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Prime Minister

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FM WASHINGTON 201557Z JULY  
TO PRIORITY FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 2006 OF 20 JULY 1979=  
MY TELNO 2001: US POLITICAL SCENE.

1. BRZEZINSKI HAS TOLD ME ONE OR TWO THINGS ABOUT THE ODD EVENTS OF THE LAST FEW DAYS. HE REALISED THAT THE CONSIDERABLE STATE OF UNCERTAINTY AROUSED BY THE RESIGNATION OF THE WHOLE CABINET AND THE DELAY IN FILLING THE POSTS AGAIN HAS TAKEN SOME OF THE GILT OFF THE GINGERBREAD OF THE PRESIDENT'S LAST SUNDAY'S BROADCAST. BUT THE WHOLE EPISODE WAS MORE A MATTER OF MIS-HANDLING THAN OF INTENTION TO CREATE A CRISIS.

2. AT LAST TUESDAY'S CABINET MEETING THE PRESIDENT SAID IN GENERAL TERMS THAT HE WANTED TO MAKE ONE OR TWO CHANGES IN HIS CABINET AND WHITE HOUSE STAFF, TO WHICH VANCE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT HELP THE PRESIDENT IF HE COULD ASSUME THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE CABINET WERE READY TO PLACE THEIR OFFICES AT HIS DISPOSAL. NOBODY CHALLENGED THIS BUT NOR, ACCORDING TO BRZEZINSKI, WAS IT ASSUMED ROUND THE TABLE THAT ALL MEMBERS HAD RESIGNED. THE CRITICAL POINT THEN OCCURRED AROUND 4 PM WHEN THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS SECRETARY JODY POWELL ANNOUNCED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD ASKED FOR THE RESIGNATION OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AND MANY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

3. BRZEZINSKI BECAME AWARE QUITE SOON THAT THIS DRAMATIC PIECE OF NEWS WAS LIKELY TO CREATE CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD, LET ALONE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES. HE THEREFORE ARRANGED THAT BOTH THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE, BROWN AND HE SHOULD BE REAFFIRMED IN THEIR OFFICES.

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4. BRZEZINSKI MADE NO ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL THE INCREASED DOMINANCE OF THE GEORGIAN MAFIA IN THE WHITE HOUSE, PARTICULARLY WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW CHIEF OF STAFF HAMILTON JORDAN. THE EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURE OF EVALUATION REPORTING ON TOP LEVELS OF THE ADMINISTRATION, WHICH HAS PRODUCED MIRTH AND WONDERMENT IN NON-GEORGIAN CIRCLES IN WASHINGTON, WAS JORDAN'S BRAINWAVE. HE WOULD BE COLLATING ALL THE ANSWERS ON THE QUALITIES OF CABINET MINISTERS AND THEIR SENIOR OFFICIALS BUT BRZEZINSKI'S IMAGINATION COULD NOT EXTEND TO SAYING WHAT ON EARTH HE WOULD DO WITH THE RESULTS. (WE HAVE HEARD THAT VANCE, HAVING BEEN CONFIRMED IN OFFICE, TOLD HIS SENIOR STAFF THAT HE WOULD DECLINE TO RETURN THE FORMS).

5. JUDGED AT THE MOMENT IT LOOKS VERY MUCH AS THOUGH THIS EPISODE OF THE RESIGNATIONS HAS ADDED TO THE LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN CARTER'S ADMINISTRATION AND MOREOVER UNDONE MUCH OF THE GOOD THAT THE BROADCAST OF LAST SUNDAY MAY HAVE ACHIEVED. THIS IS CERTAINLY THE GENERAL VIEW IN CONGRESS AND IN TODAY'S EAST COAST PRESS.

HENDERSON

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