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SAVING TELEGRAM

BY BAG

FROM PARIS

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TO FCO TELNO 120 SAVING OF 19 DECEMBER

REPEATED SAVING TO OTHER EEC POSTS, MOSCOW, UKDEL NATO, BONN
AND WASHINGTON

YOUR TELNO 631 TO MOSCOW: MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENT BREZHNEV
ON EUROPEAN SECURITY

1. The Deputy Diplomatic Adviser at the Elysée has given us an account of President Giscard's reply to the letter sent by President Brezhnev in mid-October, which dealt mainly with TNF modernisation. Levitte said that President Giscard's letter (which was handed over in Moscow on 10 December) was low-key. It began by recalling France's special position over TNF modernisation (which Brezhnev had acknowledged in his own message). France had not been a member of NATO's integrated military organisation since 1966 and this had allowed her to play an individual role in deepening detente in Europe. The motives which had led General de Gaulle to withdraw from NATO's integrated military organisation remained valid, and the French position remained unchanged. France had not participated either directly or indirectly in the decision on TNF modernisation: to have done so would have meant in effect that France had rejoined NATO.

2. The letter went on to say that this did not mean that France was unconcerned about problems likely to affect the security of Europe. France had adopted a positive attitude towards SALT II, and her approval had carried all the more weight given the independence of French defence policy. The French government favoured the pursuit of strategic negotiations. These should lead not only to a reduction in the rate of the growth of the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers, but also to genuine reductions, both qualitative and quantitative. As for other negotiations, it was not for France to pronounce on MBER, in which she did not participate. However, the French government welcomed as a positive gesture the Soviet decision to withdraw 20,000 troops from Eastern Europe.

3. President Giscard's letter then went on to discuss the French proposal for a Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE). After recalling its main features, President Giscard expressed the hope that there would be a rapprochement of French and Soviet views. Levitte said the letter did not go into detail regarding Soviet objections to the French proposal. It noted that there were certain convergences between the CDE and the proposals put forward by the Warsaw Pact. In conclusion, it expressed the hope that Franco/Soviet

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discussions on security issues would develop. The aim was not to look for the lowest common denominator but to find ways of achieving greater complementarity between the French and Soviet positions.

4. It seems clear that the message, unsurprisingly, was chiefly designed to draw attention to France's apartness in European military matters and therefore her suitability to be a continuing partner in a privileged dialogue with the Soviet Union. The message also brings out the importance to the French government of its CDE proposal as being France's own special contribution to disarmament and military détente. It takes the wind out of the sails of Gaullist and left-wing opposition while giving France its own home made ticket to Europe's top tables.

5. A brief article in Le Figaro of 18 December, giving a very limited outline of Giscard's letter, concludes with the comment that it was no accident that the President had waited until the eve of the NATO Ministerial meeting in Brussels before replying.

HIBBERT

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