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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 358 OF 25 APRIL

INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON, PARIS, UKDEL NATO

Germany
Read in full.

BREZHNEV'S INVITATION TO SCHMIDT

1. I WAS HOST TODAY AT ONE OF THE REGULAR QUADRIPARTITE LUNCHES FOR VAN WELL AND MY AMERICAN AND FRENCH COLLEAGUES AND ONE OF THE SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION WAS BREZHNEV'S INVITATION TO CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT. I ASKED VAN WELL WHAT THE GERMAN ANALYSIS WAS OF THE REASONS FOR THE INVITATION TO BE ISSUED AT THIS TIME.

2. VAN WELL SAID THAT, IN THE GERMAN VIEW, THE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP HAD TAKEN A DECISION IN MID-MARCH BEFORE BREZHNEV WENT ON HOLIDAY THAT THE THEME SHOULD BE QUOTE BUSINESS AS USUAL IN EUROPE UNQUOTE. THIS HAD A NUMBER OF REASONS. FIRST, THE RUSSIANS HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE AMERICANS WERE INCOMMUNICADO UNTIL AFTER THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS. (STOESSEL STRONGLY DENIED THIS). SECONDLY, THE RUSSIANS NATURALLY WISHED TO DO WHAT THEY COULD TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE EUROPEANS AND THE AMERICANS: GROMYKO'S VISIT TO PARIS AND THE INVITATION TO SCHMIDT TO VISIT MOSCOW WERE ALL PART OF THE SAME TACTICS. OTHER EVIDENCE WHICH POINTED IN THE SAME DIRECTION WAS THE PRESENT VISIT OF THE POLISH VICE-PREMIER TO BONN AND THE COMPARATIVE EASE WITH WHICH THE PRESENT ROUND OF INNER-GERMAN NEGOTIATIONS WAS BEING CONDUCTED. BRUNET CONFIRMED THAT HIS LUNCH WITH ABRASIMOV ON 23 APRIL HAD BEEN AS UNEVENTFUL AS MY LAST LUNCH WITH HIM ON 19 MARCH HAD BEEN: ABRASIMOV HAD MADE HIS USUAL LIST OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN A COMPARATIVELY MILD FORM. I POINTED OUT THAT IN THE PAST BREZHNEV HAD BEEN VERY INSISTENT THAT TOP LEVEL MEETINGS SHOULD ONLY TAKE PLACE AFTER THE MEETING HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY PREPARED AND WHEN THERE WERE AGREEMENTS TO BE SIGNED. HAD THE SITUATION NOW CHANGED? VAN WELL SAID THAT WHEN THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAD DELIVERED BREZHNEV'S INVITATION, THERE HAD BEEN NO QUESTION OF FRESH AGREEMENTS TO BE SIGNED BUT SEMYONOV HAD SAID ONLY THAT NOTHING SHOULD BE DONE AT THE MEETING TO JEOPARDISE THE GOOD ATMOSPHERE BY RAISING EXTRANEIOUS SUBJECTS.

3. I THEN ASKED VAN WELL WHAT, IN THE GERMAN VIEW, WAS TO BE GAINED FROM SUCH A MEETING. VAN WELL REPLIED THAT THERE WERE VERY FEW BILATERAL SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION: ONE WAS THE QUESTION OF THE RE-UNIFICATION OF FAMILIES, WHICH HAD FALLEN OFF IN RECENT MONTHS. BUT THERE WERE OTHER GENERAL SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION. TO BEGIN WITH IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO FIND OUT WHETHER DOBRYNIN'S RECENT APPROACH TO VANCE WAS INTENDED AS A SOVIET REPLY TO EUROPEAN IDEAS ABOUT A NEUTRAL AND NON-ALIGNED AFGHANISTAN. SECONDLY, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO PERSUADE THE RUSSIANS TO RE-STATE THEIR GENERAL POSITION ON THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES, WHICH HAD INITIALLY BEEN HELPFUL. THIRDLY, AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT, THERE WOULD BE AN

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OPPORTUNITY TO GO OVER TO THE OFFENSIVE ON THE ARMS CONTROL ASPECTS OF THE NATO DECISION OF 19 DECEMBER. VAN WELL HASTENED TO ADD THAT THIS WOULD BE QUOTE WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS UNQUOTE, THAT IS TO SAY, THERE WOULD BE NO QUESTION OF HOLDING UP THE NATO DECISION ON TNF MODERNISATION. FINALLY, VAN WELL ADMITTED THAT THERE WAS A DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATION. AFTER THE SPD DIS-ARMAMENT CONFERENCE IN COLOGNE LAST WEEK-END IT WAS HIGHLY DESIRABLE FOR THE CHANCELLOR, IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HIS PARTY, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE ARMS CONTROL ASPECT OF THE NATO DECISION HAD NOT BEEN LOST SIGHT OF.

4. AS FOR TIMING, VAN WELL SAID THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE BEFORE THE VENICE SUMMIT. THIS WOULD BE TO EMPHASISE THAT SCHMIDT WOULD ONLY GO TO MOSCOW AFTER THE FULLEST CONSULTATION WITH HIS WESTERN PARTNERS AND THEREFORE, AS IT WERE, FROM A POSITION FOUR-SQUARE WITHIN THE ALLIANCE. THE ASSUMPTION WAS THAT, IF THE INVITATION WERE ACCEPTED, IT WOULD BE FOR A DATE BETWEEN THE VENICE SUMMIT AND THE START OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES. VAN WELL EMPHASISED THAT THE CHANCELLOR HAD TAKEN NO FINAL DECISION TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION, BUT THE WHOLE TENOR OF HIS REMARKS ASSUMED THAT THE CHANCELLOR WAS WORKING TOWARDS AN EVENTUAL ACCEPTANCE.

5. I AGREE WITH VAN WELL'S ASSESSMENT OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPORTANCE TO SCHMIDT OF THE INVITATION. A REFUSAL WOULD SIMPLY NOT BE UNDERSTOOD LOCALLY, BOTH IN VIEW OF THE GERMAN LONGING FOR DETENTE TO BE SEEN TO CONTINUE AND ALSO AS A POWERFUL CHANCELLOR-BONUS IN THE RUN-UP TO THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS.

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