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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO FRG: 16/17 SEPTEMBER
PRESS COMMENT

TWO LEADING NEWSPAPERS TODAY CARRY FAVOURABLE COMMENTARIES ON THE STATE OF UK-FRG RELATIONS AND ON THE PROSPECTS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT WHICH STARTS TOMORROW.

2. WRITING IN "DIE WELT" (CONSERVATIVE, 200,000 COPIES) CONRAD - WHO HAS INTERVIEW WITH MRS THATCHER TOMORROW - COMMENTS THAT: IN KEEPING WITH THE PRAGMATIC STYLE OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS, ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS ARE MORE DOWN TO EARTH THAN THE FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP. THE PROFESSIONALISM OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY AND FREQUENTLY PARALLEL INTERESTS HAVE LED TO A REMARKABLY MATTER-OF-FACT WAY OF DEALING WITH EACH OTHER. THERE ARE NO PERSONALITY PROBLEMS IN LONDON COMPARABLE TO THOSE BETWEEN MITTERRAND AND CHIRAC. MRS THATCHER REPRESENTS PERSONAL CONTINUITY, ALTHOUGH HER SELF-WILLED CHARACTER ALSO PRESENTS PROBLEMS FOR HER PARTNERS. ALL THIS MIGHT HAVE HELPED TO MAKE REGULAR CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE IRON LADY AND CHANCELLOR RATHER RARE LATELY, APART FROM SOME MEETINGS AT THE PERIPHERY OF SUMMIT CONFERENCES. THIS MAKES THATCHER'S VISIT TO BONN TOMORROW ALL THE MORE WELCOME. IT WOULD BE QUITE WRONG TO SUSPECT THE WISH FOR A "COUNTER-BALANCE" TO FRANCO-GERMAN FRIENDSHIP BEHIND SUCH CONTACTS. THE PM SAID HERSELF IN A WELT INTERVIEW 2 YEARS AGO: "I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ONE FRIENDSHIP EXCLUDES FRIENDSHIP WITH OTHERS". THE FACT IS THAT THE EUROPEANS, AND PARTICULARLY THE GERMANS, NEED THE COSMOPOLITAN APPROACH, THE COMMON SENSE AND RELIABILITY OF THE BRITISH. FOR THE FRG THIS IS ALSO REFLECTED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE FIRST-RATE RHINE ARMY. AND SO ONE WELCOMES THE FACT THAT THE CHANCELLOR WILL PAY HIS RESPECT TO THESE TROOPS ON WED. TOGETHER WITH MRS THATCHER.

3. THE RHEINISCHE POST (DUESSELDORF'S MAIN NEWSPAPER: CONSERVATIVE: 395,000) PRINTS A COMMENTARY FROM THEIR LONDON CORRESPONDENT KUBALLA, WHO SUGGEST THAT SINCE NOTHING IS HAPPENING AT PRESENT BETWEEN LONDON AND PARIS, RELATIONS WITH THE FRG ARE GAINING IMPORTANCE FOR HMG. THE 18TH SUMMIT IN BONN THIS WEEK IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR MRS THATCHER. RELATIONS ARE SO GOOD THAT, WHILE THE TOP PEOPLE PLAY A CERTAIN ROLE FOR THE ATMOSPHERE, THEY DO NOT AFFECT SUBSTANTIAL AND PRACTICAL CONTACTS AT ALL LEVELS. THE FIRST JOINT VISIT BY THE TWO HEADS OF GOVERNMENT TO BFG IS MEANT TO UNDERLINE THIS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BRITAIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEFENCE IN EUROPE. DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES IN LONDON STRESS THAT THATCHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH KOHL HAS IMPROVED. BOTH SIDES MAKE EFFORTS TO LISTEN TO EACH OTHER AND TO RESPOND EVEN IF THEIR CHARACTERS ARE SO DIFFERENT.

4. FCO: PLEASE PASS TO NO 10 PRESS OFFICE.

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