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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK (FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY):

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US/SOVIET RELATIONS : PROPAGANDA AND REALITY

1. SOVIET ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA HAS PROBABLY NOT BEEN AS SULPHUROUS OR STRIDENT SINCE THE PRE-DETENTE ERA. ALREADY UNFORGIVING FOR MOST OF THIS YEAR, THE TONE OF COMMENT ON THE US ADMINISTRATION AT LARGE HAS TAKEN A SHARP TURN FOR THE WORSE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE KAL DISASTER (EG, 'HAWKISH, UNTHINKING, PATHOLOGICALLY ANTI-SOVIET' : PRAVDA, 11 SEPTEMBER).

THE CANZELLATION OF GROMYKO'S TRIP TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS NOT HELPED : ALTHOUGH HE WAS PROBABLY RELIEVED TO HAVE AN EXCUSE NOT TO PACE THE MUSIC, HE HAS, CHARACTERISTICALLY, SOUGHT TO TRANSFORM THE HUMILIATION INTO YET ANOTHER CAUSE OF COMPLAINT AGAINST THE US.

2. IT HAS ALSO BECOME COMMONPLACE TO DIRECT ABUSE AT THE US PRESIDENT IN PERSON, A PHENOMENON PROBABLY NOT SEEN ON THIS SCALE SINCE TRUMAN WAS IN THE WHITE HOUSE. THE SOVIET PRESS REGULARLY ACCUSE REAGAN OF LYING AND HYPOCRISY. AMONG A NUMBER OF READERS' LETTERS PUBLISHED IN PRAVDA ON 25 SEPTEMBER, WHICH GAVE VENT TO CRUDE ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT ONE DESCRIBED REAGAN AS

READERS' LETTERS PUBLISHED IN PRAVDA ON 25 SEPTEMBER, WHICH GAVE VENT TO CRUDE ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT, ONE DESCRIBED REAGAN AS 'ONE OF THE CRUELLEST AND MOST WILL-INTENTIONED LEADERS OF OUR TIMES'. LITERARY GAZETTE (21 SEPTEMBER) HAS CALLED HIM A DANGEROUS MAN RUNNING A DANGEROUS ADMINISTRATION. PRAVDA, AGAIN ON 25 SEPTEMBER, REPORTED WITH PROMINENT RELISH DER SPIEGEL'S ALLEGATIONS ABOUT HIS PERSONAL WEAKNESSES AS PRESIDENT.

3. THIS WAVE OF PROPAGANDA IS NOW BEGINNING TO SHOW SIGNS OF SELF-INDUCED WAR PSYCHOSIS, AS IT MIRRORS ITS OWN ACCUSATIONS OF ANTI-SOVIET, MILITARY

RISK HYSTERIA IN WASHINGTON. MARSHAL OGARKOV RECENTLY SAID THAT THE US WAS PREPARING FOR WAR (MY TEL NO 1068). IN A SPEECH IN NOVOSIBIRSK ON 23 SEPTEMBER, CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER VOROTNIKOV LAID SPECIAL EMPHASIS, IN 'THE PRESENT COMPLICATED INTERNATIONAL SITUATION' ON THE NEED FOR CONSTANT ATTENTION TO BE PAID TO THE STRENGTHENING OF THE COUNTRY'S DEFENSIVE POTENTIAL. A LEADING ARTICLE ON 20 SEPTEMBER IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE PAPER, RED STAR, TALKED OF 'VIGILANCE, VIGILANCE AND AGAIN VIGILANCE... TO BE VIGILANT MEANS BEING FULLY AWARE OF THE REAL DANGER OF WAR...'

4. A RECURRENT SUB-THEME HAS BEEN THAT THE 'PROVOCATION' WAS DESIGNED TO EASE THE WAY FOR NATO'S INF DEPLOYMENT. IN CONTRAST WITH THIS, HOWEVER, AKHROMEYEV AND KORNHENKO AT THEIR PRESS CONFERENCE ON 14 SEPTEMBER (MY TEL NO 1021) ATTEMPTED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, TO BREAK THE LINK BETWEEN INF AND THE DESTRUCTION OF TSE KAL AIRLINER. THE PARADOX IS IN PART EXPLAINED BY THE NEED TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THE LATTER. BUT THE PRESS CONFERENCE ALSO REFLECTED SOVIET RECOGNITION OF WHERE PROPAGANDA ENDS AND REAL POLITIK BEGINS. AS SUCH, IT WAS AN EFFORT TO GET THE FOCUS OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS BACK TO WHERE SOVIET INTERESTS ARE MOST VITALLY ENGAGED: ARMS CONTROL AND, IMMEDIATELY, THE INF NEGOTIATIONS.

5. THE RUSSIANS WILL REALISE THAT THEY CANNOT HOPE TO CARRY ON AS IF THE SHOOTING DOWN OF THE AIRLINER HAD NEVER HAPPENED. THE START AND INF TALKS TAKE PLACE IN THE WORST EAST/WEST POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE FOR YEARS. MORE SERIOUSLY, THE US/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP APPEARS TO COMPRISE THE GENEVA TALKS, GRAIN AND LITTLE ELSE. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AIRLINER HAS PUT PAID TO THE MOVEMENT IN PERIPHERAL AREAS WHICH WAS DISCERNIBLE DURING THE SUMMER (MOSCOW TEL NO 792). SUBJECT TO WHAT MAY BE GOING ON THROUGH ANY BACK CHANNEL, US/SOVIET DIALOGUE HAS ATROPHIED, PARTICULARLY AT HIGH LEVEL. SHULTZ AND GROMYKO HAVE MET ONLY ONCE THIS YEAR AND IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BETTER HAD THEY NOT DONE SO

LEVEL. SCHELTZ AND GROMYKO HAVE MET ONLY ONCE THIS YEAR AND IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BETTER HAD THEY NOT DONE SO. WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW APPEAR ENCLOSED IN A POLITICAL VACUUM. THERE IS CORRESPONDINGLY BROAD SCOPE FOR COMPOUNDING THE EXISTING MUTUAL SUSPICION AND INCOMPREHENSION. EVEN BEFORE THE SHOOTING DOWN OF THE AVR8,4, SIR D SUTHERLAND WARNED AGAINST TOO OPTIMISTIC A VIEW OF THE PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS, IN PARTICULAR, FOR A US/SOVIET SUMMIT IN 1984 (MOSCOW TELS NOS 677 AND 792). NOW, A MEETING BETWEEN REAGAN AND ANDROPOV NEXT YEAR SEEMS ALMOST INCONCEIVABLE.

6. WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF SOVIET MOVEMENT AT GENEVA OR ON OTHER NEURALGIC POINTS IN THE US/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP, SUCH AS SAKHAROV AND SHCHARANSKY ? THE RUSSIANS WILL KNOW THAT, BY DESTROYING THE AIRLINER, THEY HAVE PROBABLY DEALT A FATAL BLOW FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE TO THE NUCLEAR FREEZE MOVEMENT IN THE US AND THEIR HOPES OF EXPLOITING A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN TO SOVIET NEGOTIATING ADVANTAGE. THEY ARE CONSCIOUS THAT THEY HAVE DONE SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THEIR PEACE CAMPAIGN: THE MEETING IN MOSCOW ON 20 SEPTEMBER OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARIES OF THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES LOOKS LIKE A ATTEMPT TO GET THE CAMPAIGN BACK ON THE RAILS. ALL THIS MAY INDUCE ANDROPOV TO MAKE SOME GESTURE, SUBSTANTIVE OR COSMETIC OR A MIXTURE OF BOTH, BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. BUT THERE WILL BE A GREAT TEMPTATION HERE TO DIG IN DEFIANTLY AND DISPLAY AGAIN THOSE UNSAVOURY NATIONAL REFLEXES TO WHICH THE PASSENGERS ON THE KOREAN AIRLINER FELL VICTIM. THE PRELIMINARY REACTION HERE TO REAGAN'S NEW INF INITIATIVE BODES WELL (MY TEL NO 1064). SEEN FROM HERE, THE PROSPECTS FOR A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE GENEVA ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS LOOK BLEAK. YET WITHOUT IT, 1984 IS LIKELY TO PROVE EVEN MORE TROUBLED FOR EAST/WEST RELATIONS THAN 1983.

7. CENTRAL TO THE PROGNOSIS IS THE PLACE OF THE MILITARY IN THE SOVIET ESTABLISHMENT. I WILL EXPLORE THIS IN A DESPATCH ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AIRLINER WHICH I AM SENDING TO THE DEPARTMENT BY THIS WEEK'S BAG.

FCO PLEASE PASS TO ALL SAVING ADDRESSEES

RATFORD

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