANEL) AND STU SPENCER (FORD'S CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR IN 1976, WHOSE ADDITION TO REAGAN'S INNER CIRCLE OF ADVISERS TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTION WAS WIDELY SEEN AS A TURNING POINT IN REAGAN'S CAMPAIGN).
 3. BOTH REAGAN'S OUTRIGHT PARTISANS AND MORE DETACHED OBSERVERS ALL EMPHASISED THAT HE WAS A MAN WHO SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. HIS DECENCY, AFFABILITY AND SIMPLE MANNER WERE GENUINE. BUT HE WAS NEITHER SOFT NOR STUPID. HE WAS A SKILLED POLITICIAN AND (AS HE HAD DEMONSTRATED IN THE CAMPAIGN) THE BEST POLITICAL COMMUNICATOR IN AMERICAN POLITICS. HE WAS CAPABLE OF ATTRACTING HIGH CLASS ADVISERS AND WAS GOOD AT LISTENING TO ADVICE. BUT ALTHOUGH A PRAGMATIC POLITICIAN, HE HAD GREAT INNER STRENGTH AND WAS NOT EASILY SHIFTED FROM A POSITION OR COURSE OF ACTION WHICH HE BELIEVED TO BE RIGHT. HE HAD WHAT SMITH CALLED AN INSTINCT FOR DECISION MAKING AND WOULD MAKE HIS OWN DECISIONS ON IMPORTANT ISSUES. FOREIGN LEADERS WOULD FIND HIM CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE.
 4. SMITH AND OTHERS SAID THAT REAGAN'S FIRST PRIORITY ON ASSUMING OFFICE WOULD BE TO TACKLE DOMESTIC ISSUES, ESPECIALLY THE ECONOMY. THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT REAGAN WOULD NOT GIVE PROPER WEIGHT TO INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS OR THAT HE WAS NOT CONSCIOUS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATION WITH AMERICA'S ALLIES. ON THE CONTRARY, REAGAN AND HIS ADVISERS DID NOT WANT TO REPEAT CARTER'S MISTAKE OF LAUNCHING IMPORTANT INITIATIVES EARLY IN HIS ADMINISTRATION WITHOUT ADEQUATE CONSULTATION. BUT THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION AND THE NATURE OF REAGAN'S MANDATE MEANT THAT THE ECONOMY MUST COME FIRST. SMITH ADDED THAT FOR THE NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS THE COMPLEX PROCESS OF BUILDING AN ADMINISTRATION WOULD ALSO ABSORB A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION AND THUS DIMINISH THE SCOPE FOR DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH ALLIES.

/S. ON

CONFIDENTIAL

5. ON FOREIGN POLICY SPENCER SAID THAT REAGAN'S FIRST AIM WOULD BE TO DEVELOP A COHERENT GLOBAL STRATEGIC CONCEPT AND TO SEEK ALLIED AGREEMENT TO IT. REAGAN'S FOREIGN POLICY WOULD BE MUCH MORE CLEARLY DEFINED THAN CARTER'S. BUT SPENCER WARNED THAT REAGAN WOULD PUT US NATIONAL INTERESTS FIRST. REAGAN WOULD TAKE ACCOUNT OF LEGITIMATE DIFFERENCES OF PERCEPTION AND INTEREST BETWEEN THE US AND HER ALLIES, BUT HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO "PLAY HARDBALL" WITH THE ALLIES IF NECESSARY; AND THE ALLIES MIGHT FIND THAT LINKAGE APPLIED TO AMERICAN'S DEALINGS WITH THEM NO LESS THAN WITH THE SOVIET UNION. IN THIS REAGAN WOULD BE REFLECTING A GROWING FEELING IN THE COUNTRY THAT SOME OF THE ALLIES WERE NOT PULLING THEIR WEIGHT AND WERE TAKING AMERICA TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED.

6. SPENCER ADDED THAT REAGAN WOULD NOT BE DISPOSED TO TRAVEL ABROAD DURING HIS FIRST YEAR OR SO IN OFFICE UNLESS THERE WERE VERY GOOD REASONS FOR IT. BUT HE WOULD BE LIKELY TO MAKE USE OF HIGH-RANKING EMISSARIES SUCH AS HIS SECRETARY OF STATE AND PERHAPS DR KISSINGER AND EX-PRESIDENT FORD.

7. SPENCER SAID THAT IN ADDITION TO MAJOR ISSUES OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND THE MIDDLE EAST, ONE COULD EXPECT THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION TO PAY MUCH MORE ATTENTION TO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE THAN HAD ITS PREDECESSORS. THERE WOULD BE A HARD-NOSED DETERMINATION TO DEFEND US INTEREST IN LATIN AMERICA AND A MUCH TOUGHER ATTITUDE TO LEFT-WING ACTIVITIES THERE. ON THE MIDDLE EAST SPENCER SAID THAT, CAMPAIGN RHETORIC NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF RE-THINKING GOING ON INSIDE THE REPUBLICAN PARTY ABOUT WHERE THE BALANCE SHOULD BE STRUCK BETWEEN THE US COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL AND THE WIDER REGIONAL INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES.

8. THOMAS RECEIVED VARYING ASSESSMENTS OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH PRESIDENT REAGAN WOULD CONTINUE TO BE INFLUENCED BY HIS "KITCHEN CABINET", THE CLOSELY-KNIT CIRCLE OF ELDERLY, SELF-MADE AND VERY CONSERVATIVE CALIFORNIANS WHO BROUGHT REAGAN FORWARD AS A NATIONAL POLITICIAN AND HAVE BEEN HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS AND ADVISERS FOR MANY YEARS. ONE VIEW WAS THAT THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO ENJOY ACCESS TO THE PRESIDENT BUT EXERT DIMINISHING INFLUENCE, WHICH WOULD INCREASINGLY BE EXERCISED BY SENIOR WHITE HOUSE STAFF AND CABINET MINISTERS AND (AS NOW) BY MRS REAGAN. ON THE OTHER HAND IT WAS ARGUED THAT REAGAN SHARED MANY OF THE ATTITUDES AND ASSUMPTIONS OF HIS OLD FRIENDS AND WOULD CONTINUE TO TURN TO THEM FOR ADVICE. BUT IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT WHEREVER THE BALANCE MIGHT BE STRUCK, WILLIAM FRENCH SMITH AND CAP WEINBERGER (BOTH OF WHOM ARE EXPECTED TO BE GIVEN SENIOR ADMINISTRATION APPOINTMENTS) WOULD REMAIN AMONGST REAGAN'S MOST IMPORTANT COUNSELLORS WHETHER IN OR OUT OF GOVERNMENT. FCO PASS SAYING PARIS, BONN, UK DEL NATO, MOSCOW. HENDERSON

FCO/WHITENALL D
NAD

[REPEATED AS
REQUESTED]

THIS TELEGRAM
WAS NOT
ADVANCED

2

CONFIDENTIAL