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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 456

OF 141200Z MARCH 88

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ADVANCE COPY

SOVIET UNION/FRG: ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITS BY KOHL AND GORBACHEV

1. PRAVDA OF 14 MARCH ANNOUNCED THAT, FOLLOWING AGREEMENT BETWEEN GORBACHEV AND KOHL, THE FEDERAL CHANCELLOR WILL PAY AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION IN THE AUTUMN OF 1988 AND THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CPSU WILL PAY AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE FRG IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1989. EXACT DATES FOR THE VISITS WILL BE FIXED IN DUE COURSE.

COMMENT

2. THE DEGREE OF ADVANCE PUBLIC NOTICE FOR THESE VISITS IS MOST UNUSUAL, IF NOT UNPRECEDENTED. (IF FAR EXCEEDS THE NOTICE GIVEN OFFICIALLY IN THE SOVIET PRESS OF THE REAGAN/GORBACHEV SUMMITS.) THE ANNOUNCEMENT ENDS SPECULATION, AND IS A FURTHER RESTATEMENT TO THE IMPORTANCE CURRENTLY ATTACHED BY THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP TO RELATIONS WITH THE FRG. PRESUMABLY THE EARLY REFERENCE TO GORBACHEV'S RETURN TRIP IS INTENDED TO CATER FOR GERMAN SENSITIVITIES, GIVEN THAT KOHL HAS NOW AGREED TO COME HERE FIRST.

CARTLEDGE

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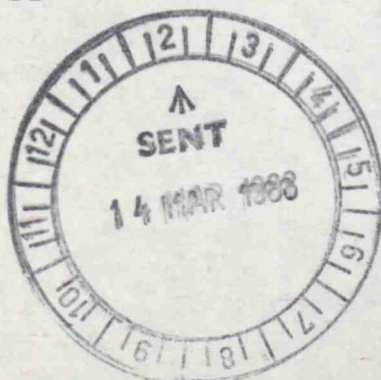
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