

GRS 500

UNCLASSIFIED

DESKBY 140900Z

FM MOSCOW 140924Z FEB 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 208 OF 14 FEB

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Durs
1412*

FROM HICKS 1130 HRS LOCAL TIME MOSCOW TUESDAY

FOR FCO COMMUNICATIONS

PLEASE ONPASS FOLLOWING TO COI NEWSROOM (ATTN CHATTERIS),
FCO NEWS DEPT (ATTN RIDGEWAY), FCO INFORMATION DEPT (ATTN
DICKINSON), NO TEN PRESS OFFICE (ATTN MURRAY) WITH 0900 HRS
DESKBY

ITEM: THATCHER-CHERNENKO TALKS IN MOSCOW

BY GARY HICKS LPS CHIEF DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT MOSCOW (LPS):

TOP LEVEL POLITICAL CONTACT BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND SOVIET
LEADERSHIPS WAS RESUMED HERE TODAY TUESDAY FOURTEEN FEBRUARY
WITH THE NEWS THAT BRITAIN'S PRIME MINISTER MRS MARGARET THATCHER
WILL MEET THE NEW RUSSIAN LEADER MR. KONSTANTIN CHERNENKO
AFTER THE FUNERAL OF PRESIDENT YURI ANDROPOV.

THE KREMLIN TALKS, SCHEDULED TO LAST ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES
BEFORE HER RETURN TO LONDON TONIGHT, ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO BE
ATTENDED BY THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY SIR GEOFFREY
HOWE, AND THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY MR. ANDREI GROMYKO.

OVER THE YEARS SUCCESSIVE BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARIES HAVE
HELD MEETINGS WITH THE SOVIET FOREIGN SECRETARY MR. ANDREI GROMYKO,
USUALLY IN NEW YORK AT THE START OF NEW UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY SESSIONS THERE BUT OCCASIONALLY ELSEWHERE SUCH AS AT THE
RECENT 35-NATION CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT IN EUROPE (CDE) IN
STOCKHOLM.

/ CONTACT

CONTACT AT A HIGHER POLITICAL LEVEL HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN VIRTUALLY LACKING SINCE HAROLD WILSON, PRIME MINISTER AT THAT TIME, VISITED MOSCOW IN 1975 FOR TALKS WITH THE LATE PRESIDENT LEONARD BREZHNEV. (MRS. THATCHER BRIEFLY MET SOVIET PRIME MINISTER MR. KOSYGIN IN MOSCOW IN 1979 ON HER WAY TO THE TOKYO ECONOMIC SUMMIT).

THE 1975 TRIP, RESULTING AS IT DID IN JOINT COMMUNIQUEs RUNNING TO TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WORDS, WAS PORTRAYED AS USHERING IN A BRAVE NEW ERA OF BRITISH-SOVIET RELATIONS. SINCE THEN DISILLUSIONMENT HAS SET IN AS THE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE HAS CHANGED RADICALLY WITH HOPES OF EAST-WEST ''DETENTE'', AS IT WAS THEN CALLED, DIMINISHED CONSIDERABLY AS A RESULT OF EVENTS LIKE THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN.

NO-ONE HERE PRETENDS THAT MRS. THATCHER WILL TODAY SUDDENLY CHANGE THIS FROSTY CLIMATE. YET THE VERY FACT SHE IS HERE - AND SEEING MR. CHERNENKO - IS REGARDED AS SIGNIFICANT AND IMPORTANT AND ANOTHER STAGE ON THE LONG DIPLOMATIC ROAD TOWARD BETTER EAST-WEST RELATIONS OF WHICH SHE SPOKE ON HER RECENT HUNGARIAN VISIT.

TONIGHT'S TALKS ARE NOT SEEN AS AN OCCASION FOR DETAILED SCRUTINY OF SPECIFIC PROBLEMS SINCE THERE IS SCARCELY TIME. MRS. THATCHER IS EXPECTED TO REITERATE THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST BETWEEN BRITAIN AND THE SOVIET UNION AND THAT THOSE DIFFERENCES MUST BE RECOGNISED. SHE IS, TOO, LIKELY TO URGE THE NEW LEADER TO RETURN TO THE ARMS CONTROL TALKS NOW SUSPENDED AS SHE WILL ARGUE THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS EXCEPT AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. (THE SOVIET UNION REACTED TO DEPLOYMENTS OF THE 16-NATION NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION DEPLOYMENTS OF CRUISE AND PERSHING MISSILES LAST DECEMBER BY BREAKING OFF THE INTERMEDIATE NUCLEAR FORCE TALKS AND ADJOURNING INDEFINITELY THE STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TALKS WITH THE UNITED STATES.)

THE PRIME MINISTER SEEMS CERTAIN TO POINT OUT THAT THE WEST REMAINS COMPLETELY GENUINE IN ITS DESIRE FOR BALANCED AGREEMENTS AT LOWER LEVELS OF ARMS, BUT THAT SUCH ARMS CONTROL IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT POLITICAL UNDERTAKINGS. CONSEQUENTLY THE EAST-WEST DIALOGUE MUST BE BROADENED AND GIVEN MORE SUBSTANCE.

/SHORTLY

SHORTLY BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KREMLIN MEETING, MRS THATCHER AND SIR GEOFFREY (REPRESENTING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE) AND THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR SIR IAIN SUTHERLAND (REPRESENTING THE ROYAL FAMILY) LAID WREATHS AT THE IMPOSING NEO-CLASSICAL HALL OF COLUMNS WHERE ANDROPOV'S BODY LIES IN STATE.

THEY STOOD FOR TWO MINUTES AS AN ORCHESTRA PLAYED SOLEMN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND AS THE PUBLIC, WHO HAD BEEN QUEUING IN THE SNOW IN TEMPERATURES MORE THAN TEN DEGREES BELOW FREEZING, CONTINUED TO FILE PAST THE OPEN COFFIN BANKED WITH COLOURFUL FLOWERS. THE BRITISH PARTY BOWED AND LEFT THE BUILDING, WHICH THE NOBILITY USED AS A CLUB UNTIL LENIN DECREED IT BE HANDED OVER TO THE TRADE UNIONS IN 1919.

ON HER RETURN TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY MRS. THATCHER, ACCOMPANIED BY SIR GEOFFREY, SAW PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ OF PAKISTAN THERE AT HIS REQUEST. THEY SPENT 45 MINUTES MAINLY DISCUSSING INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS BUT CONCENTRATING PARTICULARLY UPON THE AFGHAN SITUATION WHICH HAS RESULTED IN SOME 3.1 MILLION REFUGEES ON PAKISTAN SOIL. SOME BILATERAL ISSUES WERE ALSO APPARENTLY DISCUSSED BUT NO DETAILS WERE AVAILABLE AFTERWARDS.

THEN SHE WENT TO RED SQUARE FOR THE FUNERAL CEREMONY WITH SIR GEOFFREY, MR. DENIS HEALEY (LABOUR PARTY FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN), MR. DAVID STEEL (LIBERAL PARTY LEADER) AND DR. DAVID OWEN (LEADER OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS). AFTERWARDS MRS. THATCHER WAS DUE TO PAY HER CONDOLENCES TO POLITBURO MEMBERS IN ST. GEORGE'S HALL IN THE GREAT KREMLIN PALACE WHERE SHE WILL ALSO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR BRIEF, INFORMAL; CHATS WITH SOME OF THE SCORES OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT GATHERED HERE. (LSPS)

SUTHERLAND

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