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KOHL'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

SUMMARY

1. KOHL TOOK A FIRM LINE IN WASHINGTON ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT FORUM. THE GERMANS ARE STRUCK BY THE NEW AMERICAN MOOD.

DETAIL

2. I SAW VOLKER RUEHE (CDU PARLIAMENTARY DEFENCE SPOKESMAN) WITHIN AN HOUR OF HIS RETURN TO BONN TODAY AS A MEMBER OF KOHL'S DELEGATION IN WASHINGTON. RUEHE HAD HIMSELF VISITED MOSCOW IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE WASHINGTON TRIP, WHICH IS PRESUMABLY WHY KOHL PAID HIM THE SIGNAL DISTINCTION OF INCLUDING HIM IN HIS PARTY (AND APPARENTLY IN THE BULK OF THE TALKS). RUEHE IS ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST YOUNG POLITICIANS IN THIS COUNTRY, CLOSE TO KOHL BUT SUSPECT IN THE EYES OF STRAUSS. RUEHE GAVE HIS PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS: A FULL EPC BRIEFING WILL TAKE PLACE LATER TODAY IN WASHINGTON.

REYKJAVIK DISARMAMENT ISSUES

3. RUEHE SAID THAT KOHL HAD WANTED TO CONVEY FULL SUPPORT, IN GENERAL TERMS, FOR THE ARMS CONTROL POSITION TAKEN BY REAGAN AT REYKJAVIK. BUT HE HAD ALSO SPOKEN STRONGLY OF THE NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT EUROPEAN SECURITY INTERESTS. HE HAD "ACCEPTED" (DELIBERATELY NOT A STRONGER WORD) THE PROPOSAL FOR ZERO LRINF IN EUROPE, BUT ONLY IF THERE WERE A STRINGENT LINK TO SRINF. KOHL HAD SPOKEN AGAINST THE IDEA AT REYKJAVIK OF SIMPLY A FREEZE ON SRINF AND A LINK TO SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATIONS: THERE MUST BE A GUARANTEE OF SUCH NEGOTIATIONS, AND AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON EQUAL CEILINGS AT A LOW LEVEL, BUT A LEVEL ABOVE ZERO.

4. ON SDI, KOHL HAD CONTINUED TO SUPPORT RESEARCH, BUT SOLELY WITHIN THE RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE ABM TREATY.

5. KOHL'S MAIN THRUST WAS ON THE DANGER OF REDUCING STRATEGIC NUCLEAR SYSTEMS BELOW 50 PERCENT WITHOUT PROGRESS ON CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT WHICH RECTIFIED THE IMBALANCE IN EUROPE. RUEHE SAID THIS MEANT THAT THE FIRST 50 PERCENT REDUCTIONS COULD TAKE PLACE AS LONG AS CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS WERE IN TRAIN. BUT THE SECOND PHASE, BELOW 50 PERCENT CUTS, COULD NOT START UNLESS THERE WERE RESULTS ON THE CONVENTIONAL IMBALANCE. HE DESCRIBED THIS AS A FIRM LINKAGE. FOR EUROPE, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO AVOID NOT JUST THE DANGER OF NUCLEAR WAR, BUT OF ALL WAR. -1-

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6. I SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD TAKEN A STRONG LINE ON THE CONTINUED NEED FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, E.G. WITH KARPOV AND IN PUBLIC. RUEHE WELCOMED THIS. THE FRG HAD TO DO THE SAME IN PUBLIC. BUT, AS A NON-NUCLEAR POWER, IT WAS HARDER TO LEAD THE DISCUSSION. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS KOHL REGULARLY MADE THE POINT THAT THE BRITISH AND FRENCH NUCLEAR DETERRENTS ASSUMED A GROWING IMPORTANCE FOR EUROPEAN DEFENCE AS THE AMERICANS TOYED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF RENDERING THE US INVULNERABLE TO NUCLEAR ATTACK, WHETHER THROUGH ELIMINATION OF WEAPONS, OR THROUGH SDI. BUT PUBLIC PRESENTATION BY THE EUROPEANS HAD TO BE HANDLED CAREFULLY: WE SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS ACTING AS A BRAKE ON DISARMAMENT NOW THAT THERE WAS MASSIVE MOMENTUM FORWARDS (A DEBATING POINT WHICH PERLE HAD MADE IN WASHINGTON).

7. RUEHE SAID THAT KOHL'S SECOND MAIN PITCH WAS ON THE CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT FORUM. HE HAD ASSURED ALL HIS INTERLOCUTORS, FROM REAGAN DOWNWARDS, OF THE NEED TO BRING THE FRENCH ALONG: IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE TO HAVE DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE URALS WITHOUT THE FRENCH (AND THE SPANIARDS), WHO WOULD NOT ACCEPT THAT THEIR INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUCH A DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE SHOULD COME FROM THE NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL. WEINBERGER APPEARED TO BE THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM OVER THE IDEA FOR A CSCE SUB-FORUM. ACCORDING TO RUEHE, THE GERMANS NOW THINK WASHINGTON MUST AND WILL TALK DIRECT TO PARIS. KOHL WILL RAISE THE QUESTION HIMSELF WITH MITTERRAND AT THEIR SUMMIT IN FRANKFURT ON 27 OCTOBER.

8. RUEHE SAID THAT KOHL HAD THANKED REAGAN FOR RAISING HUMAN RIGHTS IN REYKJAVIK AND HAD SPOKEN ABOUT THE 100,000 GERMAN-SPEAKING RUSSIANS. KOHL SEEMED TO HAVE HIT AN EMOTIONAL BULLS-EYE WITH REAGAN WITH THE STORY OF AN 80-YEAR-OLD GERMAN SPEAKING RUSSIAN WHO HAD TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD COME TO THE FRG BECAUSE HE WANTED TO DIE THERE.

9. REAGAN HAD NOT ONCE MENTIONED ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. THESE HAD COME UP WITH BAKER, WHO HAD BEEN DEFENSIVE AND STRESSED HIS WORRIES ABOUT PROTECTIONISM, AS ONE SIDE OF ISOLATIONISM, GROWING IN THE US. KOHL HAD SAID THAT IF THE GROWTH RATES FORECAST FOR 1987 DID NOT MATERIALISE HE WOULD LOOK AGAIN AT THE QUESTION OF INTEREST RATES. THERE WAS NO REAL PRESSURE.

MOSCOW VISIT

10. RUEHE HAD VISITED MOSCOW LAST WEEK TO PARTICIPATE IN A SYMPOSIUM ARRANGED BY NOVOSTI AND THE FRG LIBERAL WEEKLY DIE ZEIT. THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAD SEEMED LESS WORRIED ABOUT SDI IN THE SHORT-TERM BUT EXTREMELY WORRIED BY THE IMPLICATIONS OF EVEN A PARTIAL US DEFENSIVE SYSTEM SHOULD THERE BE DEEP CUTS IN STRATEGIC MISSILES. LAST WEEK RUEHE HAD NO SENSE IN MOSCOW THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE GOING TO WAIT-OUT REAGAN (A THREE-YEAR PROCESS). ON THE CONTRARY, THERE HAD BEEN A SENSE OF URGENCY AND A GENUINE FEELING IN MOSCOW THAT THE WORLD LOOKED DIFFERENT AFTER REYKJAVIK AND A REAL BREAKTHROUGH WAS AHEAD. RUEHE WAS IMPRESSED BY THIS SAME SPIRIT IN WASHINGTON WHERE SHULTZ, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD QUOTZBTAESTJYTQVTGWVZTHE EFFECT THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAD CHANGED THE WORLD AND THAT THINKING HAD TO CHANGE TOO. RUEHE NOTED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS NOT CURRENTLY SEEKING TO PLAY-UP ANGST IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, AS THEY HAD DONE AT THE TIME OF THE LAST ELECTION IN 1983. THEY SEEMED ALMOST TO DISMISS THE SPD.

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COMMENT

11. I AM MOST STRUCK BY:

A) KOHL'S READINESS TO SPEAK FRANKLY TO THE AMERICANS ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF FULL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT FOR CONVENTIONAL STABILITY IN EUROPE (DESPITE ANY GERMAN RETICENCE YOU MAY HAVE SENSED AT GLENEAGLES, WHICH WOULD HAVE SURPRISED ME ANY WAY).

B) RUEHE'S PERCEPTION OF A CHANGED ATMOSPHERE IN BOTH MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON SINCE REYKJAVIK, WITH A SENSE IN BOTH CAPITALS OF AN HISTORICAL WATERSHED.

BULLARD

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