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FM BONN

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 071

OF 021740Z FEBRUARY 87

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INFO SAVING CONSULATE-GENERALS IN THE FRG

FORMATION OF A NEW FRG GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY

1. COALITION NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN IN EARNEST THIS WEEK. THEY LOOK LIKE BEING LONG AND DIFFICULT. NEW GOVERNMENT NOT EXPECTED BEFORE MARCH.

DETAIL

2. A WEEK AFTER THEIR VICTORY IN THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS ON 25 JANUARY (MY TELNOS 053 AND 054), THE CDU, CSU AND FDP ARE SETTLING DOWN TO BEGIN NEGOTIATING THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S POLICY PROGRAMME AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW CABINET. LAST WEEK'S PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN CDU AND CSU, DESIGNED TO AGREE A COMMON LINE BEFORE CONFRONTING THE FDP, WERE UNFRUITFUL BECAUSE TOO MUCH TIME WAS SPENT ARGUING ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UNION PARTIES' SETBACK ON 25 JANUARY. THE FDP'S INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL LATER THIS WEEK, AND THE CDU WILL NOW CONDUCT SEPARATE BUT PARALLEL TALKS WITH THE CSU AND FDP, IN THE HOPE OF WRAPPING THEM UP BY END-FEBRUARY.

3. THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL CONCENTRATE INITIALLY ON THE POLICY PROGRAMME, LEAVING THE APPORTIONMENT OF JOBS UNTIL LATER. (DETAILS OF THE POLICY ISSUES AT STAKE ARE BEING REPORTED BY DAG). BANGEMANN HAS UNEXPECTEDLY SAID THAT, DESPITE THE FDP'S GOOD SHOWING ON 25 JANUARY, THEY WILL NOT SEEK A FOURTH CABINET POST AT THIS STAGE.

4. THE FIRST SESSION OF THE NEW BUNDESTAG WAS FIXED FOR 18 FEBRUARY MAINLY BECAUSE, UNDER FRG LAW, THIS WILL ALLOW THE GOVERNMENT TO CALL THE NEXT ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER 1990, RATHER THAN FACE ANOTHER MID-WINTER POLL. BUT THIS ALSO SETS A DEADLINE FOR THE CDU AND CSU AT LEAST TO AGREE THE BROAD OUTLINES OF A COMMON PROGRAMME, SO THAT THEY CAN PRESENT THEMSELVES AS A JOINT PARLIAMENTARY GROUP AND, AS THE LARGEST SUCH GROUP, BE ENTITLED TO NOMINATE THE PRESIDENT OF THE BUNDESTAG.

5. KOHL HOWEVER IS REFUSING TO BE RUSHED AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT DETAILED POLICY NEGOTIATIONS WILL HAVE BEEN CONCLUDED BY 18 FEBRUARY. IN THAT CASE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION, PRESIDENT VON WEIZSAECKER WILL HAVE TO ASK THE PRESENT KOHL ADMINISTRATION TO CARRY ON IN A CARETAKER CAPACITY. THIS INTERIM STATE OF AFFAIRS COULD CONTINUE UNTIL SOME TIME IN MARCH, THOUGH THE CHANCELLOR HIMSELF COULD BE FORMALLY RE-ELECTED AT A COMPARATIVELY EARLY STAGE.

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6. FOR KOHL TO TAKE HIS TIME OVER THESE NEGOTIATIONS IS CHARACTERISTIC OF HIM, BUT IS ALSO CONSISTENT WITH PAST PRACTICE IN THE FRG. IN 1949 ADENAUER TOOK EIGHT WEEKS TO FORM HIS GOVERNMENT, AND IN 1974 SCHMIDT TOOK NINE. KOHL'S THREE WEEK NEGOTIATIONS IN 1993 WERE THE SHORTEST EVER.

BULLARD

BONN WILL PASS TO SAVING ADDRESSEES

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