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TO DESKBY 181600Z FCO

TELNO 1252

OF 181414Z DECEMBER 89

INFO PRIORITY EAST BERLIN, BMG BERLIN, MOSCOW, WASHINGTON, PARIS
INFO PRIORITY UKDEL NATO, UKREP BRUSSELS, THE HAGUE, ROME

THE GERMAN QUESTION: THE MOOD IN THE FRG ON THE EVE OF KOHL'S VISIT TO DRESDEN

SUMMARY

1 CONTINUED ATMOSPHERE OF DRAMA. THE DOMINANT THEMES: QUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR KOHL'S TEN POINT PLAN, MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT FOREIGN REACTIONS TO IT, ANXIETY ABOUT THE PACE OF EVENTS IN THE GDR, AND POLITICIANS SEEKING TO SLOW IT DOWN.

DETAIL

THE KOHL PLAN

2. THE DUST NOW HAVING SETTLED, IT IS CLEAR THAT KOHL HAS WON MAJORITY SUPPORT FOR THE THRUST OF HIS PLAN, AND MUCH ADMIRATION - ALBEIT OFTEN RELUCTANT AND SOMETIMES QUALIFIED BY RESENTMENT - FOR THE TACTICAL SKILL HE SHOWED IN MOVING JUST AT THE RIGHT TIME TO STAKE OUT HIS POSITION. CRUCIAL TO THIS SUCCESS WAS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PLAN OVERLAPPED, NO DOUBT BY DESIGN, WITH EXISTING SPD POLICY: THUS LEADING VOIGT AND VOGEL IN THEIR INITIAL REACTIONS IN THE BUNDESTAG (MY TELNO 1164) TO GIVE IT AN UNQUALIFIED ENDORSEMENT. AGAINST THAT BACKGROUND SUBSEQUENT SPD ATTEMPTS TO RUBBISH THE PLAN HAVE PROVED LARGELY INEFFECTIVE - PARTLY ALSO BECAUSE IN A NUMBER OF RESPECTS, NOTABLY THE ABSENCE OF ANY TIMETABLE AND THE STRESS ON PLACING REUNIFICATION WITHIN THE WIDER EUROPEAN CONTEXT, KOHL'S PLAN CAN CONVINCINGLY BE DEPICTED AS RESPONSIBLE.

3. KOHL HAS NOT HOWEVER COME THROUGH UNSCATHED. IN THREE SIGNIFICANT RESPECTS HIS PLAN HAS FAILED TO WIN OVER NOT ONLY THE SPD AND THE GREENS BUT ALSO THE FDP:

(A) IT ASSUMES THE DESIRABILITY OF 'REUNIFICATION' - A TERM WHICH BECAUSE OF THE IMPLICATION SOME READ INTO IT OF SUPPORT FOR GERMANY'S 1937 FRONTIERS IS DISLIKED BY THE FDP AND IS ANATHEMA ON THE LEFT:

(B) THERE HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD CRITICISM OF THE FAILURE TO CONSULT (OR AT LEAST INFORM) IN ADVANCE THE FDP, THE FRG'S KEY WESTERN

ALLIES AND THE SOVIET UNION:

(C) DITTO CONCERNING THE FAILURE TO INCLUDE A FORMULA ON THE QUESTION OF POLAND'S WESTERN BORDER (MY TELNO 1240).

4. THERE ALSO REMAINS ONE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KOHL'S APPROACH AND THAT OF THE SPD. SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THEIR BERLIN PARTY CONFERENCE, WHICH BEGAN TODAY, THE LATTER LOOK SET TO OPT FOR CONFEDERATION FOR A PERIOD, PERHAPS A LONG ONE, EN ROUTE TO FULL UNITY IN FEDERATION, WHILE KOHL HAS BLURRED THE POINT BY PROPOSING CONFEDERATIVE STRUCTURES INSTEAD FOR THAT STAGE.

FOREIGN REACTIONS

5. IN RESPONDING TO FOREIGN REACTIONS PUBLIC OPINION IN THE FRG HAS DIVIDED INTO TWO BROAD CAMPS, THE ONE PATIENT AND RESPONSIBLE, THE OTHER PUZZLED AND OFTEN IRRITATED BY WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS A FAILURE IN SOME COUNTRIES TO PAY MORE THAN LIP SERVICE TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

6. THE RESPONSIBLE VIEWPOINT, VOICED MORE STRONGLY ON THE CENTRE LEFT THAN ON THE RIGHT, HAS BEEN ARTICULATED MOST CLEARLY BY HELMUT SCHMIDT, IN ''DIE ZEIT'' (15 DECEMBER). HE STRESSED BOTH THE NEED FOR A GRADUAL APPROACH TO THE GERMAN QUESTION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECTING THE INTERESTS OF OTHER PEOPLES OF EUROPE. POINTING OUT THAT THE GERMANS STILL CARRIED THE BURDEN OF THE CRIMES COMMITTED THROUGHOUT EUROPE BY NAZI GERMANY, HE COMMENTED THAT THE ANXIETY OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AT THE PROSPECT OF THE GERMANS BEING REUNITED UNDER ONE ROOF WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. A WAY FORWARD HAD TO BE FOUND WHICH WOULD MAKE THIS PROSPECT SEEM NOT JUST TOLERABLE BUT USEFUL TOO.

7. BUT IT IS THE SECOND GROUP WHICH HAS BEEN THE MORE VOCIFEROUS. THOUGH EVEN THE AMERICANS, FOLLOWING BAKER'S BERLIN SPEECH, ARE SEEN AS WANTING TO CONDITION THE PROCESS OF REUNIFICATION MORE TIGHTLY THAN ENVISAGED IN KOHL'S PLAN, THIS GROUP ARE GENERALLY PREPARED TO SEE THE US AS ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS - ''GERMANY'S MOST IMPORTANT AND RELIABLE CHAMPION'' IN THIS DEBATE, AS ''DIE WELT'' PUT IT ON 13 DECEMBER. THE OTHER MAJOR PLAYERS HOWEVER ARE VIEWED WITH VARYING DEGREES OF DISFAVOUR. THEY DIVIDE INTO THOSE WHOSE RESERVATIONS ARE SEEN AS UNDERSTANDABLE - THE SOVIET UNION AND POLAND - AND THOSE WHO MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO SHOW MORE SOLIDARITY: THE UK, ITALY AND (FOR SOME TASTES) FRANCE. THE UK AND FRANCE IN PARTICULAR HAVE BEEN REMINDED MORE THAN ONCE THAT THEY HAVE DUTIES AS WELL AS RIGHTS IN RELATION TO THE GERMAN QUESTION AND ACCUSED OF

SEEING THEIR RESERVED RIGHTS LESS AS LEVERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACHIEVING GERMAN UNITY THAN AS BARRIERS IN ITS WAY.

8. SINCE 11 DECEMBER THERE HAVE BEEN CRITICAL (AND OFTEN SHARP) COMMENTS ABOUT THE BRITISH ATTITUDE FROM NEWSPAPERS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM: FROM ''DER SPIEGEL'' AND ''STERN'' (BOTH LEFT OF CENTRE) THROUGH THE MASS CIRCULATION ''BILD'' TO THE CONSERVATIVE ''DIE WELT'' AND ''FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE'' (FAZ). EVEN THE MORE DISPASSIONATE OBSERVERS (EG FAZ ON 15 DECEMBER: FAXED TO WED) DISCERN A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE IMPECCABLE ORTHODOXY OF THE UK POSITION FOR MOST OF THE LAST 35 YEARS AND THE MORE QUALIFIED STAND WE ARE SEEN AS HAVING ADOPTED IN RECENT WEEKS.

9. AGAINST THAT BACKGROUND THE FOUR POWER MEETING OF AMBASSADORS ON 11 DECEMBER WAS NOT SURPRISINGLY VIEWED IN SOME QUARTERS WITH A CERTAIN SUSPICION. BUT THE OVERALL REACTION HERE, DESCRIBED IN MY TELNO 1228, HAS BEEN SATISFACTORY. WHILE THERE IS SOME DISPOSITION TO SNIPE AT THE ALLIES THERE IS NOW A WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF THEIR ROLE, PENDING THE FINAL PEACE SETTLEMENT, AND OF THE NEED FOR THEM TO BE PROPERLY CONSULTED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

EVENTS IN THE GDR

10. UNDERLYING THE DEBATE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IS A KEEN AWARENESS THAT THE HURRICANE IS IN THE EAST, WITH ITS DIRECTION AS UNCERTAIN AS ITS STRENGTH IS EVIDENT. AS ANALYSIS HAS DEVELOPED OF THE STATE OF THE GDR AND THE POLICY OPTIONS BEFORE IT, IT HAS BECOME PROGRESSIVELY CLEARER THAT THE PROBLEMS FAR OUTWEIGH THE AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS. THE REST OF THE WINTER, IN PARTICULAR, IS VIEWED WITH CONSIDERABLE FOREBODING, AND EVEN MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS QUO TILL THE MAY ELECTION IS FAR FROM CERTAIN.

11. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES FEDERAL LEADERS HAVE CONCENTRATED ON APPEALING FOR CALM AND PRUDENCE. VON WEIZSAECKER FOR A LONG TIME HELD BACK, SCENTING NO DOUBT THE DIFFICULTY OF SAYING ANYTHING WHICH WAS BOTH INCISIVE AND UNCONTROVERSIAL. HIS TV INTERVIEW OF 13 DECEMBER (EAST BERLIN TELNO 464) HAD GOOD REVIEWS IN THE GDR BUT ANGERED THE CDU, BECAUSE OF HIS FAILURE TO MENTION EITHER REUNIFICATION OR KOHL'S TEN POINTS. GENSCHER HAS GIVEN A STREAM OF SPEECHES AND INTERVIEWS IN SIMILAR VEIN, LAYING HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR CAUTION AND RESTRAINT. KOHL TOO HAS TAKEN A BROADLY SIMILAR LINE, ALBEIT LARDED WITH REFERENCES TO HIS OWN PLAN. THE PREDOMINANT OBJECTIVE FOR BONN AT THIS STAGE IS CLEARLY TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE (CF PARAGRAPH 8 OF UKDEL NATO TELNO 426) TO SLOW

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THE PACE OF EVENTS IN THE GDR, TO ALLOW THE TWO GERMAN STATES TO GROW TOGETHER BY OSMOSIS AND TO AVOID THE DANGERS THAT WOULD ARISE WERE THE PROCESS TO GET OUT OF CONTROL.

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YOUR TELNO 723: CONSULTATIONS WITH THE FRG ON GERMAN QUESTION

1. KOHL TOOK A DELIBERATE DECISION NOT TO CONSULT ALLIES (OR HIS COALITION PARTNERS) IN ADVANCE ABOUT THE TEN POINTS SPEECH ON 28 NOVEMBER. HE WANTED TO AVOID ARGUMENT ABOUT THE CONTENTS, WHICH COULD HAVE CAUSED DELAY AND PRIOR LEAKS AND THUS ENDANGERED HIS AIM OF PERSONALLY BECOMING MASTER OF THE DEBATE HERE ON THE GERMAN QUESTION. HE HAS PAID A PRICE: NOT ONLY THE ALLIES AND THE FDP BUT ALSO THE OPPOSITION AND THE GERMAN MEDIA HAVE REPEATEDLY CRITICISED THE LACK OF CONSULTATION. THIS, AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE FOUR AMBASSADORS' MEETING IN BERLIN, HAVE GIVEN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IN GENERAL A SALUTORY REMINDER OF FOUR POWER RIGHTS.
2. THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY ARE WELL AWARE OF THE NEED TO CONSULT PROPERLY. THE THREE AMBASSADORS HAVE HAD TWO MEETINGS SO FAR THIS MONTH WITH SEITERS, WHERE KOHL'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO DRESDEN HAS BEEN DISCUSSED. ANOTHER IS SCHEDULED FOR 21 DECEMBER, TO BRIEF US AFTER THE VISIT. THE THREE ALLIED MINISTERS ARE SEEING DUISBERG, THE RESPONSIBLE UNDER SECRETARY IN THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY, ON 18 DECEMBER FOR A FINAL BRIEFING BEFORE KOHL'S VISIT.
3. NEVERTHELESS IT IS POSSIBLE THAT KOHL WILL AGAIN SEE A BALANCE OF ADVANTAGE IN NOT CONSULTING THE ALLIES ABOUT A NEW STEP ON THE GERMAN QUESTION. IN TRYING TO REDUCE THAT RISK, WE SHOULD INTENSIFY BILATERAL CONSULTATION BUT ALSO BEAR IN MIND THAT INVOLVEMENT OF ALL THREE ALLIES CAN HAVE A STRONGER GULLIVER EFFECT THAN BILATERAL CONTACT.
4. THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY WAS THE DEPARTMENT AT FAULT LOST TIME. I SHALL CONTINUE MY CAMPAIGN FOR MORE CONTACT WITH SEITERS AND DUISBERG. WHEN YOU ARE NEXT IN BONN, WE SHOULD SEEK A CALL ON KOHL, CITING GENSCHER'S RECENT ONE ON THE PRIME MINISTER. YOU SHOULD ALSO SEE SEITERS. WE SHOULD SEEK CALLS ON HIM AND ON TELTSCHIK FOR MINISTERS OF STATE AND SENIOR FCO OFFICIALS VISITING BONN. I WOULD WELCOME A VISIT BY SIR PERCY CRADOCK, WHO COULD CALL ON SEITERS AND TELTSCHIK AS WELL AS THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.

5. AS FOR THE AUSWAERTIGES AMT, WE SHOULD MAKE FULL USE OF NATO, EPC AND ESPECIALLY THE BERLIN-RELATED FORUM. ON THE BILATERAL ASPECT, FREQUENT MEETINGS BETWEEN YOU AND GENSCHER WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT. I HOPE MR WALDEGRAVE WILL COME IN EARLY JANUARY. SUDHOFF IS TO VISIT LONDON FOR TALKS WITH THE PUS ON 9 FEBRUARY. I HOPE WESTON WILL VISIT BONN IN JANUARY, TO GET TO KNOW KASTRUP AND EXPERIENCE THE ATMOSPHERE ON THE GERMAN QUESTION. I AGREE THAT RATFORD'S TALKS WITH HOEYNCK, WHO PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE HERE, SHOULD BE USED TO THE FULL.

6. THE INNER GERMAN MINISTRY IS MUCH LESS IMPORTANT IN POLICY MAKING. BUT IT CAN BE A USEFUL SOURCE OF INFORMATION. VISITING MINISTERS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS SHOULD CALL ON FRAU WILMS, THE MINISTER, OR DOBIEY, THE VERY COMPETENT DEPUTY SECRETARY.

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