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PS
PS / Mr Howard
PS / Lt Belstead
Sir Bullard
Mr Goodison
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FM BONN 021035Z FEB 83

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 112 OF 02 FEBRUARY

INFO SAVING WASHINGTON MOSCOW UKDEL NATO BMG BERLIN CGS IN FRG
CICC(G).

YOUR TELNO 46: VISIT OF CHANCELLOR KOHL (AND HERR GENSCHER)
TO CHEQUERS, 4 FEBRUARY.

1. KOHL'S AND GENSCHER'S THOUGHTS ARE CURRENTLY DOMINATED BY THE FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE CDU/CSU'S SUPPORT IN THE OPINION POLLS HAS HELD FAIRLY STEADY AT ABOUT 47 PERCENT, ALTHOUGH ONE RECENT POLL SHOWED IT SOMEWHAT LOWER. THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME IS STILL THAT THE CDU/CSU WILL BE RETURNED TO POWER ON 6 MARCH, WITH OR WITHOUT THE FDP AS COALITION PARTNER. BUT THE GAP IN THE POLLS BETWEEN THEM AND THE SPD HAS BECOME MUCH NARROWER. VOGEL OF THE SPD HAS SHOWN HIMSELF A MORE ATTRACTIVE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE THAN MANY EXPECTED, AND HIS PARTY HAS MADE MUCH OF THE RUNNING SO FAR ON THE MAIN CAMPAIGN ISSUES. ALTHOUGH HE EXUDES CONFIDENCE KOHL MUST BE UNCOMFORTABLY AWARE OF THE GAP BETWEEN CDU AND SPD.

2. GENSCHER IS FIGHTING FOR HIS POLITICAL LIFE (AMONG OTHER THINGS, USING HIS FOREIGN MINISTER MANTLE TO THE UTMOST AND GAINING MUCH PUBLICITY AS A PROMOTER OF GERMAN INTERESTS IN THE PROCESS). THE FIGHT HAS RECENTLY BEEN GOING WELL. THE FDP'S PROSPECTS OF

~~THE FIGHT HAS RECENTLY BEEN GOING WELL. THE FDP'S PROSPECTS OF STAYING IN THE GOVERNMENT LOOK BETTER THAN FOR SOME TIME. AT THEIR CONFERENCE IN FREIBURG LAST WEEKEND, AT WHICH THEY DECLARED THEMSELVES FOR CONTINUING THE PRESENT COALITION WITH THE CDU, THEY CAME ACROSS AS UNITED, IN STRONG CONTRAST TO THEIR DISARRAY IN BERLIN LAST NOVEMBER. LATEST OPINION POLLS, TAKEN EVEN BEFORE THAT CONFERENCE, SHOW SUPPORT FOR THE FDP RISING FROM 3.3 PERCENT TO VERY NEAR THE CRUCIAL 5 PERCENT, AND THE TECHNICALITIES OF THE SYSTEM MEAN THAT THIS COULD UNDERRATE THEIR TRUE STRENGTH. SUPPORT FOR THE GREENS, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS SLIDING, AND THE IMPRESSION IS GROWING THAT THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO MAKE IT INTO THE BUNDESTAG.~~

3. BUT THERE ARE STILL OVER 4 WEEKS TO GO, AND THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS NOT YET COME FULLY ALIVE. THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF ECONOMIC ISSUES HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN AND SHOWS SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CDU AND FDP. AND THE SPD HAVE MADE SOME FAIRLY EFFECTIVE CRITICISMS, NEVERTHELESS, IT IS TOO SOON TO SAY WHICH SIDE WILL WIN THE ECONOMIC DEBATE IN THE CAMPAIGN.

4. AGAINST THE DECLARED INTENTIONS OF THE MAJOR PARTIES, INF HAS SO FAR BEEN THE DOMINANT THEME, WITH THE SDP, FREE OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICE, SEEKING TO INCREASE THEIR APPEAL BY LAYING GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR MOVEMENT AND SUCCESS IN NEGOTIATIONS. KOHL'S STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE ZERO OPTION AT ONE TIME LOOKED DANGEROUSLY LIKE RIGIDITY, ESPECIALLY AS GENSCHER TRIED TO PROFILE HIS PARTY WITH TALK OF INTERIM SOLUTIONS WHICH WAS NOT HELPFUL TO THE WESTERN POSITION. BUT MITTERRAND'S SPEECH TO THE BUNDESTAG ON 20 JANUARY AND BUSH'S IN BERLIN (MY TELNO 104) HAVE HELPED KOHL'S CREDIBILITY BY EMPHASISING ALLIANCE SOLIDARITY AND SIGNALLING AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS ON ACCEPTABLE TERMS.

ALTHOUGH THE GENERAL LINE OF BUSH'S SPEECH WAS RATHER HARD, KOHL'S STAFF RECKON THAT THE SUMMIT OFFER, OFTEN URGED BY KOHL, WILL HELP THE LATTER IN THE ELECTIONS. MOST OF TODAY'S GERMAN PRESS APPROVES THE REAGAN LETTER AND SUPPORTS THIS VIEW. THERE IS ALSO SOME CRITICISM INCLUDING FROM LEFT-WING SOURCES: BUT VOGEL, BY PUBLICLY STATING HIS APPROVAL OF REAGAN'S INITIATIVE AND REFERRING TO A MORE FLEXIBLE AMERICAN STANCE, HAS NARROWED THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND KOHL ON THE INF ISSUE.

5. KOHL SEES THE CHEQUERS MEETING AS ONE IN A SERIES WITH WESTERN LEADERS WHICH HAS ALREADY INCLUDED THOSE WITH MITTERRAND AND BUSH. HIS KEY PURPOSE IN THESE MEETINGS, APART FROM ELECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS, IS TO DEMONSTRATE WESTERN SOLIDARITY ON SECURITY MATTERS TO

~~ATIONS~~ IS TO DEMONSTRATE WESTERN SOLIDARITY ON SECURITY MATTERS TO MOSCOW AND DOMESTICALLY, AND THUS INCREASE THE PRESSURE ON THE USSR TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY ON INF AFTER THE FEDERAL ELECTION. HE WILL BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS TO SAY ON INF. HE IS EXPECTING HER TO MAKE A STATEMENT AT THE JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE ABOUT THE EXCLUSION OF BRITISH AND FRENCH SYSTEMS, AND IS READY TO SUPPORT THIS.

6. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S INTEREST IN THE COMMUNITY IS AT PRESENT LARGELY CONFINED TO GETTING THE BEST ELECTORAL ADVANTAGE FROM THE PRESIDENCY, AS WAS DEMONSTRATED BY GENSCHER'S PERFUNCTORY PERFORMANCE AT LAST WEEK'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL (UKREP TELNO 352). IT IS THEREFORE UNLIKELY THAT KOHL WILL BE READY TO TALK IN GREAT DETAIL ABOUT THE ISSUES MENTIONED IN PARA 3 OF TUR, BUT EMPHASIS ON THE GERMAN PRESIDENCY IN THE BUDGET CONTEXT SHOULD HELP TO FOCUS KOHL'S ATTENTION ON OUR CONCERNS.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING TO ALL ADDRESSEES EXCEPT BMG BERLIN, CICC(G) AND CONSULATES-GENERAL IN THE FRG.

TAYLOR

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SENT AT 021142Z GU