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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 196 OF 24 FEB

INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, BONN PARIS

INFO SAVING OTHER NATO AND ALL EASTERN EUROPEAN POSTS,  
UKDEL MADRID, UKDEL VIENNA, UKDIS GENEVA, TOKYO, PEKING

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GROMYKO INTERVIEW ON NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

SUMMARY

1. PRAVDA ON 24 FEBRUARY PUBLISHED AN INTERVIEW WITH GROMYKO ON NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL. HIS REPLIES WERE ALONG STANDARD LINES. THERE HAD BEEN NO PROGRESS IN THE GENEVA TALKS BECAUSE OF THE AMERICAN POSITION AIMED AT MILITARY SUPERIORITY. WESTERN EUROPEAN TALK OF A POSSIBLE INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION ON INF WAS AN INDICATION OF THE DIFFICULTY OF DEFENDING THE ZERO OPTION. BUT THE NATO POSITION WAS STILL TO DEPLOY NEW US MISSILES. DEPLOYMENT WOULD UNDERCUT THE TALKS. A SOLUTION IN GENEVA WAS POSSIBLE IF THE US ADOPTED A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH.

DETAIL

2. THE MAIN POINTS OF GROMYKO'S REPLIES WERE :

(A) US AND SOVIET ATTITUDES TO NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL:

MOVEMENT IN THE DIRECTION OF CURBING THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE HAD HALTED. THE BLAME LAY WITH WASHINGTON WHICH WAS AFTER MILITARY SUPERIORITY AT ANY PRICE. THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE OF PRINCIPLE IN SOVIET AND US APPROACHES TO NUCLEAR ARMS LIMITATIONS, WHICH DETERMINED THEIR POSITIONS AT THE GENEVA TALKS. THE SOVIET UNION WAS PREPARED TO REDUCE AND LIMIT NUCLEAR ARMS ON A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE BASIS. WASHINGTON DEMONSTRATED BY ITS DEEDS A RELUCTANCE TO FOREGO THE COURSE OF SPURRING THE ARMS RACE AND BREAKING PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS. THE CHIEF OBSTACLE AT BOTH SETS OF GENEVA TALKS WAS THAT WASHINGTON SOUGHT SOVIET UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT.

(B) NUCLEAR BALANCE: CLAIMS THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD UPSET THE BALANCE WHILE THE USA ONLY STROVE TO RESTORE IT WERE A DECEPTION. AS RECOGNISED IN SALT 2 THERE WAS PARITY IN STRATEGIC ARMS. IN EUROPE, THE USSR AND NATO EACH HAD ABOUT 1,000 MEDIUM RANGE DELIVERY VEHICLES.

(C) START: (AFTER GROMYKO HAD SET OUT THE STANDARD SOVIET POSITION) 'NATURALLY ALL THESE LIMITATIONS AND REDUCTIONS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO VERIFICATION'. WASHINGTON'S POSITION WAS AIMED NOT AT THE REDUCTION OF STRATEGIC ARMAMENTS BUT AT LEGALISATION OF A RACE, IN THE HOPE OF UNILATERAL AMERICAN ADVANTAGES.

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(D) INF: "THE SOVIET UNION SUGGESTED AGREEMENT ON THE RENUNCIATION OF ALL TYPES OF ARMS INTENDED TO HIT TARGETS IN EUROPE, BOTH MEDIUM RANGE AND TACTICAL". ALTERNATIVELY THE SOVIET UNION PROPOSED A TWO THIRDS CUT IN MEDIUM RANGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, IT WAS PREPARED TO KEEP IN EUROPE THE EXACT NUMBER OF MISSILES THAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE HAD, WITH EQUAL LEVELS OF SOVIET AND NATO MEDIUM RANGE AIRCRAFT. THE RESULT WOULD BE A GAIN FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY: OVER 1,300 MEDIUM RANGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS WOULD BE REDUCED IN THE AREA. "AFTER THESE REDUCTIONS THE NUMBER OF LAUNCHERS ON OUR MEDIUM RANGE MISSILES IN THE EUROPEAN PART OF THE USSR AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF WARHEADS ON THEM WOULD BE LOWER, I REPEAT, LOWER THAN IN 1976. THAT IS BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE MODOGEAN

VVAN OF MEDIUM RANGE MISSILES BY THE SOVIET UNION."

(E) STATE OF THE GENEVA TALKS: DESPITE THE CLAIMS OF AMERICAN PROPAGANDA THERE WAS NO HEADWAY AT THE NEGOTIATIONS. IT WAS A DELIBERATE PROPAGANDA DEVICE, UNWORTHY OF SERIOUS NEGOTIATING PARTNERS, TO PUT ABOUT THE IDEA THAT THE CHANCES OF AGREEMENT WOULD BE WORSE IF THE US DEPARTED FROM ITS PRESENT STAND.

(F) THE POSITION OF OTHER NATO COUNTRIES: THERE WERE DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW. THERE WAS A GROWING AWARENESS OF THE DANGER WHICH INF DEPLOYMENT WOULD BRING. AT THE SAME TIME SUPPORT WAS EXPRESSED FOR THE ZERO OPTION. THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF SPOKESMEN OF NATO COUNTRIES RANG FALSE. TO COME OUT IN FAVOUR OF THE ZERO OPTION MEANT TO SUPPORT THE DEPLOYMENT OF NEW AMERICAN MISSILES IN EUROPE. WESTERN EUROPE WAS WRONG TO PLAY THE ROLE OF OBSERVER FROM THE SIDELINES AND COULD SPEAK UP IN FAVOUR OF JUST SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF MEDIUM RANGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

(G) INTERMEDIATE SOLUTIONS: WESTERN EUROPEAN TALK ABOUT POSSIBLE AMERICAN INTERMEDIATE VERSIONS WAS A DEFINITE INDICATOR THAT NATO FOUND IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO DEFEND THE PRESENT AMERICAN POSITION. REGRETTABLY NO HEADWAY TOWARDS GREATER REALISM HAD BEEN SEEN. "IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS EVERYTHING REVERTS TO THE ORIGINAL POSITION WHICH IS TO IMPLEMENT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER THE NATO PLAN AND TO RAILROAD NEW US MISSILES INTO WESTERN EUROPE". NO PROPOSALS MEETING THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY HAD SO FAR EMANATED FROM THE US AND NATO.

(H) DEPLOYMENT: IT WAS A DELUSION THAT DEPLOYMENT WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF THE GENEVA TALKS AND THAT AFTER THE BEGINNING OF DEPLOYMENT THE TALKS WOULD PROCEED AS IF NOTHING WAS HAPPENING. NEW US MISSILES WOULD RESULT IN A QUALITATIVELY NEW SITUATION. THE AMERICANS WOULD THEREBY UNDERCUT THE TALKS.

(I) PROSPECTS FOR SOLUTIONS AT GENEVA: THE POSSIBILITY DID EXIST IF WASHINGTON ADOPTED A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH. IT WAS NOW THE TURN OF THE US TO SPEAK UP.

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3. THE PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW IS PROBABLY, BY LENDING GROMYKO'S NAME TO IT, TO ENSURE THAT SOVIET PROPAGANDA IS GIVEN GOOD COVERAGE IN THE WESTERN PRESS, ESPECIALLY IN THE FRG IN THE RUN UP TO THE ELECTIONS ON 6 MARCH.

4. GROMYKO SAYS NOTHING ESSENTIALLY NEW ABOUT THE SOVIET APPROACH TO INF AND START. SUPERFICIALLY GROMYKO ATTEMPTS TO REJECT INTERMEDIATE SOLUTIONS. BUT HE DOES NOT CLOSE SOVIET OPTIONS AND ENDS HIS REMARKS WITH A HINT THAT AGREEMENT WAS STILL POSSIBLE IF THE US CAME UP WITH NEW PROPOSALS.

5. HIS REFERENCES TO VERIFICATION OF START AND THE NUMBER OF WARHEADS REMAINING UNDER THE ANDROPOV INF PROPOSAL ARE INTENDED TO IMPROVE THE PRESENTATION OF THE SOVIET CASE. (TZHP RAPIDLY DRAWN IDELDMERATE ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO THE PASSAGE QUOTED AT THE END OF PARA 2(D) ABOVE) THE SLIGHTLY REVISED FORMULA FOR THE MAXIMALIST VERSION OF THE SOVIET INF PROPOSALS (NO MEDIUM RANGE OR TACTICAL WEAPONS AIMED AT EUROPE RATHER THAN IN EUROPE) ALSO SURFACED IN DEFENCE MINISTER USTINOV'S ARTICLE TO MARK ARMED FORCES DAY IN PRAVDA ON 23 FEBRUARY. THE CHANGE SEEMS OF LITTLE OR NO RELEVANCE TO THE GENEVA TALKS. IT MAY BE INFLUENCED BY THE SWEDISH PROPOSAL FOR A BATTLEFIELD NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE AND CRITICISM THAT THE ZONE COULD BE TARGETTED FROM OUTSIDE.

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