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MY TELNO 386: NEW FRG DEFENCE MINISTER

SUMMARY

1. CHOICE OF SCHOLZ CONFIRMED. MEDIA, FOLLOWING HEAVY GOVERNMENT BRIEFING, CONCENTRATE ON HIS INTELLIGENCE AND INDUSTRIOUSNESS, AS MUCH AS IGNORANCE OF DEFENCE MATTERS. HE HAS THE INTELLIGENCE: THE QUESTION IS WHETHER HE CAN DEVELOP CLOUT. RECOMMENDATIONS ON MESSAGES AND VISITS.

DETAIL

2. KOHL TODAY CONFIRMED NOMINATION OF SCHOLZ AS DEFENCE MINISTER. NO OTHER CABINET CHANGES WILL BE MADE. PARLIAMENTARY STATE SECRETARIES WUERZBACH AND FRAU HUERLAND MUST TENDER THEIR RESIGNATIONS. FRAU HUERLAND IS EXPECTED TO BE REAPPOINTED. MANFRED CARSTENS (CDU MEMBER OF BUNDESTAG - BRIGHT AND ENERGETIC FINANCE EXPERT) IS EXPECTED TO REPLACE WUERZBACH.

3. SCHOLZ WAS BORN IN BERLIN IN 1937. AFTER STUDYING LAW IN BERLIN AND HEIDELBERG HE HELD ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS IN BERLIN AND MUNICH, BECOMING PROFESSOR OF STATE AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW IN BERLIN, AND FOR A WHILE PROFESSOR AT MUNICH, WHERE HE STILL TEACHES. HE BECAME BERLIN SENATOR FOR JUSTICE IN 1981, AND SENATOR FOR FEDERAL AFFAIRS IN THE BERLIN CDU/FDP COALITION IN 1983, AT WHICH POINT HE FORMALLY JOINED THE CDU. HE WAS ELECTED TO THE BERLIN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONLY IN 1985. HE IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE INTELLECTUALLY ABLE AND AMBITIOUS. SCHOLZ VISITED THE UK AS GUEST OF HMG IN 1986. HIS WIFE IS A JUDGE. HE IS FANATIC ABOUT FOOTBALL. HIS ENGLISH IS WEAK.

4. INITIAL PUBLIC COMMENT ON THIS UNEXPECTED CHOICE HAS BEEN SURPRISINGLY UNCRITICAL. SCHOLZ'S COMPLETE LACK OF DEFENCE EXPERIENCE IS NOT NECESSARILY SEEN AS A DISADVANTAGE. HE SEEMS TO

ENJOY RELATIVELY STRONG BACKING FROM THE RIGHT WING OF THE CDU AND THE CSU, AND SOME OF THE MEDIA ARE SUGGESTING, ON THE BASIS OF BRIEFING FROM THAT DIRECTION, THAT HE WILL DEVELOP IN STATURE TO THE POINT WHERE HE CAN COUNTER-BALANCE GENSCHER IN CABINET DISCUSSION OF DEFENCE ISSUES. AMONG FMOD AND BUNDESWEHR CONTACTS WE HAVE FOUND LOYAL HOPES BUT NO ENTHUSIASM FOR THE APPOINTMENT.

5. KOHL IS USUALLY SHREWD IN HIS MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS. HE MUST BELIEVE THAT SCHOLZ WILL GROW INTO THE JOB AND BECOME A FIRM DEFENCE MINISTER: THERE WERE PLENTY OF APPARENTLY STRONGER CANDIDATES IN THE FIELD. I UNDERSTAND FROM KOHL'S OFFICE THAT HE HAS KNOWN AND RESPECTED SCHOLZ FOR SOME YEARS BUT THAT THEY ARE NOT FRIENDS.

6. THE QUESTION OF SCHOLZ'S LIKELY EFFECTIVENESS AS DEFENCE MINISTER COMES DOWN TO A JUDGEMENT WHETHER HE HAS THE INTELLECT TO MASTER THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF THE FMOD QUICKLY: AND WHETHER HE HAS THE PERSONALITY AND CAN DEVELOP THE POLITICAL CLOUT TO FIGHT HIS CORNER IN CABINET AND IN PARLIAMENT ABOUT THE REQUIREMENTS OF DEFENCE, INCLUDING NUCLEAR MODERNISATION, AND ABOUT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE FMOD TO IMPLEMENT THE REFORM PLAN BUNDESWEHR 2000. I JUDGE FROM MY FIVE YEARS' ACQUAINTANCE WITH SCHOLZ AND THE GENERAL OPINION OF HIM THAT HE DOES HAVE THE INTELLECT. AS TO PERSONALITY, I AM AT THIS STAGE DOUBTFUL. SCHOLZ DOES NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING FIRST RATE IN THIS RESPECT. JUDGING FROM HIS PERFORMANCE AS A BERLIN SENATOR, HE CAN BE ERRATIC AND QUIRKY. THERE IS ALSO DOUBT ABOUT HIS POWERS AS AN ADMINISTRATOR - A KEY QUESTION IN A LARGE DEPARTMENT. POLITICAL CLOUT IS ALSO A QUESTION MARK: SCHOLZ HAS NO NATIONAL REPUTATION AND, HAVING NEVER BEEN A MEMBER OF THE BUNDESTAG, WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IN EXERTING INFLUENCE THERE.

7. I RECOMMEND THAT MR YOUNGER SEND AN EARLY MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS AS WELL AS A SUITABLE MESSAGE TO WOERNER (THE LATTER TO ARRIVE NO EARLIER THAN 16 MAY). I WELCOME MR YOUNGER'S AGREEMENT TO INVITE THE NEW MINISTER FOR AN EARLY INTRODUCTORY VISIT TO LONDON. I THINK IT IMPORTANT THAT THE TWO DEFENCE MINISTERS MEET IF POSSIBLE BEFORE THE SUMMER BREAK. IF, FOR TIME-TABLE REASONS, SCHOLZ PROVES UNABLE TO VISIT LONDON IN THAT TIME-SCALE, I HOPE THAT, EXCEPTIONALLY, MR YOUNGER MIGHT BE PREPARED TO MAKE A FLYING VISIT HERE, PERHAPS FOR A MEAL WITH SCHOLZ.

8. I RECOMMEND THAT, ONCE SCHOLZ IS IN OFFICE, COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF BRITISH FORCES GERMANY, WEARING BOTH NATIONAL AND NATO HATS, SHOULD INVITE SCHOLZ TO VISIT THE HQ OF BFG/NORTHAG/2 ATAF. I THINK IT UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THIS TO HAPPEN BEFORE THE AUTUMN. BUT THE

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COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF MAY BE ABLE TO PAY COURTESY CALLS ON SCHOLZ IN
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