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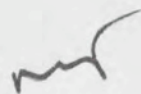
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FM WASHINGTON 181430Z SEP 84

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2762 OF 18 SEPTEMBER

INFO SAVING CG'S IN USA, BIS NEW YORK, UKMIS NEW YORK, ANKARA, ATHENS, BRUSSELS, BONN, COPENHAGEN, LISBON, LUXEMBOURG, OTTAWA, OSLO, PARIS, ROME, REYKJAVIK, THE HAGUE, UNDEL NATO, UKDEL VIENNA, DUBLIN, UKREP BRUSSELS, MADRID, MOSCOW, TOKYO.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: THE EARLY RUNNING 

SUMMARY

1. AS OF NOW, IT LOOKS LIKE REAGAN TO WIN IN A LANDSLIDE. BUT THERE ARE STILL SEVEN WEEKS TO GO.

DETAIL

2. WITH SEVEN WEEKS TO GO, OPINION POLLS, COMMENTATORS, DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS ALIKE ARE FORECASTING WHAT IS CALLED HERE A QUOTE SHOO-IN UNQUOTE FOR REAGAN. HIS LEAD OVER MONDALE IN THE LATEST POLLS AVERAGES 16 POINTS, WITH PRIVATE POLLS BY BOTH PARTIES SHOWING IT AT SOME 10 POINTS, AND SOME PUBLISHED POLLS PUTTING IT AS HIGH AS 25 TO 30 POINTS. MONDALE HAS YET TO FIND AN ISSUE - SEE MIFT - ON WHICH THE PRESIDENT IS SERIOUSLY VULNERABLE. AS A RESULT PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE CONTEST IS STILL LOW, WITH MOST AMERICAN VOTERS FINDING MORE EXCITEMENT IN THE BASEBALL WORLD SERIES AND THE START OF THE FOOTBALL SEASON, WHERE WINNERS LOOK HARDER TO IDENTIFY.

3. MONDALE CONTINUES TO LOOK LIKE A LOSER. HE LEADS AT PRESENT ONLY IN (PREDOMINANTLY BLACK) WASHINGTON DC AND IN HIS HOME STATE OF MINNESOTA. JACKSON HAS SO FAR FAILED TO DELIVER MASSIVE BLACK REGISTRATION, AND FERRARO TO DELIVER A HIGHER FEMALE VOTE. THE SINGLE GREATEST CHANGE OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS IS THE WAY BUSH HAS LEAPED AHEAD OF FERRARO IN THE POLLS. BUT MOST POLLS SHOW HER MORE POPULAR THAN MONDALE, THOUGH LESS POPULAR THAN EITHER OF THEIR OPPONENTS: THE WORST OF ALL WORLDS. PUTTING HER ON THE TICKET BEGINS TO LOOK LIKE THE GIMMICK THAT FAILED.

4. THE REASONS FOR REAGAN'S LEAD REMAIN THE SAME AS THEY ALWAYS WERE. FIRST, THE ECONOMY. THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS ARE BETTER OFF THAN THEY WERE FOUR YEARS AGO UNDER CARTER - UNDER CARTER - MONDALE AS THE REPUBLICANS NEVER FAIL TO POINT OUT. AND THE MAJORITY EXPECT THE NEXT FOUR YEARS TO BE BETTER FOR THEIR POCKETS UNDER REAGAN THAN UNDER MONDALE. IT WOULD BE UNPRECEDENTED FOR AMERICANS TO DISMISS A PRESIDENT WITH GROWTH IN THE ECONOMY AT ITS PRESENT LEVEL. SECONDLY, THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONALITY. THE POLLS SHOW THAT RESPECT FOR HIS LEADERSHIP QUALITIES IS DOUBLE THAT FOR MONDALE'S. REAGAN RADIATES OPTIMISM, PATRIOTISM, GOODWILL AND FAITH IN AMERICAN'S FUTURE: AMERICANS SEE THE BEST SIDE OF THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN HIS CHARACTER. THEY LIKE WHAT THEY SEE AND ARE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR IT. THIRDLY, THE ETHOS OF THE SUNBELT. AMERICA IS CHANGING: THE SUNBELT, WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON SUNRISE INDUSTRIES, SELF-RELIANCE

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AND NO UNIONS, REPRESENTS THE AMERICAN FUTURE. MONDALE AND FERRARO ARE APPEALING TO AMERICAN ATTITUDES, VALUES AND GEOGRAPHICAL INTERESTS DATING FROM THE PAST. THE PENDULUM MAY ONE DAY SWING BACK: BUT IT IS SWINGING AWAY FROM MONDALE AND FERRARO AT PRESENT.

5. OF COURSE, THERE ARE STILL SEVEN WEEKS TO GO. A LOT CAN HAPPEN IN THAT TIME. THE REPUBLICANS COULD BECOME COMPLACENT. THE TELEVISION DEBATES NOW FIXED FOR 7 AND 21 OCTOBER BETWEEN REAGAN AND MONDALE AND 11 OCTOBER FOR BUSH AND FERRARO MIGHT CHANGE PEOPLES PERCEPTIONS OF THE RACE. THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH MIGHT BECOME AN ISSUE. THAT IS NO DOUBT WHY ONE OF THE WHITE HOUSE ADVISERS, WHOSE MAIN CONCERN IS WITH THE RISK OF AN OCTOBER SURPRISE, TOLD ME THE OTHER DAY THAT THEIR OWN PRIVATE POLLS WERE QUOTE FRIGHTENINGLY GOOD UNQUOTE.

6. BUT AS OF NOW THE FORECAST HAS TO BE A LANDSLIDE. THE INTERESTING QUESTIONS ARE THE COMPOSITION OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE. FEW OBSERVERS NOW THINK THE DEMOCRATS CAN WIN THE SIX EXTRA SEATS NEEDED FOR CONTROL OF THE SENATE. IN THE HOUSE, WHERE THE TRADITIONAL WISDOM HAS BEEN THAT THE DEMOCRAT MAJORITY WOULD GO UP, THERE IS NOW TALK OF POSSIBLE REPUBLICAN GAINS. BUT THE RE-ELECTION OF A SITTING PRESIDENT HAS NEVER THIS CENTURY - EVEN IN 1972 - BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY MORE THAN MODEST GAINS FOR HIS PARTY IN THE HOUSE. THE LANDSLIDE, IF IT HAPPENS, WILL BE MORE A PERSONAL THAN A PARTY TRIUMPH. THE SOPHISTICATED ARE ALREADY DISCUSSING THE 1988 RACE: ITS RUNNERS, ITS ISSUES.

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