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FM MOSCOW 071445Z JUN 79

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 337 OF 7 JUNE.

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POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS.

1. IN MY DESPATCH OF 3 APRIL I ARGUED THAT BRITISH INTERESTS COULD BE SERVED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RELATIONSHIP OF GREATER SUBSTANCE BETWEEN BRITAIN AND THE SOVIET UNION AND NOTED VARIOUS ITEMS OF BILATERAL BUSINESS WHICH WERE RELEVANT.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER'S ACTION IN RECEIVING PATOLICHEV, SPEAKING CLEARLY TO HIM ABOUT BRITISH POLICY AND VISITING THE SOVIET EXHIBITION HAS SET THE TONE WHICH THE RUSSIANS RESPECT. IN THE POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS ON 13/14 JUNE, ZEMSKOV WILL DOUBTLESS BE SEEKING TO PROBE FURTHER BRITISH INTENTIONS AS REGARDS BOTH THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND MAJOR CURRENT INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE RELATED TO SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT. HE WILL BE HOPING FOR - AND WILL I THINK ACCURATELY CARRY BACK TO MOSCOW - A REASONED PRESENTATION OF BRITISH POLICY. I DOUBT WHETHER IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO DRAW HIM INTO SERIOUS AND THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION AND WE MAY NOT LEARN MUCH THAT IS NEW ABOUT SOVIET POLICY, BUT THE CONSULTATIONS COME AT AN IMPORTANT STAGE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS AND MAY BE MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN THEIR CONTENT WOULD SUGGEST.

3. GIVEN THE TIMING OF THE TALKS I WOULD EXPECT ZEMSKOV TO HAVE VERY MUCH IN MIND THE FOLLOW-UP TO SALT II, EUROPEAN SECURITY PROBLEMS AND IN PARTICULAR THE CURRENT WARSAW PACT PROPOSALS. SOVIET PROPAGANDA, REFLECTING CONCERN ABOUT NATO FORCE IMPROVEMENTS IN GENERAL AND TNF IN PARTICULAR, IS NOW SEEKING TO PRESENT "INFLUENTIAL CIRCLES" IN BRITAIN, GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES AS FORMING AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE AGAINST DETENTE. IT WILL BE HELPFUL IF ZEMSKOV COULD BE MADE TO REALISE THAT THERE IS A REAL UNITY OF INTEREST IN WESTERN EUROPE IN A BALANCED PROGRAMME DESIGNED TO ENHANCE SECURITY AT A LOWER LEVEL OF MILITARY EFFORT ON BOTH SIDES, AND THAT PROPOSALS WILL BE JUDGED BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY CONTRIBUTE IN REAL TERMS TO THIS OBJECTIVE.

4. I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT SOME OF THE FIRE IS GOING OUT OF THE RUSSIANS ON THE QUESTION OF THE WESTERN RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA. ZEMSKOV CAN SCARCELY FAIL TO SAY HIS PIECE ABOUT ARMS SUPPLIES AND MAY INDULGE IN OBJECTIONABLE RHETORIC BUT NEED NOT BE TAKEN TOO SERIOUSLY. A QUIET RE-EMPHASIS OF THE BALANCE OF OUR POSITION SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO KEEP THE RECORD STRAIGHT. ON VIETNAMESE REFUGESS I WOULD EXPECT HIM TO DO HIS BEST TO EVADE THE POINT AND COME BACK TO CHINA POLICY. ON THE MIDDLE EAST THERE IS AS YET NO SIGN OF A SOVIET READINESS TO ACCEPT THE EGYPT-ISRAEL AGREEMENT AS A FAIT ACCOMPLI AND TO ASSIST IN THE MOVE FORWARD TO A SETTLEMENT OF THE PALESTINE PROBLEM. EVEN IF THE RUSSIANS ARE READY FOR ANY MOVEMENT ON THE QUESTION AT THE VIENNA SUMMIT, I WOULD EXPECT ZEMSKOV TO STICK HARD TO THE LINE THAT THE BILATERAL TREATY (AND PROBABLY SADAT WITH IT) MUST DISAPPEAR BEFORE THERE CAN BE PROGRESS TO A WIDER SETTLEMENT. ON AFRICA HE IS LIKELY TO DIG IN FIRMLY ON THE GROUND THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL NEVER ABANDON ITS SUPPORT FOR LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, BUT THAT THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE WEST ARE OF OUR OWN MAKING, THAT THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF A GENUINELY REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT UNDER MUZOREWA AND THAT ANY MOVE TOWARDS RECOGNITION WILL MEET RESOLUTE AFRICAN OPPOSITION.

5. ONE AREA WHICH I THINK IS IMPORTANT IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRITISH ECONOMY. THE RUSSIANS MAY BE STARTING TO REALIZE THE EXTENT TO WHICH IN THE NEXT DECADE BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC POWER AND POTENTIAL POLITICAL INFLUENCE CAN BE TRANSFORMED BY THE FACT THAT WE ARE THE ONLY MAJOR WESTERN POWER WITH THE PROSPECT OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN ENERGY. BUT THE MESSAGE HAS YET TO SINK HOME POLITICALLY AND IT WILL DO MUCH TO STRENGTHEN OUR POSITION IF ZEMSKOV COMES BACK TO MOSCOW CONVINCED OF OUR POTENTIAL STRENGTH AS WELL AS OF THE NEW BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO REALISE IT.

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6. IF MY ASSESSMENT IS RIGHT THE DISCUSSION WITH ZEMSKOV WILL NOT SHOW MUCH SPARKLE BUT I HOPE THAT THOSE WHO MEET HIM WILL NOT BE DETERRED BY THIS. HIS PERSONAL STYLE IS VERY MUCH THAT OF THE SLIGHTLY BLINKERED OFFICIAL, NORMALLY MOST CORRECT AND COURTEOUS AND APPRECIATIVE OF A WARMER RESPONSE THAN HE BY NATURE FINDS IT EASY TO INSPIRE. HE OCCASIONALLY PERMITS HIMSELF A DISPLAY OF ANGER. HE DELIVERED AN EMOTIONAL TIRADE TO SIR R HIBBERT LAST YEAR ABOUT DISSIDENTS AND LIKE MOST RUSSIANS HE IS EMOTIONAL ABOUT THE WAR. HE RECKONS TO BE SOMETHING OF AN EXPERT ON THE HISTORY OF THE 30S AND IN PARTICULAR ON BRITISH POLICY IN THAT PERIOD. HIS FIELD OF RESPONSIBILITY IS BRITIAN, THE OLD COMMONWEALTH, IRELAND AND SCANDINAVIA, CULTURAL AFFAIRS INCLUDING UNESCO, CONSULAR DEPARTMENT AND ARCHIVES. HE SPEAKS VERY LITTLE ENGLISH BUT QUITE GOOD GERMAN AND ITALIAN.

KEEBLE

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