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FM BONN 091000Z MAY 85
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 468 OF 9 MAY
INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON, PARIS, UKDEL NATO, UKREP BRUSSELS, MOSCOW,
WARSAW, BMG BERLIN, EAST BERLIN, TEL AVIV

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE WAR IN EUROPE *ms*

SUMMARY

1. THE DAY PASSED OFF WITH DIGNITY IN THE FRG. REMARKABLE SPEECH BY PRESIDENT VON WEIZSAECKER.

DETAIL

2. THE GERMAN CABINET HAD WISELY DECIDED SOME WEEKS AGO TO ORGANISE ONLY TWO EVENTS, A FORMAL MEETING IN PARLIAMENT AND A JOINT ROMAN CATHOLIC/EVANGELICAL SERVICE IN COLOGNE CATHEDRAL.

3. THE MEETING IN PARLIAMENT WAS BOYCOTTED BY THE GREENS, WHO HAVE BEEN HAVING DIFFICULTY IN FORMULATING A PARTY LINE ON THE EVENTS OF 1933-45, BUT ATTENDED OTHERWISE BY MOST MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES AS WELL AS REPRESENTATIVES OF REGIONAL PARLIAMENTS, JUDICIARY, BUNDESWEHR, CHURCHES, JEWS, TRADE UNIONS, EMPLOYERS, EXPELLEES AND OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS.

4. THERE WERE (FOR ONCE) ONLY TWO SPEECHES, BY JENNINGER, PRESIDENT OF THE BUNDESTAG, AND PRESIDENT VON WEIZSAECKER. THE DIFFERENCE IN CLASS CAME OUT.

5. JENNINGER HAD OBVIOUSLY THOUGHT CAREFULLY WHAT TO SAY, BUT MIGHT HAVE DONE BETTER TO SAY LESS. HE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO IMPLY THAT HITLER'S RISE TO POWER WAS MAINLY THE FAULT OF THE WESTERN POWERS AND THAT ALL WOULD HAVE BEEN WELL IF ONLY HE HAD STOPPED IN 1938.

6. WEIZSAECKER, IN A MUCH LONGER SPEECH, (SUMMARY IN MIFT), WAS ABLE TO FIND A SAFE PATH THROUGH THE WHOLE HISTORICAL AND EMOTIONAL MINEFIELD WITHOUT DODGING ANY OF THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS. WERE THE WESTERN POWERS TO BLAME? CHURCHILL HIMSELF HAD CALLED THEM 'INNOCENT, NOT GUILTLESS'. DID THE GERMAN PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS? ANYONE WHOSE EYES AND EARS WERE OPEN KNEW OF THE TRAINS ROLLING EASTWARDS. WAS THERE INJUSTICE IN THE EXPULSION OF GERMANS FROM THE EAST? IF SO, IT WAS THE CONSEQUENCE OF 1939, NOT OF 1945, AND THE POLES AND RUSSIANS WHO TOOK THEIR PLACE WERE EXPELLEES TOO. AND SO ON, FOR NEARLY AN HOUR.

7. AS OFTEN, WEIZSAECKER ONCE OR TWICE WENT BEYOND WHAT HIS PREDECESSORS WOULD HAVE THOUGHT CONSTITUTIONALLY PROPER, EG IN HIS POINTED WELCOME FOR GORBACHEV'S RECENT STATEMENT ABOUT NOT WANTING TO FAN ANTI-GERMAN FEELING, AND HIS REMARK THAT 'UNDERSTANDING HAS PRIORITY OVER LEGAL CLAIMS' WHICH TODAY'S PRESS HAS HEADLINED AS A WARNING THAT THE FRG MUST SETTLE FOR EXISTING BORDERS. MY SOVIET

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COLLEAGUE, WEARING THE ONLY UNIFORM IN THE DIPLOMATIC GALLERY, LISTENED IMPASSIVELY THROUGHOUT.

8. THERE WERE SOME BURSTS OF APPLAUSE, BUT WEIZSAECKER SHOOK THESE OFF, AS IF HE WANTED HIS SPEECH TO STAND AS A WHOLE AND ANYWAY IT WAS NO DAY FOR CLAPPING.

9. I THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT'S PERFORMANCE REMARKABLE EVEN BY HIS OWN HIGH STANDARDS. HE WAS REQUIRED TO SPEAK FOR THE WHOLE NATION ON A SUBJECT ON WHICH IT IS DEEPLY DIVIDED: TO SUM UP WEEKS OF CONTRADICTORY DEBATE IN WORDS TO WHICH ALL CAN RALLY: AND TO CONVEY A MESSAGE TO GERMANY'S FORMER VICTORS AND VICTIMS WHICH IS BOTH HISTORICALLY SOUND AND COMPLETELY UP TO DATE. HE SEEMED TO ME TO DO ALL THESE THINGS, AND MOST OF THE PRESS TODAY TAKES THE SAME VIEW. EXCEPTIONS ARE 2 RIGHT-WING PAPERS FAZ, WHICH IS SILENT AND WELT, WHICH FINDS THE PRESIDENT CLEAR ON THE POST BUT FOGGY (IE MODERATE) ON THE PRESENT.

10. THE OECUMENICAL SERVICE IN COLOGNE CATHEDRAL WAS ALSO REMARKABLE IN ITS WAY. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC AND EVANGELICAL SERMONS ADDED NOTHING TO WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID, APART FROM BIBLICAL REFERENCES. BUT THE HUGE CHURCH WAS FULL. PRELATES ATTENDED FROM THE GDR AND POLAND. PLACED IN THE FRONT PEW BY THEMSELVES WERE THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR AND NACHMANN, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF JEWS IN GERMANY: THE FEDERAL PRESIDENT AND THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT SHOOK THEIR HANDS ON THE WAY OUT.

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PRESIDENT VON WEIZSAECKER'S SPEECH: 8 MAY

1. PRESIDENT VON WEIZSAECKER SAID THAT THIS WAS A DAY FOR REFLECTION ON GERMAN HISTORY. IT WAS NO DAY FOR CELEBRATION. FORTY YEARS AGO MOST HAD MERELY BEEN GRATEFUL TO BE ALIVE. MOST HAD BELIEVED THAT THEY HAD FOUGHT IN A JUST CAUSE. THEN THEY SAW THAT ALL HAD BEEN NOT ONLY IN VAIN, BUT ALSO IN THE SERVICE OF A CRIMINAL REGIME. PEOPLE HAD BEEN DISORIENTATED. GRADUALLY IT BECAME CLEAR, AND WAS OBVIOUS TODAY, THAT THE 8TH OF MAY HAD BEEN ABOVE ALL A DAY OF LIBERATION.

2. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO FORGET HOW MUCH SUFFERING HAD BEGUN FOR MANY GERMANS ON 8 MAY 1945. THE BURDENS HAD NOT BEEN EQUALLY DIVIDED. BUT THE CAUSES OF FLIGHT, EXPULSIONS AND REPRESSION LAY NOT IN THE END OF THE WAR: THEY LAY IN ITS BEGINNING AND IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIME WHICH HAD CAUSED IT. 8 MAY 1945 WAS INSEPARABLE FROM 30 JANUARY 1933. THERE WAS NO REASON NOW TO CELEBRATE 8 MAY AS A VICTORY: THERE WAS EVERY REASON TO CELEBRATE IT AS THE END OF A WRONG TURNING IN GERMAN HISTORY AND THE BEGINNING OF NEW HOPE.

3. TODAY WAS A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE - FOR THE 6 MILLION JEWS: FOR THE WAR DEAD: FOR THE COUNTLESS POLES AND RUSSIANS WHO DIED: FOR GERMANY'S OWN DEAD. THERE HAD BEEN MANY WAYS OF TURNING ONE'S EYES AWAY FROM THE HORRORS WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE DURING THE WAR. BUT THOSE WHO HAD WANTED COULD EASILY HAVE FOUND OUT. WHEN THE UNDENIABLE FACTS OF THE HOLOCAUST BECAME CLEAR, TOO MANY CLAIMED NOT TO HAVE KNOWN ANYTHING. RESPONSIBILITY OR INNOCENCE OF A WHOLE PEOPLE DID NOT EXIST. THESE CONCEPTS WERE NOT COLLECTIVE BUT PERSONAL. IT WAS FOR THOSE WHO HAD LIVED THROUGH THOSE TIMES TO ASK THEMSELVES HOW DEEPLY INVOLVED THEY HAD BEEN. BUT THE MAJORITY OF GERMANS TODAY HAD EITHER BEEN CHILDREN OR NOT EVEN BORN THEN. THEY COULD NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE GERMANS. BUT THEY, TOO MUST FACE UP TO THE PAST. TO DENY THE PAST WAS TO BE BLIND TO THE PRESENT. HE WHO FORGOT THE INHUMANITY WAS LIABLE TO REPEAT IT. THE JEWISH PEOPLE REMEMBERED AND WOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER. THE GERMANS WANTED RECONCILIATION: THEY MUST UNDERSTAND THAT RECONCILIATION WITHOUT REMEMBRANCE WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

4. 8 MAY 1945 HAD MARKED THE END OF THE EUROPEAN CIVIL WAR. HITLER HAD WANTED WAR. (HE QUOTED HITLER'S REMARKS TO HIS GENERALS ON 23 MAY 1939 ABOUT LEBENSRAUM TO BACK UP HIS CASE.) GERMAN DEMOCRACY HAD BEEN TOO WEAK TO PREVENT HIM. THE WEST MUST TAKE THEIR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY: AMERICA HAD TURNED ITS BACK ON EUROPE. THE NAZI-SOVIET PACT HAD OPENED THE DOOR TO HITLER'S INVASION OF POLAND. THE THEN LEADERSHIP OF THE SOVIET UNION HAD UNDERSTOOD THIS. BUT THAT DID NOT REDUCE GERMANY'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAR. THE INITIATIVE FOR WAR CAME FROM GERMANY, NOT FROM THE SOVIET UNION.

5. MANY PEOPLE SUFFERED IN THE WAR: HITLER'S LAST VICTIMS WERE THE GERMAN PEOPLE ITSELF. THOSE WHO SUFFERED MOST HAD BEEN THOSE WHO LOST THEIR HOMES IN THE EAST. BUT THEY HAD BEEN QUICK TO RENOUNCE THE USE OF FORCE TO REGAIN WHAT HAD SINCE BECOME HOME FOR OTHERS. RENUNCIATION OF THE USE OF FORCE MEANT ASSURING THOSE PEOPLE (WHO LIVED IN GERMANY'S FORMER EASTERN TERRITORIES) OF PERMANENT SECURITY FOR THEIR FUTURE. IT MEANT UNDERSTANDING HAD PRIORITY OVER LEGAL CLAIMS. THE PEOPLE OF EUROPE LOVED THEIR HOMELANDS. THE GERMANS WERE NO EXCEPTION. BUT THE EXPELLEES' LOVE OF HOMELAND WAS NO REVANCHISM.

6. THE END OF THE WAR HAD BROUGHT THE CHANCE FOR A NEW BEGINNING. THE GERMANS HAD USED IT AS BEST THEY COULD. WOMEN HAD LEAD THE WAY. THERE HAD NEVER BEEN BETTER PROTECTION FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM ON GERMAN SOIL THAN IN THE FRG TODAY. THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC HAD BECOME A STATE RESPECTED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. IT HAD LIVED FOR OVER 40 YEARS IN PEACE AND FREEDOM AND, THROUGH ITS MEMBERSHIP OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, HAD ITSELF CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO THESE GOALS. IT WANTED FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SOVIET PEOPLE.

7. BUT 40 YEARS AFTER THE WAR THE GERMAN PEOPLE REMAINED DIVIDED. THE GERMANS WERE ONE PEOPLE AND ONE NATION. THEY FELT THEY BELONGED TOGETHER. THEY SHARED THE SAME DESIRE FOR PEACE. THEY WANTED PEACE AND JUSTICE FOR ALL PEOPLES, INCLUDING THEMSELVES. A EUROPE WITH WALLS COULD NOT ACHIEVE RECONCILIATION: A CONTINENT WITHOUT FRONTIERS COULD. 'WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT 8 MAY IS NOT THE FINAL DATE IN GERMAN HISTORY, BINDING ON ALL GERMANS'.

8. MANY YOUNG PEOPLE HAD ASKED, WHY CELEBRATE THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY? A NEW GENERATION HAD GROWN UP. THE YOUNG WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED. BUT THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT WAS MADE OUT OF THEIR HISTORY. HITLER HAD WORKED TO FAN PREJUDICE, ENMITY AND HATE. YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD NOT LET THEMSELVES BE DRIVEN TO HATE OTHERS - RUSSIANS OR AMERICANS, JEWS OR TURKS, ALTERNATIVES OR CONSERVATIVES, BLACKS OR WHITES. THEY SHOULD LEARN FROM THEIR HISTORY TO LIVE WITH EACH OTHER, NOT AGAINST EACH OTHER.

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