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UNCLASSIFIED
FM BRUSSELS
TO DESKBY 271300Z FCO
TELNO 135
OF 271138Z APR 90
INFO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN
INFO SAVING OTHER EC POSTS

INFORMAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL: INTERVIEW WITH BELGIAN PRIME MINISTER

1. TODAY'S LA LIBRE BELGIQUE (CATHOLIC CONSERVATIVE) CARRIED A FULL PAGE INTERVIEW WITH MARTENS ON HIS EXPECTATIONS FOR DUBLIN. MOST OF THE GROUND COVERED IS PREDICTABLE: SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN UNION AND ACCELERATED EUROPEAN POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION. THE FOLLOWING POINTS ARE WORTH NOTING:

I) THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE IRISH PRIME MINISTER HAD PICKED UP FOUR POINTS FROM THE BELGIAN MEMORANDUM - IE DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY, EFFICIENCY OF THE INSTITUTIONS, ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION AND A COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY. WHILE MRS THATCHER WOULD OPPOSE AT DUBLIN AND ANY PROPOSALS FOR ACCELERATED EUROPEAN UNION, HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT DURING AN IGC ON POLITICAL UNION THE UK WOULD COME TO ACCEPT ALL THE ESSENTIALS.

II) EUROPEAN COMMISSION

THE COMMISSION SHOULD FULFIL THE ROLE OF A CENTRAL EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT, ACCOUNTABLE TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WHO WOULD APPOINT THE COMMISSION. THE QUESTION WAS WHETHER THE COUNCIL SHOULD BECOME THE SECOND CHAMBER AS IN A FEDERAL SYSTEM. HE AGREED WITH MRS THATCHER ON THE NEED TO AVOID CREATING A LARGE BUREAUCRACY. HENCE THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBSIDIARITY.

III) GERMAN UNIFICATION

A UNITED GERMANY SHOULD NOT BE NEUTRAL BUT FULLY INTEGRATED WITHIN THE EC. BELGIUM WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT SOME COST FOR ITS PUBLIC FINANCES BUT THIS WOULD BE BALANCED BY A BOOST TO THE ECONOMY INCLUDING THE POSSIBLE CREATION OF 50,000 NEW JOBS. THE BELGIUM TAXPAYER MUST BE MADE TO UNDERSTAND THAT BELGIAN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY WAS LINKED TO EC GROWTH.

IV) INNER BENELUX RELATIONS

THERE HAD BEEN A DETERIORATION IN BENELUX COORDINATION ON EC ISSUES IN RECENT YEARS, EG PROBLEMS WITH LUXEMBOURG OVER FISCAL MATTERS AND WITH THE DUTCH GIVEN THEIR TENDENCY TO FOLLOW THE UK LINE, BUT THIS WAS NOW BEGINNING TO IMPROVE AGAIN.

V) ROLE OF BRUSSELS

COMPARABLE TO WASHINGTON DC, IE WHILE GEOGRAPHICALLY AT THE EDGE, IT MAINTAINED A POSITION AT THE POLITICAL CENTRE. BELGIUM WOULD

HAVE A LOT IN ITS FAVOUR FOR THE FUTURE TO OFFSET A POLITICAL SHIFT TO THE EAST INCLUDING A POPULATION OPEN TO EUROPE, AND A EUROPEAN VOCATION. MARTENS WOULD FIGHT TO DEFEND BRUSSELS AS THE SEAT OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS.

VI) MARTENS ACKNOWLEDGED HIS EUROPEAN AMBITIONS TO SUCCEED DELORS AS COMMISSION PRESIDENT BUT THIS WOULD DEPEND ON THE BELGIAN ELECTIONS IN 1992.

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MR BAYNE

MR KERR

RESIDENT CLERK

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MR D A HADLEY CABINET OFFICE

MR B BENDER CABINET OFFICE

MR J OXFORD CABINET OFFICE

MR L PARKER CABINET OFFICE

MR N L WICKS HMT

MR H P EVANS HMT

MR R ALLEN HMT

MR M. MERCER HMT

MR C ROBERTS DTI VIC ST

PERMANENT SECRETARY MAFF

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