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FM MOSCOW

TO PRIORITY : F C O

TELNO 1137

OF 041330Z SEPTEMBER 85

INFO PRIORITY : WASHINGTON

INFO ROUTINE : PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO, UKMIS NEW YORK, UKDIS GENEVA

MY TELNO. 1132: U S SENATORS' MEETING WITH GORBACHEV

1. THE U S CHARGE HAS NOW GIVEN ME (AND MY FRENCH AND FRG COLLEAGUES), IN STRICT CONFIDENCE, A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING WHICH SENATOR BYRD AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD WITH GORBACHEV ON 3 SEPTEMBER, AT WHICH HE WAS PRESENT. HIS ACCOUNT IS AT LEAST AS INTERESTING FOR THE LIGHT WHICH IT THROWS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF GORBACHEV'S STYLE AS FOR THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DISCUSSION.

SUBSTANCE

2. IN HIS RESPONSE, LASTING OVER ONE HOUR, TO SENATOR BYRD'S EQUALLY LENGTHY INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT, GORBACHEV GAVE PRIDE OF PLACE TO THE SDI AND US/SOVIET RELATIONS. HE SPENT SOME TIME COVERING THE SAME GROUND ON SDI RESEARCH WHICH HAD FEATURED IN THE UNSCRIPTED PART OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH TIME MAGAZINE (MY TELNO. 1127 PARA. 3 (C)). GORBACHEV SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THAT THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE RESEARCH ISSUE MIGHT BE LARGELY SEMANTIC; HE THEN WENT ON TO REITERATE HIS DISTINCTION BETWEEN UNVERIFIABLE "FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH" AND ANY KIND OF RESEARCH WHICH TOOK PLACE BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE LABORATORY, BY DEFINITION VERIFIABLE. THE LATTER CATEGORY, HE SAID, MUST BE BANNED COMPLETELY. IF THE UNITED STATES WERE TO MEET SOVIET CONCERNS ON THIS SCORE, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD "ON THE VERY NEXT DAY" TABLE "RADICAL PROPOSALS" FOR THE LIMITATION AND REDUCTION OF BOTH STRATEGIC AND INTERMEDIATE RANGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS: THESE PROPOSALS WERE ALREADY FULLY PREPARED. GORBACHEV MADE NO REFERENCE TO THE ISSUE OF UK/FRENCH NUCLEAR WEAPONS SYSTEMS AND THERE WAS LITTLE DETAILED DISCUSSION OF ARMS CONTROL ISSUES AS SUCH, APART FROM A LAST MINUTE BID BY SENATOR NUNN TO INTEREST GORBACHEV IN THE PROPOSAL WHICH NUNN AND SENATOR WARNER ARE SPONSORING FOR THE CREATION OF A "NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION CENTRE" TO MONITOR AND TAKE ACTION ON NUCLEAR ACCIDENTS, TERRORIST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ETC. ALTHOUGH SOVIET MILITARY EXPERTS HAD ON THE PREVIOUS DAY TAKEN A S WHOLLY DISMISSIVE LINE ON THIS PROPOSAL, GORBACHEV DESCRIBED IT AS "INTERESTING" AND DESERVING OF FURTHER STUDY: HE AGREED TO ACCEPT THE PAPER IN WHICH THE TWO SENATORS HAD SET OUT THEIR PROPOSALS IN DETAIL. ON HIS OWN PROPOSAL FOR A MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR TESTS, GORBACHEV VIGOROUSLY DENIED SENATOR BYRD'S ASSERTION THAT THE MORATORIUM HAD BEEN DECLARED WHEN THE SOVIET UNION HAD COMPLETED ITS OWN CURRENT SERIES OF TESTS AND IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD NOT: HE SAID THAT THE SOVIET MILITARY HAD ENTERED SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ON THE DECLARATION OF A MORATORIUM, WHICH HAD BEEN AN ENTIRELY POLITICAL DECISION.

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3. ON US/SOVIET RELATIONS, GORBACHEV STRESSED THAT HE HAD PURPOSELY AVOIDED, IN HIS TIME MAGAZINE INTERVIEW, RAKING OVER^R PAST HISTORY OR CATALOGUING THE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION: HE HOPED THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD ADOPT THE SAME APPROACH. THE OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO MAKE A FRESH START, "AS FROM TODAY", WITH A CLEAN SLATE. BUT WASHINGTON'S WHOLLY ONE-SIDED APPROACH CREATED A MAJOR DIFFICULTY: THE UNITED STATES INSISTED THAT ALL THE CONCESSIONS SHOULD COME FROM THE SOVIET SIDE. SENATOR BYRD'S OPENING STATEMENT HAD CONTAINED NOTHING NEW: EVERYTHING WAS THE FAULT OF THE RUSSIANS, EVERYTHING WHICH THE SOVIET UNION DID WAS BLACK WHEREAS EVERYTHING THE U S DID WAS WHITE. THIS APPROACH WAS UNACCEPTABLE: THERE MUST BE RECIPROCITY. IN AN ALMOST MINATORY TONE, GORBACHEV TOLD THE SENATORS: "SOMETIMES YOU SEEM TO FORGET THAT IT IS THE SOVIET UNION YOU ARE DEALING WITH"

4. IN RESPONSE TO SENATOR BYRD'S INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, GORBACHEV DELIVERED A STRONG COUNTER-ATTACK. HOW COULD THE UNITED STATES, WHICH HAD FAILED TO RATIFY SIX MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, HAVE THE NERVE TO TALK TO THE SOVIET UNION ON THIS SUBJECT? AND WHAT MORAL AUTHORITY DID THE UNITED STATES HAVE IN THIS AREA? THE UNITED STATES HAD PLENTY OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS OF ITS OWN. FINALLY, THE AMERICAN APPROACH TO HUMAN RIGHTS WAS ENTIRELY ONE-SIDED AND BIASED: AMERICAN COMPLAINTS WERE ADDRESSED ONLY TO SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, IGNORING THE SITUATION IN E.G. SOUTH AFRICA AND CHILE. GORBACHEV NEVERTHELESS ACCEPTED WITH RELATIVELY GOOD GRACE A NUMBER OF LETTERS AND APPEALS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES WHICH THE SENATORS HAD BROUGHT WITH THEM.

5. THERE WAS VIRTUALLY NO DISCUSSION OF OTHER ISSUES: ON AFGHANISTAN, GORBACHEV INTERRUPTED THIS PASSAGE IN SENATOR BYRD'S OPENING STATEMENT TO SAY THAT THE U S CONGRESS WAS HELPING TO FUND THE CONFLICT AND DID NOT SUBSEQUENTLY RETURN TO THE SUBJECT.

STYLE

6. THE U S CHARGE, AND THE SENATORS THEMSELVES, WERE STRUCK BY GORBACHEV'S OVERWHELMING SELF-CONFIDENCE WHICH AT CERTAIN POINTS DURING THE THREE AND HALF HOUR MEETING BORDERED ON ARROGANCE. HE TREATED THE GROUP OF EMINENT AND DISTINGUISHED U S SENATORS AS IF THEY WERE MIDDLE-RANKING APPARATCHIKI. HE WAS CONTROLLED BUT FREQUENTLY CUTTING AND FROM TIME TO TIME DELIBERATELY ALLOWED ANGER TO SHOW THROUGH. HIS REMARK ABOUT THE SENATORS APPEARING TO FORGET

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THAT THEY WERE DEALING WITH THE SOVIET UNION WAS TYPICAL OF HIS GENERAL APPROACH AND CHARACTERISTICALLY "GREAT RUSSIAN". HE SHOWED NO REAL CURIOSITY ABOUT THE SENATORS' OWN VIEW AND LITTLE DISPOSITION TO DEBATE: HE SEEMED INTERESTED ONLY IN VIGOROUS AND SWINGING REBUTTAL. TO JUDGE BY THIS ACCOUNT, THE CHEMISTRY OF POWER IS BEGINNING TO WORK ON HIM, AND RATHER EARLY.

CARTLEDGE

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET]

EAST WEST & US/SOVIET RELATIONS

LIMITED

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DEFENCE D

RESEARCH D

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WED

ACDD

FED

NED

PUSD

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PS/LADY YOUNG

PS/MR RIFKIND

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MR DEREK THOMAS

SIR W HARDING

MR FERGUSSON

MR GOODALL

MR JENKINS

MR DAUNT

MR DAVID THOMAS

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