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BONN, UKDEL NATO.

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HUNGARIAN VIEWS ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS.

SUMMARY

1. THE HUNGARIANS ARE PLEASED THAT MOSCOW HAS MOVED TO A POSITION ON EAST-WEST CONTACTS WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING ALL YEAR. THEY SAY MOSCOW IS POSITIVE AND IN EARNEST IN ITS APPROACH TO THE SHULTZ-GROMYKO MEETING. THEY EXPECT GORBACHEV, WHOM THEY DESCRIBE UNEQUIVOCALLY AS NO 2 IN MOSCOW, TO CONVINC US OF THIS WHEN HE GOES TO LONDON.

DETAIL

2. I ASKED SZUROS FOR A TOUR D'HORIZON AND A RETROSPECTIVE ON HIS VISIT TO LONDON AND HAD AN HOUR WITH HIM TODAY. I ALSO TALKED WITH BANYASZ, WHO WAS IN MOSCOW LAST WEEK, AND ESZTERGALYOS.

3. SZUROS SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE AMERICANS WERE PREPARED TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE MANY OF THEM NOW REALISED THAT THEY COULD NOT ESTABLISH A POSITION OF MILITARY SUPERIORITY OVER THE SOVIET UNION AND THAT EVEN THE US ECONOMY WOULD BE OVERSTRAINED BY THE COSTS OF MILITARISATION IN SPACE. THEIR DECISION TO TALK WAS ALSO IN PART IN DEFERENCE TO WESTERN EUROPEAN INTERESTS AND VIEWS WHICH DIFFERED FROM THEIR OWN. THE SOVIETS HAD CONCEDED SOMETHING IN AGREEING TO DISCUSS NUCLEAR AS WELL AS SPACE QUESTIONS. BUT SPACE WOULD BE THE MOST PROMINENT SUBJECT. THE SHULTZ-GROMYKO MEETINGS WOULD BE A NEW START, NOT A CONTINUATION. AND TO MEET IN GENEVA WAS A SATISFACTORY COMPROMISE BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW. THE RESUMPTION OF CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SUPER POWERS WOULD BE A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT WHICH GAVE GROUNDS FOR CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM. PATIENCE WOULD BE NEEDED. BUT OVER THE NEXT 6-12 MONTHS THERE WOULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DECISION FOR DETENTE AS SIGNIFICANT AS THAT TAKEN IN THE EARLY 70'S.

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4. SZUROS ADDED THAT HE HAD HAD AN OPPORTUNITY IN PRAGUE LAST WEEK TO COMPARE NOTES WITH PONOMAREV. HE BELIEVED THE SOVIETS SAW THINGS THE SAME WAY HE DID. THE AMERICANS WOULD FIND THEM SELF-CONFIDENT BUT DETERMINED IN THEIR SEARCH FOR A BREAK THROUGH.

5. I ASKED WHETHER MOSCOW DID NOT HAVE A SERIOUS PRESTIGE PROBLEM. AFTER ALL, AS RECENTLY AS JULY THEY HAD REBUFFED AMERICAN WILLINGNESS TO TALK ON TERMS SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH CHERNENKO HAD NOW PROPOSED. SZUROS TRIED TO ARGUE THAT IT WAS WASHINGTON, NOT MOSCOW, WHOSE POSITION HAD DEVELOPED SUFFICIENTLY TO MAKE THE RESUMPTION OF DIRECT CONTACTS POSSIBLE. BUT HE CONCEDED THAT MOSCOW'S EMPHASIS AND TACTICS HAD ALSO CHANGED.

6. I REMINDED SZUROS THAT GORBACHEV WOULD BE COMING TO LONDON THIS WEEKEND. SZUROS SAID THAT HE WAS SURE GORBACHEV WOULD BE FORTHRIGHT AND DETERMINED ABOUT THE NEED FOR EAST-WEST CONTACTS. HE HAD BEEN ASKED WHAT GORBACHEV MIGHT EXPECT IN LONDON AND HAD SAID THAT HE WOULD FIND BRITISH MINISTERS WELCOMING, FRANK AND CONSTRUCTIVE. SZUROS DESCRIBED GORBACHEV AS AN OPEN, CLEVER AND FAIR MAN WHO (ALTHOUGH HE HIMSELF WOULD DENY IT) WAS FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES NO 2 IN MOSCOW. HE SPOKE ABOUT GORBACHEV'S WORK IN LEADING THE CURRENT REVIEW OF SOVIET ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. GORBACHEV HAD SPOKEN RECENTLY OF THE NEED FOR A STRONGER TECHNOLOGICAL BASE FOR THE ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENTS WHICH WERE NEEDED IF THE SOVIET PEOPLE WERE TO BE GIVEN A BETTER LIFE. GORBACHEV SAW THIS, SZUROS IMPLIED, (AND ESZTERGALYOS MADE THE SAME POINT MORE EXPLICITLY WHEN I SAW HIM EARLIER) AS DIRECTLY LINKED TO MOSCOW'S WILLINGNESS TO RESUME DIRECT EAST-WEST CONTACTS.

7. SZUROS RECALLED WITH PLEASURE HIS VISIT TO LONDON. KADAR AND LAZAR SIMILARLY RECALLED THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO BUDAPEST IN FEBRUARY. BRITAIN WAS, WITH FRANCE AND CHINA, A NUCLEAR POWER OF THE SECOND RANK. HUNGARY WAS BY ANY RECKONING VERY SMALL. NEVERTHELESS, UK-HUNGARIAN CONTACTS THIS YEAR HAD ILLUSTRATED WHAT THE NON-SUPER POWERS COULD DO TO MAINTAIN AND PROMOTE EAST-WEST CONTACTS WITHOUT DISLOYALTY TO THEIR ALLIANCE PARTNERS. THE HUNGARIANS FELT THAT IT HAD BEEN A GOOD YEAR IN THEIR FOREIGN POLICY. THEY HAD TRIED TO PLAY AN ACTIVE AND USEFUL BUT MODEST ROLE. THEY NAUGHT THAT SOME OF THEIR ALLIES WHO HAD CRITICISED THEIR ADVOCACY OF EAST-WEST CONTACTS HAD HAD TO CHANGE THEIR TUNE VALIDATED THE HUNGARIAN APPROACH. THEY WOULD CONTINUE ON THE SAME LINES THE PRIME PURPOSE OF THEIR FOREIGN POLICY WOULD BE THE BENEFIT OF THEIR OWN PEOPLE, BUT THEY HOPED IT WOULD BENEFIT OTHER PEOPLES ALSO (AND HE MADE NO SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO BENEFITTING HUNGARY'S SOCIALIST PARTNERS).

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8. ESZTERGALYOS AND BANYASZ WERE AT SIMILAR PAINS TO STRESS SOVIET GOOD INTENTIONS. BOTH LAID STRESS ON GORBACHEV'S IMPORTANCE AND ON THE WAY HE SAW SOVIET DEVELOPMENT AS INTIMATELY LINKED WITH EAST-WEST CONTACT AND IF POSSIBLE DETENTE. ESZTERGALYOS WAS RELATIVELY FRANK IN HALF ADMITTING THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD CLIMBED DOWN. HE HOPED THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD HELP MOSCOW DOWN OFF ITS BRANCH BY AVOIDING RHETORIC. THERE WAS NO TALK FROM HIM, BANYASZ OR SZUROS ABOUT THE WEST PAYING A PRICE TO REWARD THE RUSSIANS FOR COMING BACK TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE.

COMMENT

- 9. IT IS NATURAL THAT THE HUNGARIANS SHOULD BE PLEASED AT THE WAY THINGS HAVE MOVED. THEY ARE SENSIBLY AVOIDING THE TEMPTATION TO CLAIM MORE THAN A MODICUM OF CREDIT. THERE IS PROBABLY SOME EXAGGERATION IN THEIR EMPHASIS ON SOVIET READINESS FOR SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS. BUT BY AND LARGE I BELIEVE THEY ARE TELLING THE TRUTH AS THEY SEE IT. AND I WAS PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY THE STRESS THEY LAID ON GORBACHEV'S ROLE.

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EAST WEST & US/SOVIET RELATIONS

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