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RR PARIS

RR ROME

RR THE HAGUE

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Sir J. Bullard  
N. JENKINS  
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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 624 OF 22 JUNE

INFO ROUTINE ATHENS EMBASSY BRUSSELS COPENHAGEN DUBLIN LUXEMBOURG  
PARIS ROME THE HAGUE UKREP BRUSSELS UKDEL OECD WASHINGTON MOSCOW  
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GENSCHER AND THE FDP

SUMMARY

1. GENSCHER TO RESIGN AS FDP PARTY CHAIRMAN IN FEBRUARY 1985, BUT CONTINUE AS FOREIGN MINISTER THEREAFTER. HIS ANNOUNCEMENT IS THE RESULT OF PARTY PRESSURE FOLLOWING FDP'S FAILURE IN EUROPEAN ELECTION. THE FDP IN A MAJOR CRISIS. MIFT CONSIDERS IMPLICATIONS FOR BONN COALITION.

DETAIL

2. GENSCHER ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY (21 JUNE) THAT HE WOULD RESIGN THE FDP CHAIRMANSHIP AT THE NEXT PARTY CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY 1985. ONLY THREE WEEKS AGO HE HAD BEEN RE-ELECTED FOR A FURTHER TWO YEAR TERM, AFTER HAVING ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD RETIRE IN 1986 (MY TEL 551).

3. GENSCHER HAS JUSTIFIED HIS DECISION ON THE GROUNDS THAT HIS SUCCESSOR WILL NEED MORE TIME TO BUILD UP HIS POSITION BEFORE THE 1987 FEDERAL ELECTION. BUT THIS HAS A HOLLOW RING. AS I WARNED IN MY TEL 534 WOULD HAPPEN, THE FDP'S FAILURE TO CLEAR THE 5 PER CENT HURDLE IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTION HAS LED TO RENEWED PRESSURE FROM THE FDP RANK AND FILE FOR GENSCHER TO GO BEFORE 1986. AT YESTERDAY'S MEETING OF THE FDP PRAESIDIUM, GENSCHER CLEARLY CONCLUDED THAT HE MUST DO SO OF HIS OWN ACCORD, OR BE PUSHED OUT.

4. GENSCHER'S PROBLEMS WITH THE FDP GO BACK TO HIS FAILURE TO CONSULT THE PARTY PROPERLY BEFORE SWITCHING COALITION PARTNERS IN 1982. HIS ONE-MAN STYLE OF LEADERSHIP HAS CAUSED HIM TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FDP'S DISASTROUS RUN IN THE LAENDER ELECTIONS SINCE THEN. HIS MISCALCULATION OF HIS PARTY'S VIEWS OVER THE PROPOSED AMNESTY (MY TEL 493) UNDERLINED THE GAP WHICH HAD OPENED BETWEEN HIM AND THE RANK AND FILE. THE EUROPEAN ELECTION DEBACLE WAS THE LAST STRAW.

5. THERE ARE NO OBVIOUS SUCCESSORS AS PARTY CHAIRMAN. LAMBSORFF WOULD BE THE PARTY'S CHOICE BUT HE FACES THE IMMINENT THREAT OF CORRUPTION CHARGES (SEE MIFT). THE FDP LEADERS IN THE LAENDER ARE INEXPERIENCED: DAHRENDORF IS ILL AND OUT OF TOUCH. SPECULATION HAS THEREFORE FOCUSED ON BANGEMANN, THE FDP'S LEADING CANDIDATE FOR THE EUROPEAN ELECTION AND A FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE PARTY. GENSCHER HAS HINTED THAT HE WOULD WELCOME HIS APPOINTMENT. HE STANDS ON THE RIGHT OF THE PARTY AND SHOULD AND BE ABLE TO WORK WELL WITH THE CDU/CSU.

6. GENSCHER HAS SAID THAT HE INTENDS TO CONTINUE AS FOREIGN MINISTER; AND THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN HAS SAID THAT THE CHANCELLOR SEES NO REASON WHY HE SHOULD NOT DO SO. AT PRESENT, IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH THE FDP AND THE CHANCELLOR THAT HE STAY ON. THE FDP HAVE NO ONE WHO COULD TAKE OVER, AND CANNOT AFFORD THE LOSS OF SUCH A PRESTIGIOUS MINISTRY. IF GENSCHER WENT, STRAUSS WOULD NO DOUBT REVIVE HIS CLAIM TO THE JOB. THIS IS SOMETHING WHICH THE CHANCELLOR WILL WANT TO AVOID.

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