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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO TURKEY - REACTIONS

SUMMARY

1. OVERALL REACTION VERY POSITIVE: LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE EXTENSIVE AND ENTHUSIASTIC. PUBLIC OPINION SIMILARLY WELCOMING. TURKISH OFFICIALS CONSIDER THE VISIT A GREAT SUCCESS. SOUR GRAPES FROM DEMIREL OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE.

DETAIL

2. MRS THATCHER'S VISIT AROUSED FAR GREATER PUBLIC INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM THAN ANY OTHER COMPARABLE RECENT VISIT TO TURKEY. EXCELLENT PRE-VISIT PUBLICITY IN THE PRESS AND ON TELEVISION AND RADIO HELPED CONSIDERABLY: THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTS PRODUCED BY EKONOMIK BULTEN AND MILLIYET, TO WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER CONTRIBUTED, WERE OF HIGH QUALITY, AS WAS THE INTERVIEW WITH MEHMET ALI BIRAND ON '32ND DAY', TURKEY'S MOST POPULAR AND INFLUENTIAL CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMME.

3. DURING THE RUN-UP TO THE VISIT, THE PRESS SPECULATED WILDLY ABOUT OUR OBJECTIVES. THE AWARD OF THE BOSPHORUS III BRIDGE CONTRACT IN EXCHANGE FOR BRITAIN'S SUPPORT FOR TURKEY'S EC APPLICATION WAS A POPULAR THEME. AND THERE WAS SPECULATION ON A NEW PLAN FOR CYPRUS. BUT, ONCE THE VISIT BEGAN, LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE WAS GENERALLY SENSIBLE AND HELPFUL. TURKISH OFFICIAL BRIEFING WAS ACCURATE. ONLY THE BBC (AND SOME BRITISH PAPERS) CONSIDERED (WRONGLY) THAT HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD BE A FEATURE OF THE PRIME MINISTERS TALKS WITH OZAL.

4. BRITISH REPORTING WAS COLOURED BY THE UNDISCIPLINED, AND AT TIMES VIOLENT, BEHAVIOUR OF TURKISH PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS. BUT THIS DID NOT PLAY BACK SUFFICIENTLY INTO THE LOCAL MEDIA TO DISTORT THE IMPACT OF THE VISIT.

5. OPPOSITION REACTIONS WERE GENERALLY FAVOURABLE. INONU COMMENTED WARMLY ON HIS MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER. BUT FORMER PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL PUBLICLY CRITICISED HER FOR SUPPORTING THE OZAL GOVERNMENT, ALLEGING INTERFERENCE IN TURKISH AFFAIRS (TREATING US LIKE INDIA EXCLAM). A MILLIYET EDITORIAL IN EFFECT TOLD HIM NOT TO BE SO OUT-OF-DATE AND FOOLISH.

6. OVERALL, REACTIONS TO THE VISIT HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY POSITIVE. TURKISH OFFICIALS HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO US THAT THEY CONSIDER IT TO HAVE BEEN A RESOUNDING SUCCESS, THE CONTRIBUTION OF WHICH TO TURKISH/BRITISH RELATIONS, AS WELL AS TO THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OZAL AND MRS THATCHER, SHOULD STAND BOTH COUNTRIES IN GOOD STEAD IN POLITICAL AND TRADING TERMS.

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