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18 26

IS/SOVIET ARMS CONTROL TALKS

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MR GOODALL  
MR RATFORD  
MR ~~WILSON~~  
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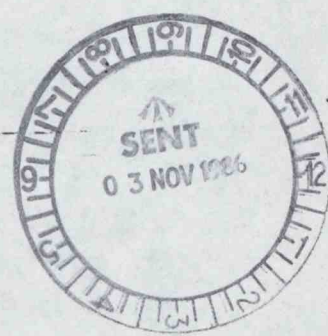
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FM BONN

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 924

OF 031710Z NOVEMBER 86

INFO IMMEDIATE MOSCOW, BMG BERLIN, UKDEL CSCE VIENNA

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO

INFO SAVING NATO POSTS, DUBLIN

FRG/SOVIET RELATIONS

SUMMARY

1. SOME EXCITEMENT OVER A NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW WITH CHANCELLOR KOHL TEN DAYS AGO, WHICH QUOTED HIM AS IMPLICITLY COMPARING GORBACHEV WITH GOEBBELS. SOME VISITS TO MOSCOW CANCELLED BY THE RUSSIANS, BUT THE GERMANS HOPE THE LONG TERM EFFECT WILL BE MINIMAL.

DETAIL

2. THE OFFENDING QUOTATION OCCURRED DURING A WIDE RANGING FOREIGN POLICY INTERVIEW IN WASHINGTON, WHEN KOHL REFERRED TO GORBACHEV'S SKILL IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND WENT ON TO MENTION GOEBBELS. MEYER-LANDRUT (PUS-EQUIVALENT, AUSWAERTIGES AMT), TO WHOM HE SPOKE THIS MORNING, ACKNOWLEDGED THIS WAS A "BLUNDER" ON KOHL'S PART. STABRECHT (FEDERAL CHANCELLERY) TOLD HEAD OF CHANCERY THAT THE

STABREIT (FEDERAL CHANCELLERY) TOLD HEAD OF CHANCERY THAT THE INTERVIEW HAD NOT BEEN BASED ON PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED QUESTIONS OR ANY OTHER AGREED FORMAT, AND KOHL HAD BEEN SPEAKING IN A RELAXED AND OFF THE CUFF. UNFORTUNATELY, ALTHOUGH NEWSWEEK SUBMITTED THE TEXT FOR APPROVAL BEFORE PUBLICATION, BAD STAFF WORK MEANT THAT IT WAS NOT CHECKED BY THE FOREIGN POLICY EXPERTS EITHER IN THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY OR IN THE FEDERAL PRESS OFFICE.

3. ON 24 OCTOBER, PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION LEADER VOGEL, CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY SOVIET AMBASSADOR KVITSINSKI, DEMANDED AN EXPLANATION. THE MATTER WAS SUBSEQUENTLY RAISED WITH THE NEW POLITICAL DIRECTOR, VON RUCHTHOFEN, IN MOSCOW ON 30 OCTOBER. THE RUSSIANS HAVE NOW CANCELLED FORTHCOMING VISITS TO MOSCOW BY RIESENHUBER, FEDERAL MINISTER OF RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY, AND BY THE TOP AUSWAERTIGES AMT OFFICIAL DEALING WITH CULTURAL AFFAIRS.

4. THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY HAVE PUBLICLY TAKEN THE LINE THAT KOHL WAS EFFECTIVELY MISQUOTED BY NEWSWEEK (THOUGH STABREIT CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE) AND THAT IN ANY CASE THERE WAS NO INTENTION TO INSULT GORBACHEV. KOHL WILL BE MAKING A GOVERNMENT DECLARATION IN THE BUNDESTAG ON 6 NOVEMBER ON EAST/WEST RELATIONS. AGAIN ACCORDING TO STABREIT, THIS WILL BE BASED STRICTLY ON HIS SEPARATE INTERVIEW ON EAST/WEST RELATIONS AND CSCE PUBLISHED IN DIE WELT TODAY (MIPT - NOT TO ALL), IN WHICH KOHL DENIED THAT HE HAD INTENDED TO COMPARE GORBACHEV AND GOEBBELS AND SAID THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF OFFENDING GORBACHEV, AND THAT HE HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF HIS EFFORTS FOR BETTER EAST-WEST RELATIONS. THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER RETRACTION OF OR APOLOGY FOR THE QUOTATION IN NEWSWEEK.

5. ASKED ABOUT RUSSIAN MOTIVES, STABREIT TOLD HEAD OF CHANCERY THAT HE THOUGHT THEY WERE TEN PER CENT PIQUE AND NINETY PER CENT COLD CALCULATION. BOTH HE AND MEYER-LANDRUT WERE INCLINED TO DISCOUNT THE LIKELIHOOD OF ANY LONG-LASTING CHILL IN FRG/SOVIET RELATIONS OR OF ANY SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS IN JANUARY.

#### COMMENT

6. KOHL IS PRONE TO GAFFES, AS WE KNOW. NO DOUBT IF THIS ONE WILL DO SERIOUS HARM EITHER TO HIS CHANCES IN THE COMING ELECTIONS OR TO FRG-SOVIET RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH MOSCOW MAY WANT HIM TO SWEAT FOR A BIT.

BULLARD

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FCO PLEASE PASS TO SAVING ADDRESSEES