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FM WASHINGTON

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 2125³¹⁵

OF 142345Z OCT 86

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PEKING FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY, MODUK FOR DACU ms

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OUR TELNO 2619 (NOT TO ALL): REYKJAVIK SUMMIT: US REACTIONS
SUMMARY

1. GENERAL CONGRESS/PRESS REACTIONS SPLIT ALONG PARTY LINES. BREAKDOWN IN REYKJAVIK POSSIBLY A SMALL NEGATIVE FACTOR FOR THE REPUBLICANS ON 4 NOVEMBER. WIDESPREAD CONCERN AMONG THE EXPERTS AT THE US PROPOSAL FOR MUTUAL ABOLITION OF ALL BALLISTIC MISSILES. GENERAL EXPECTATION OF A SOVIET PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE TO SPLIT NATO ON SDI.

DETAIL

2. THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO THE NATION (MY TUR) REFLECTED A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO PLAY UP THE ACHIEVEMENTS SO NEARLY REGISTERED IN REYKJAVIK. THE UPBEAT TONE, AND REPEATED REFERENCES TO PROGRESS MADE, WAS IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THE DEPARTURE STATEMENTS AT REYKJAVIK (MY TELS NOS 2614/6). THE CHANGE OF TONE HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY EXTENSIVE POINDEXTER PRESS BRIEFINGS (SEE SEPARATE TEL) ON THE START AND INF PROVISIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED IN REYKJAVIK.

3. THE PRESS, AND PUBLIC OPINION, HAS NOT YET FULLY DIGESTED THE WEEKEND'S EVENTS, AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S CHANGE OF EMPHASIS. BUT MR RENTON'S REFERENCE IN BRUSSELS TO THE QUOTE SERIOUS PROPOSALS WHICH EMERGED UNQUOTE IN REYKJAVIK HAS BEEN WIDELY NOTED, AND CERTAIN BROAD THEMES OF COMMENT ARE ALREADY EMERGING.

4. FIRST, ON THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF WHETHER THE PRESIDENT WAS RIGHT TO REFUSE TO ACCEPT A MORE RESTRICTIVE REDEFINITION OF THE ABMT, WHICH WOULD HAVE AFFECTED SDI, AS THE PRICE FOR SATISFACTORY OUTLINE AGREEMENTS ON START AND INF, US OPINION DIVIDES ON PARTY LINES. REPUBLICAN SPOKESMEN SUPPORT HIM, LUGAR ARGUING THAT GORBACHEV'S TACTICS WERE A QUOTE TRAP TO PUT THE US IN PERPETUAL JEOPARDY OF THE REMAINING ICBMS UNQUOTE AND NOTING THAT QUOTE THE PRESIDENT DID NOT BLINK UNQUOTE, AND

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ACTED PROPERLY TO PRESERVE US SECURITY. KEMP THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT'S CONDUCT MAGNIFICENT, AND NOTED WITH APPROVAL THAT QUOTE THE PRESIDENT IS COMMITTED TO MOVING FORWARD ON SDI, AND HAS A EQUAL COMMITMENT TO OFFENSIVE ARMS REDUCTIONS, BUT NOT ONE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE OTHER UNQUOTE. RIGHT-WING COLUMNISTS ARE EQUALLY SUPPORTIVE: GEORGE WILL SEES REYKJAVIK AS QUOTE THE PRESIDENT'S FINEST HOUR UNQUOTE.

5. ON THE DEMOCRAT SIDE NUNN THOUGHT THAT THE OUTCOME SHOWED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S MAJOR PRIORITY WAS TO PROTECT SDI, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF GIVING UP THE PROSPECT OF DEEP CUTS IN SOVIET OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS. THERE HAD BEEN A CHANCE TO QUOTE EXCHANGE A RESEARCH-TYPE BLUEPRINT, OR AT LEAST RESTRICTIONS ON IT, FOR SOVIET MISSILES THAT ARE ALREADY DEPLOYED AND THREATEN OUR NATION UNQUOTE: IT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN MISSED. HART SAID THAT QUOTE UNREASONABLE ATTACHMENT TO A SPECULATIVE SPACE-BASED DEFENSIVE SYSTEM UNQUOTE IS BLOCKING REAL PROGRESS TOWARDS ARMS CONTROL, QUOTE THE ADMINISTRATION APPARENTLY NEVER INTENDED TO USE SDI AS A BARGAINING CHIP, AS THEY HAVE SO OFTEN ALLEGED UNQUOTE.

6. THIS DIVISION WAS PREDICTABLE: HARDER TO PREDICT ARE THE EFFECTS OF REYKJAVIK ON MID-TERM ELECTION PROSPECTS. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT A DEAL IN REYKJAVIK WOULD HAVE BEEN A MAJOR ELECTORAL PLUS FOR THE REPUBLICANS IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE (WHATEVER TROUBLE IT MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THE PRESIDENT WITH THE RIGHT WING FRINGE). IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE BREAKDOWN IN REYKJAVIK WILL CONSTITUTE A COMPARABLE PLUS FOR THE DEMOCRATS, FOR THERE MAY BE A GENERAL INCLINATION TO RALLY ROUND THE PRESIDENT (AND HIS TELEVISED ADDRESS WAS WELL CALCULATED TO ENCOURAGE THIS). THERE PROBABLY IS SOME NET GAIN TO THE DEMOCRATS, BUT ECONOMIC FACTORS ARE LIKELY TO HAVE GREATER WEIGHT ON 4 NOVEMBER.

7. A SUB-THEME IN COMMENTS ON THE SUMMIT IS WIDESPREAD PUZZLEMENT AT THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL FOR THE MUTUAL ABOLITION OF ALL BALLISTIC MISSILES WITHIN 10 YEARS. BRZEZINSKI HAS DESCRIBED THIS AS MAKING EUROPE SAFE FOR SOVIET CONVENTIONAL ATTACK: NUNN HAS SAID THAT THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN HEART ATTACKS AMONG US ARMY AND AIR FORCE GENERALS IF GORBACHEV HAD ACCEPTED IT. THE WASHINGTON POST FINDS THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL STARTLING: THE WALL STREET JOURNAL LAUGHABLE.

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8. THE PRESS ARE HOWEVER UNANIMOUS IN NOW EXPECTING A SOVIET PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE DESIGNED TO PIN THE BLAME FOR ACROSS THE BOARD FAILURE IN REYKJAVIK ON THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO SDI. KARPOV'S WEST EUROPEAN VISITS ARE SEEN AS THE LIKELY FIRST STAGE IN THE OFFENSIVE. THE PRESS NOTE THAT THERE IS LITTLE WESTERN EUROPEAN ENTHUSIASM FOR SDI, BUT THEY ALSO NOTE THAT ALLIED REPRESENTATIVES AT NATO ON 13 OCTOBER WERE NOT INCLINED TO BLAME THE PRESIDENT FOR DIGGING IN ON SDI.

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