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INFO IMMEDIATE MOSCOW, WASHINGTON, PARIS, UKDEL NATO

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MY TELNOS 625, 628, 636 AND 637

GORBACHEV'S VISIT TO THE FRG: ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY

1. BIG SUCCESS FOR GORBACHEV AND KOHL. THE EVENT ITSELF AND THE PUBLICITY MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SUBSTANCE. GORBACHEV TOUR DE FORCE OF CONFIDENCE, SKILL AND CHARM, WELL CALCULATED TO CAPTIVATE THE FAMOUSLY SUGGESTIBLE AUDIENCE OF THE WEST GERMAN PUBLIC. SOME OF HIS HEARERS MORE SWAYED THAN OTHERS.

2. MUCH EXAGGERATION FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE VISIT, BUT EVIDENCE THAT THEIR FEET ARE IN FACT WELL ON THE WESTERN GROUND.

3. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CLAIM A CLEAR GAIN IN INFLUENCE FOR THE FRG, ACCEPTED NOW BY BOTH SUPPERPOWERS AS A PARTNER IN LEADERSHIP.

DETAIL

4. FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS GORBACHEV'S MESSAGE FELL ON WILLING EARS. PORTUGALOV'S PORTRAYAL OF THE VISIT ON FRG TELEVISION AS COMPARABLE IN HISTORIC IMPORTANCE TO THE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN ADENAUER AND DE GAULLE OF 1962 WAS MUSIC NOT ONLY TO A VULNERABLE GOVERNMENT FACING AN IMMINENT EUROPEAN ELECTION BUT ALSO TO A BROAD CROSS-SECTION OF THE POPULATION, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG. AS KOHL COMMENTED ON TELEVISION SOME, TWO THIRDS OF TODAY'S WEST GERMANS WERE BORN AFTER THE DEATH OF HITLER, WILL LIVE INTO THE NEXT CENTURY AND WANT TO MAKE A NEW BEGINNING.

5. GORBACHEV PERFORMED WITH CHARACTERISTIC VERVE, IN STRIKING CONTRAST TO THE RECENT LOW KEY VISIT HERE BY BUSH. OPINION POLLS IN ADVANCE OF THE VISIT HAD SHOWN HIM TO BE MORE POPULAR IN THE FRG THAN BUSH OR ANY GERMAN POLITICIAN SAVE WEIZSAECKER. THE POPULAR WELCOME WAS ECSTATIC, AND SEEN BY MANY AS THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC FOR ANY FOREIGN POLITICAL LEADER SINCE THE VISITS OF DE GAULLE IN 1962

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A profoundly
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AND KENNEDY IN 1963. BEHIND THE CHANTS OF 'GORBI, GORBI' LAY A MIXTURE OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS STRENGTH, COURAGE AND DECISIVENESS (IN CONTRAST ESPECIALLY TO KOHL), INTENSE RELIEF AT THE REDUCTION IN THE THREAT FOR WHICH HE IS WIDELY FELT HERE TO BE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE, WILLINGNESS TO BELIEVE THAT HIS INTENTIONS ARE GENUINELY GOOD AND STRONG BUT UNFOCUSSED HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF EAST/WEST RELATIONS.

6. BUT THERE ARE SOME GREY TONES IN THE GENERALLY ROSY IMPRESSION. THE TELEVISION VIEWING FIGURES SHOW THAT GORBACHEV DID NOT DRAW EXCEPTIONAL AUDIENCES. HIS BEST RATING ON 13 JUNE, WHEN HE WAS IN BONN, WAS 6.7 MILLION VIEWERS (AS AGAINST 9.5 MILLION FOR THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES IN BONN IN 1987). THERE HAS BEEN CRITICISM OF 'NAUSEATING' COMMENTARIES AND OF THE USE OF 'GORBI' BY NATIONAL NEWSREADERS, AND EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE PARTIALLY CRITICAL REPORTING IN OTHER COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY THE UK, USA AND FRANCE. THE GERMAN PRESS TOO HAS NOT BEEN ENTIRELY LAUDATORY. THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG AND SUEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF THE STATE OF FRG-SOVIET ECONOMIC RELATIONS, AND MORE THAN ONE COMMENTATOR HAS WARNED THAT GORBACHEV HAS NO MORE THAN A 50 PER CENT CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.

7. SCEPTICISM IS ALSO IN ORDER ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE VISIT. THE CENTREPIECE, THE JOINT DECLARATION, IS INOFFENSIVE: IT GENERALLY CONSISTS OF SENTIMENTS ALREADY ENSHRINED IN CSCE. THE MUCH-VAUNTED PASSAGE ON SELF-DETERMINATION, AND OTHER ELEMENTS, CAN BE HELD TO DENY THE BREZHNEV DOCTRINE AND ENDORSE FREEDOM OF CHOICE FOR THE EAST GERMANS AND OTHERS IN EASTERN EUROPE. THERE IS ALSO SATISFACTION HERE AT THE RECOGNITION OF THE PLACE OF THE USA AND CANADA IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS. BUT THE REALITY IS THAT THE DECLARATION, THOUGH IMPORTANT BILATERALLY AS A MILESTONE IN FRG/SOVIET RELATIONS, IS NOT A SUBSTANTIAL ADDITION TO THE ACQUIS OF EAST/WEST RELATIONS AS A WHOLE. MORE SIGNIFICANT PERHAPS, AT THIS JUNCTURE IN EASTERN EUROPE, WAS GORBACHEV'S PLEDGE TO KOHL (MY TELNO 628) THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL NOT INTERFERE IN THE REFORM PROCESS IN EASTERN EUROPE.

8. NOR DO THE ELEVEN AGREEMENTS SIGNED DURING THE VISIT (MY TELNO 628) NECESSARILY AMOUNT TO MUCH. AS KOHL ADMITS, A GREAT DEAL WILL DEPEND ON FOLLOW UP. IF THE RUSSIANS PROVE WILLING IN PRACTICE TO INCREASE THE EXTENT AND QUALITY OF THEIR COOPERATION WITH THE FRG IN FIGHTING DRUGS AND TERRORISM AND ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS THAT COULD BE GENUINELY USEFUL. SO COULD THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF MANAGEMENT TRAINING, WHILE THE PLANNED CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES COULD

IF SUSTAINED HAVE IMPACT IN THE SOVIET UNION.

9. KOHL (PARAGRAPH 3 OF MY TELNO 625), WIEZSAECKER AND GENSCHER HAVE ALL MADE ABSOLUTELY PLAIN THE STRENGTH OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC'S ENDURING ATTACHMENT TO NATO AND TO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. KOHL WARNED AGAINST PUBLIC EUPHORIA AND STRESSED GORBACHEV'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IN VARIOUS STATEMENTS OF THE FRG'S MEMBERSHIP OF NATO. APART FROM A COUPLE OF REMARKS BY GORBACHEV ON SNF, THERE WAS A MARKED ABSENCE DURING THE VISIT OF SOVIET WEDGE-DRIVING TACTICS.

10. GORBACHEV'S LESS THAN TOTALLY NEGATIVE REMARKS ABOUT THE BERLIN WALL, AND SOME OF HIS OTHER REMARKS, HAVE LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE MAY BE SOME HOPE OF PROGRESS ON THE GERMAN QUESTION IN THE FUTURE. BUT KOHL HAS WARNED AGAINST ILLUSIONS AND GERMAN OFFICIALS' ACCOUNTS OF THE TALKS DO NOT SUGGEST THAT 'NEW THINKING' HAS ALTERED THE SUBSTANCE OF SOVIET POLICY ON GERMANY OR BERLIN.

11. THERE WAS MUCH RHETORICAL STRESS ON THE SCOPE FOR INCREASED ECONOMIC COOPERATION, REFLECTING THE SOVIET UNION'S URGENT NEED FOR HELP AND A KEEN AWARENESS ON THE PART OF FRG BANKS AND COMPANIES OF THE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH COULD FLOW FROM PERESTROIKA. GORBACHEV POINTED OUT (MY TELNO 628) THAT TRADE WITH THE SOVIET UNION ACCOUNTS FOR A VERY SMALL PROPORTION (LESS THAN 2 PER CENT) OF GERMAN FOREIGN TRADE, AND SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF CONSIDERABLE EXPANSION. THE NEW INVESTMENT PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AGREEMENT MAY HELP TO SMOOTH THE WAY FORWARD. BUT THE VISIT WILL NOT OF ITSELF CHANGE THE ECONOMIC REALITIES. AS FEDERAL ECONOMICS MINISTER HAUSSMANN HIMSELF ADMITS, THE LACK OF A CONVERTIBLE CURRENCY AND OF SOVIET GOODS ABLE TO COMPETE IN WESTERN MARKETS REMAIN MAJOR OBSTACLES.

CONCLUSIONS

12. KOHL CAN NOW LOOK BACK ON A SUCCESSFUL NATO SUMMIT FOLLOWED BY SUCCESSIVE SUPER-POWER VISITS WHICH HAVE BEEN SEEN AS ADDING TO THE FRG'S INTERNATIONAL STATURE. HE HAS REASON TO HOPE FOR A NOT TOO BAD RESULT FOR THE CDU IN SUNDAY'S EUROPEAN ELECTIONS. HIS PERFORMANCE HAS IN TRUTH BEEN SKILFUL, MANAGING TO COMBINE A SUCCESSFUL GORBACHEV VISIT WITH REPEATED REMARKS ABOUT THE NEED TO BALANCE OPTIMISM WITH REALISM AND UNDERLINING THE FRG'S WESTERN LINKS.

13. THE KEY RESULT IS A GREAT LEAP FORWARD FOR GORBACHEV'S POPULARITY IN THE FRG AND FOR THE EXPECTATION HERE OF EAST/WEST PROGRESS. IN THE NEAR FUTURE THE GERMAN YEARNING FOR PROGRESS CAN BE EXPECTED TO FOCUS ON THE CFE NEGOTIATIONS. THE DEFENCE

CLIMATE HERE MAY GET EVEN WORSE AS THE THREAT IS PERCEIVED TO
HAVE RECEDED FURTHER. KOHL AND GENSCHER WILL WANT TO ACHIEVE THE
BALANCING ACT OF MAINTAINING THE FRG'S WESTERN LINKS WHILE TUGGING
HARD ON THE REST OF NATO TO MOVE WITH THEM IN EAST-WEST PROGRESS.
PUBLIC OPINION HERE WILL EXPECT NO LESS, AND GENSCHER ESPECIALLY
WILL BE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS.

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