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cc: Minister o.r.  
Minister (E)  
Mr Wyatt, BMG Berlin  
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~~Mr~~  
Prime Minister  
An interesting insight  
into Chancellor Kohl  
CDP 31/x.

### CHANCELLOR KOHL

1. The social occasion in Berlin to which I referred in my telegram today about the Flick affair was in fact the jamboree for which the Federal Chancellor and the Governing Mayor were joint hosts on 27 October in the Opera House in Berlin. Since we seldom see Kohl at such close quarters, I might record my impressions of the evening.
2. For the first 2 hours we all sat in the stalls while various things took place on the stage. Diepgen made a little joke about the Flick affair which obviously made both him and the audience uncomfortable. Kohl made a speech including a reference to the reconstruction of the country "after the frightful Nazi era" and a passage about the unity of the German people and about Berlin as the symbol of this. The seriousness of these remarks was in striking contrast to the jocularity of everybody else's contribution.
3. I had dropped a lot of hints about wanting to see Kohl during the evening, on account of having not got an appointment with him in Bonn. The result was that I was fetched from one of the foyers and led to a table on the stage where Kohl was giving television interviews. The rest of the people at the table were from the theatre, TV etc. The large numbers

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- 2 -

standing round were from the press, autograph hunters and no doubt security men. By moving a Wagnerian soprano out of the way I was able to get a chair next to Kohl's, where I waited for him to finish his interviews, as eventually he did.

4. Thinking that it might be some 60 seconds before a Private Secretary tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to move, I explained that I would be in London this week for the Prime Minister's briefing meeting and asked what were his expectations and ideas about the Anglo-German Summit. He said abruptly and grumpily that he had nothing special in mind. I made some poIite remarks about the Franco-German Summit due today and tomorrow, and said that perhaps this might perhaps throw up points that would be relevant to our own meeting. He replied, again very curtly, that if this happened he would let us know.

5. At this point there was an interruption of about 20 minutes while some sort of cabaret show took place. This seemed to cheer Kohl up, because he called for a huge glass of Berlin beer and began simultaneously to sign dozens of autographs and tell me all over again about Locarno and Austen Chamberlain. From this he went on to his meeting at Verdun with Mitterrand, and thence to the plot against Hitler of 20 July 1944, on which his point was that von Tresckow and others were not only the leading conspirators but also the most brilliant staff officers of their generation, a fact which he found deeply significant.

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- 3 -

6. Throughout all this there was a continuous flashing of photographic lights and a thrusting of programmes under Kohl's nose to be autographed. Figures in various sorts of period costume loomed up and were photographed standing alongside the Chancellor and his glass of beer. Eventually someone called Nowotny was brought up to take my place, although not until I had been sitting there for about three quarters of an hour, with the Wagnerian soprano on my other side.

7. Comment: As we all know, Kohl is a very untypical politician. He has a lot in his head and he blurts it out without pausing to consider whether it is going to be wasted on the audience which he happens to have in front of him or whether there might be something more important awaiting his attention. His staff evidently sense this and make no attempt to keep him supplied with what one might call operational interlocutors, nor to fend off the inquisitive. In his references to the Nazi period he spoke as if consciously from the near side of a caesura separating those who did not take part in the events of 1933-45 from those who did. He had obviously been deeply impressed by the simple but effective symbolism at Verdun: the instinctive mood which led Mitterrand and him to join hands, the thousands of schoolchildren and the parade of troops in which French and German soldiers were drawn up alternately in long rows. I could not help reflecting on the contrast between this kind of thing, likely no doubt to be echoed at the Franco-German meeting this week in Bad Kreuznach, and the more humdrum agenda of our own Summit on 2 November, even if the appointment of Dr Gehlhoff and Mr Nigel Forman is announced on that / day.

- 4 -

day. I am not saying that we should try to ape the Franco-German relationship, which you know I regard as partly hollow: the week-end press carried a reminder that four times as many Germans are learning English as French. But I do think we must persevere in the attempt to understand Herr Kohl and improve not just our physical access to him, but our mental and emotional access also.

+J.

J L Bullard

29 October 1984