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CONFIDENTIAL
FM BMG BERLIN
TO IMMEDIATE BONN
TELNO 103
OF 121605Z JUNE 87
INFO IMMEDIATE FCO
INFO PRIORITY PARIS, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW, EAST BERLIN

MY TELNO 102 (NOT TO ALL) : PRESIDENT REAGAN'S VISIT TO BERLIN

SUMMARY

1. IN THE EVENT, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION ON THE EVENING OF 11 JUNE, THE VISIT WAS NOT OVERSHADOWED BY INCIDENTS AND MUST BE JUDGED A CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS. THE PRESIDENT WAS IN EBULLIENT FORM. HIS SPEECH AT THE BRANDENBURG GATE WAS RHETORICALLY POWERFUL, AND GAINED IN EMOTIONAL IMPACT FROM THE SYMBOLISM OF ITS SETTING. THE BERLINERS GENERALLY WELCOMED ITS POSITIVE TONE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE CITY. HOWEVER, THE SPECIFIC NEW PROPOSALS ON BERLIN DID NOT APPEAR TO MAKE MUCH IMMEDIATE IMPRESSION ON THE AUDIENCE. WE SHALL REPORT FURTHER ON MEDIA COVERAGE.

DETAIL

2. PRESIDENT REAGAN'S VISIT TO BERLIN ON 12 JUNE IN CONNECTION WITH THE CITY'S 750TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS WAS HIS SECOND TO THE CITY, HIS FIRST HAVING BEEN IN 1982. HE WAS IN BERLIN ONLY FOR SOME FOUR AND A HALF HOURS, AND THUS NOTICEABLY SHORTER THAN THOSE OF PRESIDENT MITTERRAND AND, PARTICULARLY, HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN. THE MAIN EVENTS WERE A CALL ON PRESIDENT AND FREIFRAU VON WEIZSAECKER AT SCHLOSS BELLEVUE, A VISIT TO THE REICHSTAG, A SPEECH AT THE BRANDENBURG GATE AND AN AMERICAN STYLE BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR BERLIN AT TEMPELHOF AIRPORT.

3. ON 11 JUNE, SOME 20,000 PEOPLE DEMONSTRATED AGAINST THE PRESIDENT. THIS PROTEST PASSED OFF PEACEFULLY IN THE MAIN, BUT AFTERWARDS THERE WERE A NUMBER OF RELATIVELY SMALL SCALE INCIDENTS. HOWEVER, THESE WERE WELL CONTAINED BY THE POLICE, AND DID NOT REALLY JUSTIFY THE PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THEM BY THE MEDIA, INCLUDING THE BBC WORLD SERVICE. A DEMONSTRATION PLANNED FOR TODAY WAS BANNED, AND AGAIN SUCH TROUBLE AS HAS OCCURRED HAS BEEN QUICKLY DEALT

AND AGAIN SUCH TROUBLE AS HAS OCCURRED HAS BEEN QUICKLY DEALT WITH. THE FEARS THAT THE VISIT MIGHT BE OVERSHADOWED BY VIOLENT CLASHES HAVE NOT BEEN REALISED. NOR IN THE EVENT WERE THERE ANY INCIDENTS IN THE UNTERBAUGEDIET - THE RUSSIANS AND EAST GERMANS KEPT OUT OF THE AREA, ALTHOUGH THROUGHOUT THE VISIT TO THE REICHSTAG AND THE BRANDENBURG GATE, EAST GERMAN GUARDS WATCHED THE PROCEEDINGS CLOSELY FROM THEIR SIDE OF THE WALL.

4. THE MOST MEMORABLE PART OF THE VISIT WAS THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH AT THE BRANDENBURG GATE, WHICH WAS PRECEDED BY SPEECHES OF WELCOME BY THE GOVERNING MAYOR AND CHANCELLOR KOHL. A CROWD OF SOME 30,000 PEOPLE HAD BEEN INVITED TO HEAR THE SPEECH. WE THINK (EAST BERLIN MAY BE ABLE TO COMMENT) THAT SOME EAST BERLINERS ALSO LISTENED ON THEIR SIDE OF THE WALL.

5. ALTHOUGH THE AUDIENCE WERE BY THEN RATHER WEARY FROM WAITING WHEN THE PRESIDENT ARRIVED, HE WAS GREETED WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM. AND, THANKS TO THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SETTING, THE PRESIDENT'S MASTERFUL DELIVERY AND HIS USE OF A NUMBER OF GERMAN PHRASES, HIS SPEECH HAD A POWERFUL EMOTIONAL IMPACT. PREDICTABLY, THE LOUDEST APPLAUSE CAME FOR HIS CALL TO MR GORBACHEV, IF HE WANTED PEACE AND LIBERALISATION, TO OPEN THE BRANDENBURG GATE AND TO TEAR DOWN THE WALL. THROUGHOUT THE SPEECH, THERE WAS REPEATED EMPHASIS ON THE INABILITY OF TYRANNY TO WITHSTAND THE IDEALS OF FREEDOM.

6. THE PROPOSALS FOR BRINGING EAST AND WEST BERLIN CLOSER TOGETHER WHICH HAD BEEN FORESHADOWED IN THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER (FCO TELNO 278 TO YOU) WERE ALL PUT FORWARD, BUT THOSE ON AIR TRAFFIC, THE HOLDING OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND YOUTH EXCHANGES DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ANY GREAT INITIAL IMPACT ON THE AUDIENCE. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN BECAUSE THEY WERE PUT FORWARD IN NON-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE, OR THE EXPLANATION MAY BE SIMPLY

THAT SINCE THE PRESIDENT WAS SPEAKING IN ENGLISH (ALTHOUGH GERMAN TEXTS WERE AVAILABLE) MANY OF THE BERLINERS IN THE CROWD DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND HIS WORDS AND THE ALLIES IN THE CROWD DID NOT FULLY APPRECIATE THIS SIGNIFICANCE. INFORMAL COMMENT WAS SCEPTICAL ABOUT WHETHER THEY WOULD COME TO ANYTHING. THERE WAS MUCH MORE ENTHUSIASM FOR THE ONE SPECIFIC, IF SOMEWHAT VISIONARY, PROPOSAL, FOR HOLDING THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN BERLIN IN BOTH EAST AND WEST. WE SHALL REPORT FURTHER ON THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS WHEN THERE HAS BEEN A CHANCE TO ASSESS THE MEDIA COVERAGE.

7. FOR THE REST, THE SPEECH CONTAINED NO SURPRISES. THE PRESIDENT DID NOT HAVE ANYTHING VERY NEW TO SAY ON THE BROADER ASPECTS OF EAST/WEST RELATIONS ALTHOUGH HE DID SPEAK, AS HAD CHANCELLOR KOHL, OF HOW THE WEST'S FIRMNESS ON INF HAD BROUGHT AN AGREEMENT WITHIN REACH.

8. IN GENERAL, BOTH THE AMERICANS AND THE BERLIN SENAT ARE PLEASED, AND PERHAPS A LITTLE RELIEVED, AT THE WAY THE VISIT HAS GONE. THOUGH NOT EPOCH-MAKING OR UNIVERSALLY POPULAR, IT WAS IN THE END AN EVENT WHICH HAS HELPED TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS BETWEEN AMERICANS AND BERLINERS AND HAS UNDERLINED IN A WORTHY MANNER THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO BERLIN.

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