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TELNO 305

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TASS REACTION TO PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY TO GORBACHEV'S 15 JANUARY
ARMS CONTROL PROPOSALS

SUMMARY

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1. THE ONLY COMMENT SO FAR ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY TO GORBACHEV HAS BEEN BY THE TASS MILITARY ANALYST, CHERNYSHEV. THE COMMENT WAS NEGATIVE THROUGHOUT, FOCUSING ON TRIDENT, SDI AND DEFENCE SPENDING, AND QUESTIONING BRITISH COMMITMENT TO ARMS CONTROL.

DETAIL

2. CHERNYSHEV QUOTED THE FINANCIAL TIMES AS SAYING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD REJECTED THE KEY PROVISIONS OF THE SOVIET PROPOSALS AND DID NOT APPROVE ANY PLAN FREEZING THE BUILD-UP OF BRITISH NUCLEAR FORCES.

3. NOW THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD EXPLICITLY DECLARED ITS READINESS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET MEDIUM RANGE MISSILES FROM EUROPE NOT TO BE LINKED WITH SPACE AND STRATEGIC WEAPONS, AND FOR A MUTUAL ELIMINATION OF US AND SOVIET EUROPEAN INF, LONDON HAD COMPLETELY LOST ITS 'OSTENTATIOUS ENTHUSIASM' FOR THIS.

4. TRUE TO THE CHURCHILLIAN DICTUM THAT ONE SHOULD NOT RELINQUISH ATOMIC WEAPONS WITHOUT OTHER MEANS TO PRESERVE PEACE, THE PRIME MINISTER, WAS NOT LETTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS OUT OF HER HANDS AND WAS THE FIRST WEST EUROPEAN LEADER TO TO JOIN THE 'SPACE STRIKE WEAPONS CLUB' TO PARTICIPATE IN WASHINGTON'S 'MEANS OF PRESERVING PEACE'.

5. LONDON MUST REALISE THAT BRITISH REFUSAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO US/SOVIET EUROPEAN INF REDUCTIONS, WHILE CONTINUING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STAR WARS PROGRAMME, BLOCKED THE INVIGORATION OF THE GENEVA TALKS. WHAT THEN WAS THE REAL WORTH OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT THAT THESE TALKS WERE A SOURCE OF HOPE FOR PEACE? IN FEBRUARY 1985, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD BOASTED TO CONGRESS THAT BRITAIN WAS THE FIRST TO DEPLOY US CRUISE MISSILES: SHE NOW HAD GOOD REASON TO BOAST OF OBEDIENTLY FOLLOWING US ADVENTURISM AND MILITARISM.

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6. JUST AS, NEGLECTING BRITISH NATIONAL INTERESTS, THE PRIME MINISTER FAVOURED AN AMERICAN TAKE-OVER OF WESTLAND, SO THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT WISH TO GIVE UP ITS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS. BRITAIN SPENT MORE PER CAPITA ON MILITARY PROGRAMMES THAN ANY OTHER NATO MEMBER. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ALSO FIRMLY COMMITTED TO TRIDENT, AT THE COST OF NEARLY £11,000 MILLION, CONTRARY TO THE MAJORITY OF BRITISH OPINION WHICH BELIEVED THAT TRIDENT WAS A FIRST-STRIKE WEAPON. AS THE 'OBSERVER' NOTED, ACQUIRING TRIDENT EVEN EXCEEDED BRITAIN'S SELF-IMPOSED REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE NUCLEAR DETERRENCE DOCTRINE.

7. THE REFUSAL TO END BRITAIN'S 'QUANTITATIVE BUILD UP OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS' CALLED IN QUESTION THE SINCERITY OF STATEMENTS ABOUT COMMITMENT TO PEACE AND WEAPONS REDUCTION. SCHOOL MASTERS WROTE OF THEIR PUPILS: 'COULD DO BETTER'. OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSE: 'COULD NOT DO WORSE'.

COMMENT

8. THESE SNIDE COMMENTS CONTAIN NO NOVELTIES OF APPROACH. THE COMPLAINT THAT OUR EARLIER ALLEGED INTEREST IN A EUROPEAN INF AGREEMENT HAS NOW EVAPORATED IN THE LIGHT OF OUR TRUE ADVOCACY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS SIMILAR TO THAT MADE BY SHEVARDNADZE AGAINST NATO GENERALLY IN HIS CONGRESS SPEECH (MY TELNO 264, PARAGRAPH 7).

9. ALTHOUGH THE TASS COMMENTARY IS UNRELIEVEDLY NEGATIVE IT DOES NOT HAVE THE STATUS OF A SERIOUS ANALYSIS. THERE HAS SO FAR BEEN NO COMMENT ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY IN THE CENTRAL SOVIET PRESS: BUT THIS WILL DOUBTLESS FOLLOW IN DUE COURSE.

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