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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 274

OF 051925Z MARCH 90

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MY TELNO 266: POLAND'S WESTERN BORDER

SUMMARY

1. CRITICISM OF KOHL FROM FDP, SPD AND HIS PREDECESSOR AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU. HE COMMENTS FURTHER. INTRA-COALITION DEBATE, TO BE CONTINUED ON 6 MARCH.

DETAIL

2. THE FDP HAVE REACTED SHARPLY TO KOHL'S ATTEMPT TO LINK ON THE ONE HAND THE BORDER QUESTION AND ON THE OTHER REPARATIONS AND THE RIGHTS OF THE GERMAN MINORITY IN POLAND. IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW ON 4 MARCH GENSCHER SAID THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF EXPANDING THE DISCUSSION OF REPARATIONS. SO LONG AS THE BORDER QUESTION WAS KEPT OPEN THE DOOR TO GERMAN UNITY WOULD STAY CLOSED. ON 3 MARCH LAMBSDORFF (FDP CHAIRMAN) SAID HE WAS UNHAPPY ABOUT KOHL'S STATEMENT AND CRITICISED THE CHANCELLOR FOR RAISING THE 'HIGHLY DELICATE QUESTION OF REPARATIONS'. ON 5 MARCH, FOLLOWING A MEETING OF THE FDP PRAESIDIUM, HE SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE CHANCELLOR HAD BROUGHT THAT SUBJECT INTO THE EQUATION. POLAND HAD ALREADY RENOUNCED CLAIMS TO REPARATIONS IN 1953 AND THERE WAS NO REASON TO DOUBT THE POLISH GOVERNMENT'S WORD.

3. ON 3 MARCH VOGEL (SPD CHAIRMAN) WARNED THAT STATEMENTS SUCH AS KOHL'S COULD TURN NOT ONLY POLAND BUT THE WHOLE OF EUROPE AND THE US AGAINST GERMAN UNIFICATION. HE CALLED ON THE FDP AND FRAU SUESSMUTH (PRESIDENT OF THE BUNDESTAG) TO BRING KOHL TO HIS SENSES, AND ADVANCED AN SPD PLAN FOR CONSULTATION BETWEEN POLAND AND THE TWO GERMANIES LEADING TO A TREATY. IN THE BUNDESTAG THE SPD ARE PRESSING FOR A DEBATE ON THIS SUBJECT ON EITHER 7 OR 8 MARCH.

4. FOR THE CDU/CSU DREGGER, LEADER OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY, HAS EXPRESSED FULL SUPPORT FOR KOHL, ARGUING THAT IT IS THE CHANCELLOR'S DUTY TO REPRESENT GERMAN INTERESTS. RUETTIGERS, A PARTY WHIP, CLAIMED ON 3 MARCH THAT POLISH POLITICIANS HAD RECENTLY BEEN CASTING DOUBT ON THE VALIDITY OF THE 1953 TREATY WITH THE GDR IN WHICH THE POLES HAD RENOUNCED CLAIMS FOR REPARATIONS, CLAIMING THAT IT HAD BEEN

SIGNED UNDER SOVIET PRESSURE. POLAND THEREFORE NEEDED TO REAFFIRM THAT TREATY WITH A UNITED GERMANY. BARZEL, KOHL'S PREDECESSOR AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU, SAID KOHL WAS LIKE 'A BULL IN A CHINA SHOP', AND NOTED HOW GENSCHER WAS CONSTANTLY HAVING TO TIDY UP THE MESS THE CHANCELLOR LEFT BEHIND HIM.

5. FOLLOWING A MEETING OF THE CDU PRAESIDIUM ON 5 MARCH KOHL DEFENDED HIS POSITION TO THE PRESS. HE STRESSED THAT THE GERMANS HAD A LEGITIMATE WISH TO SEE THE THREE TOPICS OF POLAND'S WESTERN BORDER, REPARATIONS AND THE PROTECTION OF MINORITIES LEGALLY SETTLED IN THE CONTEXT OF GERMAN UNIFICATION, AND HE WAS DUTY BOUND AS CHANCELLOR TO MAKE SURE THAT HAPPENED. HE AND GENSCHER WERE NOT IN FACT FAR APART. A TREATY DEALING WITH THE BORDER QUESTION COULD BE NEGOTIATED AND RATIFIED ONLY BY A PAN-GERMAN GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT. COMPENSATION LINKED TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR HAD FOR YEARS BEEN ONE OF POLAND'S DEMANDS VIS-A-VIS THE FRG. AS FOR MINORITY RIGHTS, IT WAS THE 'MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD', GIVEN THE HALF MILLION PLUS GERMAN MINORITY IN POLAND, TO INCLUDE THIS IN AN AGREEMENT WITH POLAND. AT THE SAME TIME THERE COULD BE AGREEMENT ON THE RIGHTS OF THE POLISH COMMUNITY IN GERMANY.

6. KOHL AND GENSCHER MET ON THE AFTERNOON OF 5 MARCH TO DISCUSS THEIR DIFFERENCES, PRIOR TO A PLANEED MEETING OF COALITION LEADERS ON THIS SUBJECT ON THE MORNING OF 6 MARCH.

COMMENT

7. THE DISPUTE HAS RECEIVED WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN THE FRG MEDIA, MUCH OF IT HIGHLY CRITICAL OF KOHL, WHOSE STANCE IS SEEN AS BOTH GRACELESS AND ILL-ADVISED. SEVERAL PAPERS ARGUE THAT BY BENDING OVER BACKWARDS TO ACCOMMODATE THE RIGHT WING FRINGE HE IS PUTTING AT RISK THE WHOLE PROCESS OF UNIFICATION.

8. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHY HE HAS LINKED REPARATIONS TO THE BORDER ISSUE. HE APPEARS TO BE CLASSIFYING UNDER THAT HEAD THE LONGSTANDING POLISH REQUEST FOR COMPENSATION FOR THOSE POLES WHO DID FORCED LABOUR IN GERMANY DURING THE WAR. THAT FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS LEADING UP TO THE FRG/POLISH JOINT DECLARATION OF LAST NOVEMBER, BUT WAS NEVER ACCEPTED BY THE GERMANS. HE MAY NOW BE TRYING TO BLOCK OFF FURTHER POLISH PURSUIT OF THE ISSUE.

9. GENSCHER WILL BE ANNOYED BY SEVERAL FEATURES OF KOHL'S STATEMENT. FIRST, IT WAS EVIDENTLY MADE WITHOUT CONSULTATION. SECONDLY, IT IS ON A SUBJECT WHERE HE HAS MADE THE INTERNATIONAL RUNNING WITH THE AIM OF REASSURING GERMANY'S NEIGHBOURS. KOHL'S EFFORTS HAVE DONE THE

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OPPOSITE. GENSCHER WILL NOW SEE HIMSELF AS HAVING TO REPAIR THE
DAMAGE, WHICH MAY NOT BE EASY. HE HAS BEEN SHARPLY CRITICAL IN
PUBLIC, PARTLY NO DOUBT TO PICK UP WHAT DOMESTIC CAPITAL MAY BE
AVAILABLE OUT OF KOHL'S CLUMSINESS. HE MAY HOPE TO CATCH SOME
DISAFFECTED CDU VOTERS. HIS ALIGNMENT WITH THE SPD ON THE ISSUE PUTS
PRESSURE ON KOHL.

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