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TELEGRAM NUMBER 342 OF 18 APRIL

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M.I.P.T. CONVERSATION WITH VON STADEN; FEDERAL CHANCELLOR'S INVITATION TO MOSCOW

1. AS INSTRUCTED IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH GLADSTONE AND VEREKER, I RAISED WITH VON STADEN THE QUESTION OF BREZHNEV'S INVITATION TO CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT TO VISIT MOSCOW. I SAID THAT WE LOOKED FORWARD TO THE CONSULTATIONS WHICH HAD BEEN PROMISED IN VON STADEN'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH WADE-GERY ON 16 APRIL. THE VERY PRELIMINARY REACTION IN LONDON WAS THAT THERE WOULD CLEARLY BE A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS ABOUT WHAT, IF IT TOOK PLACE, WOULD BE THE FIRST HIGH LEVEL CONTACT WITH THE SOVIET UNION SINCE THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN. IN PARTICULAR, THERE WOULD BE PROBLEMS ON TIMING. WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE REACTION OF BRITISH MINISTERS, OFFICIALS IN LONDON THOUGHT THAT THE QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED INCLUDED (A) HOW THE VISIT SHOULD BE RELATED TO THE VENICE SUMMIT AND THE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING IN ANKARA; AND (B) WHAT ITS IMPACT WOULD BE ON THE OLYMPIC GAMES, BEARING IN MIND THAT, IF IT TOOK PLACE IN THE EARLY SUMMER, IT WOULD FALL IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE FINAL DECISION ON WESTERN PARTICIPATION AND THE GAMES THEMSELVES. THESE QUESTIONS APART, WE ASSUMED THAT, IF THE CHANCELLOR DID GO TO MOSCOW, HE WOULD WISH TO SPEAK TO A BRIEF WHICH HAD BEEN CAREFULLY CO-ORDINATED WITH HIS ALLIES AND WOULD WANT TO MAKE FULL USE FOR THIS PURPOSE OF THE VARIOUS SUMMIT MEETINGS WHICH WERE IN PROSPECT. I ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF HERR GENSCHER COULD HAVE A WORD ABOUT ALL THIS WITH YOU IN THE MARGINS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL AT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT WEEK.

2. VON STADEN SAID THAT THE FEDERAL CHANCELLOR HAD THIS MORNING

2. VON STADEN SAID THAT THE FEDERAL CHANCELLOR HAD THIS MORNING GIVEN A CONFIDENTIAL BACKGROUND BRIEFING TO A GROUP OF TRUSTED JOURNALISTS WHICH WOULD BE REFLECTED IN TOMORROW'S PRESS. HE HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAD TAKEN NO DECISION YET ON WHETHER TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION. HE DID NOT REGARD ARMS CONTROL/TNF AS THE MOST URGENT ITEM FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE SOVIET UNION: THE CRITICAL PROBLEMS WERE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN: THE LATTER IN PARTICULAR COULD DEVELOP INTO A SERIOUS CRISIS WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO. ALTHOUGH IT WAS PRIMARILY A US/IRAN PROBLEM, IT WOULD CERTAINLY FIGURE ON ANY AGENDA FOR HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET LEADERS.

3. THE CHANCELLOR HAD EMPHASISED THAT HE DID NOT REGARD THE INVITATION AS A DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE OR ONE IN WHICH ELECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD PLAY A PART. HIS ONLY INTEREST IN GOING TO MOSCOW WOULD BE TO CONTRIBUTE TO DE-ESCALATING THE WORLD CRISIS. NOR HAD HE MADE UP HIS MIND ON TIMING: HE CERTAINLY HOPED TO GO TO MOSCOW SOONER OR LATER: BUT WHETHER IT SHOULD BE IN JUNE OR LATER IN THE YEAR OR EVEN IN 1981 WAS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION. ASKED WHAT THE ELEMENTS IN HIS DECISION WOULD BE, THE CHANCELLOR HAD REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT DISCLOSE THEM. BUT THEY WOULD INVOLVE IN THE FIRST PLACE A CAREFUL CO-ORDINATION (SORGFAELTIGE ABSTIMMUNG) WITH THE FRG'S ALLIES AND SECONDLY PRECISE PREPARATION (GENAUER VORBEREITUNG) WITH THE SOVIET SIDE. HE ENTIRELY AGREED WITH THOSE OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN WHO HAD EMPHASISED THAT, IF HE WENT TO MOSCOW, HE SHOULD GO IN HIS CAPACITY AS HEAD OF A GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS PART OF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE.

4. VON STADEN SAID THAT IT WOULD BE CLEAR TO THE RUSSIANS FROM THE PRESS REPORTS OF THIS BRIEFING THAT THE CHANCELLOR WAS IN NO HURRY TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION AND WOULD BE GOING, IF AT ALL, ONLY AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ALLIANCE. THE SOVIET UNION WOULD THEN HAVE TO SWALLOW THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO BE MADE NEXT WEEK THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS RECOMMENDING AGAINST GERMAN PARTICIPATION IN THE MOSCOW OLYMPICS. IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN WHETHER, IN THE LIGHT OF THAT DECISION, THE SOVIET INVITATION WOULD BE MAINTAINED.

5. ON CONSULTATION, VON STADEN SAID THAT HE HAD ASSURED WADE-GEY, BRZEZINSKI AND WAHL THAT THE THREE ALLIES WOULD BE CONSULTED FIRST AND THAT THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE DONE THROUGH MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. MODALITIES HAD NOT YET BEEN DISCUSSED BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND GENSCHER: THIS WOULD HAPPEN ON SUNDAY AND THE GERMANS WOULD PROBABLY BE IN TOUCH WITH US ON MONDAY 21 APRIL. THE SUGGESTION THAT GENSCHER MIGHT DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH YOU ON 21/22 APRIL WAS A VERY HELPFUL ONE, WHICH HE WOULD TRANSMIT.

6. I ASKED WHETHER THE CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS ON TIMING INDICATED THAT HE WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEA OF POSTPONING THE VISIT UNTIL LATER IN THE YEAR. VON STADEN SAID THAT THE CHANCELLOR WAS VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE TIMING CONSIDERATIONS WHICH I HAD REFERRED TO EARLIER. HE WAS ALSO DETERMINED TO MAKE THE VISIT, IF AT ALL,

TO EARLIER. HE WAS ALSO DETERMINED TO MAKE THE VISIT, IF AT ALL, ONLY ON A QUOTE REALISTIC BASIS UNQUOTE - I.E. IF HE WERE ABLE TO REACH PRIOR AGREEMENT WITH THE ALLIES, AND ALSO WITH THE SOVIET SIDE, ON THE GROUND TO BE COVERED. AT THE SAME TIME, IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THE CHANCELLOR'S OBJECTIVE WAS TO CONTRIBUTE TO DE-ESCALATION AT A TIME WHEN THE CRISIS SEEMED MOST THREATENING. THIS COULD POINT TO AN EARLIER RATHER THAN A LATER DATE. THE CHANCELLOR WAS THE LAST MAN TO OVERSTIMATE HIS OWN WEIGHT: NEVERTHELESS HE THOUGHT THAT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HAVE SOME MITIGATING EFFECT ON SOVIET REACTIONS TO US MEASURES AGAINST IRAN.

7. VON STADEN WENT ON TO EMPHASISE THAT THE CHANCELLOR HAD BEEN IN NO WAY EAGER TO RECEIVE THE SOVIET INVITATION. HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED AS WELL AS PLEASED BY THE POSITIVE REACTION OF OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN. APART FROM HIS STATEMENT OF READINESS TO GO TO MOSCOW MADE DURING THE GOVERNMENT DECLARATION IN JANUARY, HE HAD SENT NO SIGNALS TO THE SOVIET SIDE. HE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE INHERENT DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS - AND ESPECIALLY OF THE RISK OF APPEARING TO LEND HIMSELF TO SOVIET WEDGE-DRIVING TACTICS. WE COULD HOWEVER RELY ON HIM TO DO NOTHING WHICH WOULD ENCOURAGE THE RUSSIANS TO PURSUE SUCH TACTICS. THE CHANCELLOR'S READINESS TO TAKE UP THE INVITATION STEMMED SOLELY FROM HIS VERY DEEP ANXIETY THAT THE IRAN CRISIS IN PARTICULAR COULD BE ESCALATING TOWARDS A SUPER-POWER CONFRONTATION AND CONSEQUENT RISK OF WAR UNLESS THE DIALOGUE WITH THE SOVIET UNION COULD SOMEHOW BE KEPT GOING.

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