

M. H. Debut

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FM BONN 171450Z FEB 81

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 106 OF 17 FEBRUARY

INFO ROUTINE ROME, MODUK

Read full,

MS

YOUR TELEGRAMS NO. 56 AND 57: TORNADO SALES TO ARAB COUNTRIES.

1. I DELIVERED THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO THE CHANCELLOR DURING MY FAREWELL CALL TODAY. HE TOOK IT VERY CALMLY. HE PICKED UP TWO POINTS IN THE MESSAGE. FIRST, MRS THATCHER ASKED FOR A REPLY QUOTE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNQUOTE. WHAT DID QUOTE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNQUOTE MEAN ? DID IT MEAN TWO WEEKS OR TWO MONTHS ? I REPLIED THAT I THOUGHT IT MEANT WHAT IT SAID. MRS THATCHER WAS AWARE OF THE CHANCELLOR'S DOMESTIC PREOCCUPATIONS, SINCE I HAD REPORTED THEM TO HER. SHE DID NOT WISH TO HURRY THE CHANCELLOR. NONETHELESS SHE WOULD OBVIOUSLY LIKE TO KNOW AS SOON AS THE CHANCELLOR WAS IN A POSITION TO TELL HER. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I THOUGHT THREE WEEKS TO A MONTH MIGHT BE A NICE TIME SCALE.
2. THE SECOND POINT HE LATCHED ON TO WAS THE POSSIBILITY THAT BRITISH AEROSPACE AND ROLLS ROYCE MIGHT DO THE DEED. HE INSTRUCTED HERR ZELLER, WHO WAS TAKING THE NOTE, TO LOOK INTO THE PROVISIONS OF THE TREATY ON TORNADO ABOUT EXPORTS. I SAID THAT, SPEAKING OFF THE CUFF, THE JOINT COMPANY, PANAVIA, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR EXPORTS; BUT THERE WAS NOTHING SPECIFIC IN THE TREATY ABOUT IT. AT ALL EVENTS THE CHANCELLOR SEEMED TO THINK THAT THIS MIGHT POINT A WAY OUT.
3. IN GENERAL THE CHANCELLOR SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT HIS PARLIAMENT. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE WERE OPPONENTS OF ANY EXTENSION OF THE CURRENT GERMAN RESTRICTIVE POLICY OVER ARMS EXPORTS ACROSS THE WHOLE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, NOT ONLY IN HIS OWN PARTY, BUT ALSO IN THE FDP AND EVEN IN THE CDU. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HIMSELF WAS IN FAVOUR OF A POLICY OF SUPPORTING SAUDI ARABIA; HIS PROBLEM WAS TO GET PARLIAMENTARY BACKING FOR IT.
4. COMMENT. THE CHANCELLOR'S POLITICAL PROBLEMS ARE GENUINE, AS I HAVE REPORTED, WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY AND WITHIN HIS COALITION PARTNER. HE HIMSELF IS AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING SAUDI ARABIA AND FOR HIS OWN REASONS (LEOPARD TANKS FOR OIL) WISHES TO DO SO. SO WHILE WE WOULD NO DOUBT LIKE AN EARLIER REACTION, IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT HIM TO REPLY UNTIL HE SEES HIS WAY THROUGH HIS OWN PROBLEMS.

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/5. RECOMMENDATION.

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5. RECOMMENDATION. THE CHANCELLOR DID NOT SPECIFICALLY REACT TO OUR PROPOSAL TO GIVE A TORNADO DEMONSTRATION TO THE SAUDIS, ALTHOUGH HE SCRUTINISED THE PM'S MESSAGE SUFFICIENTLY THOROUGHLY TO PICK UP THE POINTS IN PARAS 1 AND 2 OF THIS TELEGRAM. I RECOMMEND THEREFORE THAT WE HO AHEAD WITH THE DEMONSTRATION ON A NATIONAL BASIS AS PROPOSED. THE LESS PUBLICITY THE BETTER, FROM THE GERMAN POINT OF VIEW AND FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF OUR GETTING THE RIGHT ANSWER FROM THE CHANCELLOR. WE HAVE NO INTEREST IN MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO GET THE PARLIAMENTARY BACKING HE WANTS FOR HIS OWN REASONS, SINCE THAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR HIM TO GIVE US THE ANSWER WE WANT. BUT EVEN IF HE CANNOT HGO AHEAD WITH LEOPARD, THERE IS STILL A CHANCE THAT HE WILL NOT OPPOSE A NATIONAL SALE OF TORNADO. IN SHORT, SOFTLY SOFTLY CATCHEE MONKEY.

WRIGHT

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