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GERMANY AND NATO: SPD VIEWS

SUMMARY

1. THE SPD'S LIKELY CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE, LAFONTAINE OPPOSES A UNITED GERMANY STAYING IN NATO. CRITICISM FROM CDU AND FDP. EVEN SPD HIERARCHY EXPRESS PRIVATE DOUBTS.

DETAIL

2. ON SAARLAND RADIO ON 3 MARCH, LAFONTAINE SAID THAT KOHL WAS MISTAKEN IF HE BELIEVED THAT GERMANY COULD STAY IN NATO. A UNITED GERMANY SHOULD RATHER BE EMBEDDED IN A NEW EUROPEAN DEFENCE COMMUNITY, A COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM WHICH COMPRISED ALL STATES OF EUROPE AND 'COOPERATED WITH' THE US, CANADA AND THE SOVIET UNION. LAFONTAINE POINTED OUT THAT CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS IN FRANCE, THE FRG AND OTHER STATES HAD EXPRESSED SIMILAR IDEAS A YEAR AGO. IN A SPEECH ON 28 FEBRUARY, LAFONTAINE RECALLED THAT TEN YEARS AGO HE HAD ARGUED FOR A EUROPEAN DEFENCE SYSTEM, IN WHICH THE FRG FOR A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD WOULD HAVE A STATUS LIKE FRANCE OR SPAIN (EG NOT IN NATO'S INTEGRATED MILITARY STRUCTURE).

3. THE SPD OPPOSITION LEADER IN LOWER SAXONY, SCHROEDER, HAS SUPPORTED LAFONTAINE. BUT THE SPD MINISTER-PRESIDENT OF NORTH RHINE WESTFALIA, RAU, TOLD ME ON 4 MARCH THAT HE AND SPD CHAIRMAN VOGEL COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT LAFONTAINE WAS UP TO.

4. FMOD STATE SECRETARY WIMMER (CDU) HAS ACUSSED LAFONTAINE OF PUTTING HIS PERSONAL INTEREST IN POWER BEFORE THE INTERESTS OF GERMAN AND EUROPEAN SECURITY. FDP DEFENCE EXPERT RONNEBURGER SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND LAFONTAINE'S DEMAND, WHEN THE TWO ALLIANCES WERE ALREADY BECOMING LESS MILITARY AND MORE POLITICAL.

5. A CRITICAL LEADER IN THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE (CONSERVATIVE)

POINTS OUT THAT IN THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE COMMUNITY ENVISAGED BY LAFONTAINE, A UNITED GERMANY WOULD BE THE STRONGEST POWER. TO BALANCE IT EITHER THE SOVIET UNION WOULD HAVE TO BE INCLUDED, WHICH THE STATES OF EASTERN EUROPE WOULD NOT WELCOME, OR THE US AND CANADA, WHICH NATO ALREADY OFFERED.

COMMENT

6. LAFONTAINE HAS NOW MADE CLEAR THAT HE REMAINS ON THE ANTI-NATO END OF THE SPD SPECTRUM. DESPITE THE HEADLINES, HOWEVER, HE STILL SEEMS PREPARED TO CONTEMPLATE GERMAN MEMBERSHIP OF THE ALLIANCE, BUT NOT OF ITS INTEGRATED MILITARY STRUCTURE, AS AN INTERIM STEP ON THE WAY TO A 'EUROPEAN DEFENCE COMMUNITY'. PERHAPS MORE SURPRISING IS HIS APPARENT ADVOCACY OF A EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM EXCLUDING THE US AND SOVIET UNION. BY 'CONSERVATIVE POLITICIANS' HE PROBABLY HAD IN MIND FIGURES SUCH AS DREGGER IN THE CDU/CSU, WHO HAVE AT TIME CALLED FOR A EUROPEAN DEFENCE COMMUNITY, EXCLUDING THE US, CANADA AND THE SOVIET UNION, BUT WHO ARE PLAYING DOWN SUCH IDEAS AT PRESENT.

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