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FM MOSCOW 021404Z FEB 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 121 OF 2 FEB

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

INFO PRIORITY UKDEL NATO, BONN,

INFO ROUTINE PARIS, THE HAGUE, BRUSSELS, UKDIS GENEVA, ROME

INFO SAVING TO BMC BERLIN, CICC(G), OTHER NATO AND E. EUROPEAN
POSTS

BONN TELNO 103 TO FCO:

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S OPEN LETTER: ANDROPOV'S RESPONSE

1. PRAVDA ON 2 FEBRUARY CARRIED ANDROPOV'S RESPONSE, IN THE FORM OF REPLIES TO TWO QUESTIONS. THE MAIN POINTS WERE:

A) ATTITUDE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN'S LETTER AND THE PROPOSAL TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT ON THE LIQUIDATION OF MEDIUM RANGE LAND BASED MISSILES ?

- THERE WAS NOTHING NEW IN THE PROPOSAL. IT WAS STILL THE UNACCEPTABLE ZERO OPTION. THIS UNREALISTIC US POSITION WAS BLOCKING PROGRESS IN THE GENEVA TALKS. REAGAN'S RECONFIRMATION OF THIS POSITION SHOWED THAT THE US DID NOT WANT TO SEEK A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT AND WAS THEREBY DELIBERATELY CONDEMNING THE TALKS TO FAILURE.
- THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT ENGAGE IN UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT, AND, IF NEW AMERICAN MISSILES WERE DEPLOYED, WOULD RESPOND APPROPRIATELY.
- AS THE US WAS NOT WILLING TO AGREE TO THE ELIMINATION OF MEDIUM RANGE AND TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE EUROPEAN ZONE, THE SOVIET UNION WAS PREPARED TO HAVE NO MORE MISSILES THAN THERE ALREADY WERE IN EUROPE ON THE NATO SIDE. MEDIUM RANGE NUCLEAR CARRYING AIRCRAFT SHOULD ALSO BE REDUCED TO EQUAL LEVELS. THE RESULT WOULD BE FULL EQUALITY AT AN INCOMPARABLY LOWER LEVEL. WAS THE US WILLING TO SIGN SUCH AN AGREEMENT BASED ON EQUALITY AND EQUAL SECURITY ?

B) A SUMMIT TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT AS SUGGESTED BY REAGAN ?

- SUMMITS HAD A SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE SOLUTION OF COMPLEX PROBLEMS. A MEETING BETWEEN SOVIET AND US LEADERS AIMED AT FINDING MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE DECISIONS ON CURRENT ISSUES AND AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THE USSR, US, EUROPE AND THE WHOLE WORLD.
- FOR REAGAN TO MAKE A MEETING CONDITIONAL UPON SOVIET AGREEMENT ON HIS UNACCEPTABLE PROPOSAL ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE WAS NOT EVIDENCE OF A SERIOUS APPROACH TO THIS QUESTION. THAT WAS ONLY TO BE REGRETTED.

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2. THE TONE IS FIRMER THAN ANDROPOV'S KINGSBURY-SMITH INTERVIEW AT THE END OF DECEMBER (MOSCOW TELNO 298). BUT THERE IS THE SAME CAREFULLY CULTIVATED IMAGE OF MODERATION AND "SERIOUSNESS" (A WORD USED TWICE TO CONTRAST THE SOVIET AND US APPROACHES). ON SUBSTANCE (INF) THERE IS NO HINT OF FURTHER MOVEMENT IN THE SOVIET POSITION BUT THE PRESENTATION IS AGAIN CAREFUL. ANDROPOV IS AT PAINS TO PUT ACROSS THE CLAIM THAT THE SOVIET PROPOSALS INVOLVE EQUALITY AND WILL LEAD TO EQUAL LEVELS OF ARMAMENTS.
3. AS FAR AS THE U.S. AMBASSADOR HERE IS AWARE THE RUSSIANS WERE NOT GIVEN ADVANCE WARNING OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S LETTER: IF SO, THE SOVIET RESPONSE IS UNUSUALLY PROMPT. HARTMAN TELLS ME THAT, IN ADDITION TO ITS OBVIOUS PROPAGANDA ELEMENT, HE SEES IN ANDROPOV'S REPLIES A FURTHER INDICATION ("COMPLEMENTING THE HINTS WE HAVE HAD FROM OTHER SOURCES") OF A GENUINE SOVIET DESIRE FOR A SUMMIT IN DUE COURSE.

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