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DESKBY 150900Z

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FM THE HAGUE 141730Z OCT 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 253 14 OCTOBER

INFO SAVING EC POSTS WASHINGTON UKDEL NATO

MY TELNO 250: RESIGNATION OF VAN AGT.

1. EXACTLY WHEN THE NEXT CABINET WILL BE SWORN IN IS UNCLEAR. IN HIS STATEMENT TO THE PRESS ON 13 OCTOBER VAN AGT SAID THAT GOOD PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN THE CURRENT TALKS BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE LIBERALS : QUOTE THE CONTOURS OF THIS COALITION HAVE BECOME CLEARLY VISIBLE UNQUOTE.

2. CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS HAS INDEED BEEN MADE. CDA AND VVD WORKING PARTIES REACHED AGREEMENT ON 12 OCTOBER ON A FOUR YEAR PROGRAMME OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE CUTS DESIGNED TO BRING DOWN THE PSBR FROM ITS CURRENT 13 PER CENT TO 7 . (THE VVD, HAVING PRESSED ORIGINALLY FOR CUTS OVER THIS PERIOD TOTALLING 40 BILLION GUILDERS, HAS NOW ACCEPTED THAT THE AIM SHOULD BE 13 BILLION IN 1982/83, AND 7 BILLION IN EACH OF THE THREE YEARS THEREAFTER). A LARGE MEASURE OF AGREEMENT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED ON DEFENCE POLICY (PREPARATIONS FOR INF DEPLOYMENT TO BE PUT IN HAND, THE FINAL DECISION TO DEPEND ON PROGRESS IN THE GENEVA TALKS). THE ONLY UNSOLVED DISPUTE OF ANY IMPORTANCE CONCERNS BROADCASTING POLICY (THE EXTENT TO WHICH CABLE TELEVISION SHOULD BE COMMERCIALISED).

3. THE NEXT WORD UNDERLINED INFORMATEUR (SCHOLTEN) MAY THUS BE ABLE TO SUBMIT A COMPLETE SET OF POLICY PROPOSALS TO THE CDA AND VVD PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. SECURING THEIR AGREEMENT MAY NOT HOWEVER BE ENTIRELY STRAIGHTFORWARD. AS EXPLAINED IN MIFT, VAN AGT'S SUCCESSOR STANDS FURTHER TO THE LEFT. ALTHOUGH VAN AGT REMAINS AT THE HELM FOR THE MOMENT, IT WILL BE LUBBERS WHO HAS THE FINAL SAY FOR THE CDA ABOUT THE NEXT COALITION'S POLICY PROGRAMME. HE WILL BE LESS READY THAN VAN AGT TO GIVE GROUND TO THE VVD, AND THE LEFT WING OF THE CDA PARLIAMENTARY PARTY WILL CORRESPONDINGLY EMBOLDENED.

4. SPECULATION IS RIFE ABOUT THE REASONS FOR VAN AGT'S DECISION TO LEAVE THE CABINET AT THIS JUNCTURE. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THOSE GIVEN BY VAN AGT HIMSELF ARE GENUINE, BUT MAY WELL NOT BE THE WHOLE STORY. TWO OTHER THEORIES HAVE BEEN ADVANCED:

(A) A FEATURE OF DUTCH POLITICS IN THE PAST DECADE HAS BEEN THE PERSONAL RIVALRY BETWEEN DEN UYL, THE PVDA LEADER, AND VAN AGT. THE LATTER MAY WELL HAVE STAYED ON UNTIL THIS POINT IN THE PROCESS OF CABINET FORMATION PARTLY IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE PVDA WAS FIRST RULED OUT AS A POSSIBLE COALITION PARTNER FOR THE CDA:

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(B) VIGOROUS INTERNAL DEBATE HAS SWELLED IN THE CDA ABOUT THE PARTY'S IDENTITY. THE STARTING POINT HAS BEEN THE RECOGNITION THAT AFTER YEARS OF LOSING SUPPORT TO THE LEFT THE PARTY IS NOW CEDING GROUND TO THE RIGHT (IE THE VVD). VAN AGT IS WELL KNOWN TO FEEL CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL SYMPATHY WITH THE VVD. HE MAY HAVE FELT LESS WELL FITTED THAN LUBBERS FOR THE TASK OF RESHAPING THE CDA'S PHILOSOPHY TO MEET THIS NEW CHALLENGE.

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FM THE HAGUE 141745Z OCT 82

TELEGRAM NUMBER 254 14 OCTOBER

INFO SAVING EC POSTS WASHINGTON UKDEL NATO

MIPT: RESIGNATION OF VAN AGT.

1. DESPITE NEARLY A DECADE IN THE PUBLIC EYE LUBBERS REMAINS SOMETHING OF A RIDDLE. UNDOUBTEDLY OF HIGH INTELLIGENCE, A HARD WORKER AND AN EXPERT MANAGER HE IS WIDELY RESPECTED AS A CREATIVE POLITICAL FIGURE NEVER SHORT OF IDEAS. BUT HE OPERATES VERY MUCH AS A LONER, WITH NO CLOSE POLITICAL FRIENDS, AND HAS NOTHING LIKE THE POPULARITY WITH THE CDA GRASSROOTS ENJOYED BY VAN AGT. HE HAS LONG OPERATED FROM THE LEFT OF CENTRE, FIRST IN THE OLD CATHOLIC PARTY (KVP) AND THEN IN THE CDA. HE HAS THEREFORE ALWAYS BEEN VIEWED WITH SOME FAVOUR BY THE PVDA. THERE IS NO REASON, HOWEVER, TO DOUBT HIS WILLINGNESS TO FORM A COALITION WITH THE LIBERALS (VVD). HE IS WELL AWARE THAT A SUBSTANTIAL ELEMENT IN THE CDA PARLIAMENTARY PARTY HAS THE STRONGEST OBJECTIONS TO CURRENT PVDA DEFENCE AND ECONOMIC POLICIES.

2. THERE IS IN PARTICULAR NO EVIDENCE THAT LUBBERS HOLDS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT VIEWS FROM VAN AGT ON TNF STATIONING, ALTHOUGH HIS PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO DEPLOYMENT MUST BE CONSIDERED LESS STRONG.

HIS RADICAL INCLINATIONS HAVE NEVER EXTENDED TO DEFENCE POLICY, AND ONE OF THE FEATURES OF THE RUN-UP TO THE LAST ELECTION WAS HIS SHARP ATTACK ON THE (ANTI-NUCLEAR) 'LOYALISTS' IN THE CDA PARLIAMENTARY PARTY. HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO KEEP THEM ON A TIGHT LEASH.

3. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT LUBBERS HAS NOT YET FORMALLY ACCEPTED THE MANTLE OFFERED TO HIM BY HIS PARTY: HE WISHES FIRST TO EXAMINE THE NEXT WORD UNDERLINED INFOTMATEUR'S FINAL REPORT. BUT THIS IS NOT GENERALLY EXPECTED TO FACE HIM WITH PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES AS REGARDS HIS SUCCESSION.

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FM THE HAGUE 131730Z OCT 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO.
TELEGRAM NUMBER 250 OF 13 OCTOBER
INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO UKREP BRUSSELS BONN WASHINGTON
INFO SAVING OTHER EC POSTS

RESIGNATION OF THE NETHERLANDS PRIME MINISTER.

1. VAN AGT HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE THIS AFTERNOON TO ANNOUNCE THAT WHILE HE WOULD CONTINUE AS PRIME MINISTER (AND FOREIGN MINISTER) UNTIL THE SWEARING IN OF THE NEXT CABINET, HE WOULD NOT THEREAFTER BE PREPARED TO HOLD MINISTERIAL OFFICE. HE INTENDED TO REMAIN A MEMBER OF THE SECOND CHAMBER.

2. VAN AGT TOLD THE PRESS THAT:

(A) AFTER 11 YEARS WITHOUT A BREAK AS A MINISTER, AND AFTER HAVING BEEN PRIME MINISTER SINCE 1977, HE FELT HE NO LONGER HAD THE STAMINA NECESSARY TO CONTINUE AS A MINISTER FOR A FUTHER TERM. ONE OF THE MAJOR REASONS FOR THIS DECISION WAS HIS WISH TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH HIS FAMILY.

(B) THE CDA HAD ELECTED LUBBER (SEE LPR) AS HIS SUCCESSOR AS PARTY LEADER.

3. WE HAVE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT VAN AGT WAS UNDER PRESSURE FROM HIS FAMILY TO PLAY A LESS ACTIVE ROLE IN DUTCH POLITICS, BUT HIS DECISION TO ANNOUNCE HIS RESIGNATION AT THIS POINT HAS CAUSED GENERAL SUPRISE. THE TIMING MAY OF COURSE IN PART REFLECT CONFIDENCE ON VAN AGT'S PART THAT THE SUCCESSFUL ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW CENTRE-RIGHT GOVERNMENT IS NOW VIRTUALLY IN THE BAG.

4. FUTHER COMMENT WILL FOLLOW.

5. A MESSAGE OF REGRET AND TRIBUTE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED: I HOPE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO SEND ONE.

This is being prepared. RR 14/10

FCO PLEASE PASS TO SAVING ADDRESSES.

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