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US/SOVIET ARMS CONTROL TALKS

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INFO IMMEDIATE : WASHINGTON, BONN, PARIS, UKDEL NATO, UKMIS GENEVA.
INFO PRIORITY : EAST EUROPEAN POSTS.

MY TELNO 1522 : US/SOVIET SUMMIT : SOVIET PRESS PRESENTATION OF THE OUTCOME

SUMMARY

1. FAIR, FACTUAL SOVIET TV AND PRESS COVERAGE OF THE SUMMIT'S CONCLUSION ALBEIT WITH GORBACHEV'S PRESS CONFERENCE HOLDING CENTRE STAGE. AN IMPRESSION CONVEYED TO THE SOVIET PEOPLE OF A RE-ASSERTION OF THE SOVIET UNION'S SUPER-POWER STATUS, OF GORBACHEV'S CLEAR AUTHORITY, AND OF A START TO A NEW, LESS HOSTILE, MORE COOPERATIVE SOVIET/AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP. THE SOVIET UNION NOT SUCCESSFUL IN ORIENTING THE SUMMIT TOTALLY TO ARMS CONTROL BUT DID MANAGE VIRTUALLY TO EXCLUDE ANY HUMAN RIGHTS ELEMENT.

DETAIL

2. THE CONCLUDING CEREMONY IN GENEVA AND GORBACHEV'S PRESS CONFERENCE WERE COVERED LIVE ON SOVIET TELEVISION AND REPEATED IN FULL ON THE CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMME VREMYA AT PRIME EVENING

2. THE CONCLUDING CEREMONY IN GENEVA AND GORBACHEV'S PRESS CONFERENCE WERE COVERED LIVE ON SOVIET TELEVISION AND REPEATED IN FULL ON THE CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMME VREMYA AT PRIME EVENING VIEWING TIME. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL THE EVENING COVERAGE ONLY EDITED OUT LINKING PASSAGES AND NOTHING SIGNIFICANT WAS LOST.

3. THE SOVIET CENTRAL PRESS TODAY, 22 NOVEMBER, PUBLISHES THE AGREED JOINT STATEMENT IN FULL, THE STATEMENTS OF BOTH LEADERS AT THE CONCLUDING CEREMONY IN FULL AND THE FULL TEXT OF GORBACHEV'S PRESS STATEMENT AND QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: AGAIN WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT EDITING.

4. PRAVDA ALSO PUBLISHES FRONT PAGE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TWO LEADERS AT THE CONCLUDING CEREMONY, SITTING ALONE BENEATH THE TWO FLAGS WITH GORBACHEV SMILING AT REAGAN.

5. CORRESPONDENTS' ARTICLES FROM GENEVA HIGHLIGHT GORBACHEV'S PUBLIC PERFORMANCE WITH REFERENCE TO HIS HAVING HARDLY REFERRED TO HIS NOTES AND TO THE REMARKABLE EFFECT HIS PRESENTATION HAD ON WESTERN, PARTICULARLY AMERICAN, JOURNALISTS. THE PRESS ALSO PLAYS UP THE THEME THAT ONLY THOSE WHO EXPECTED EITHER A MIRACLE OR COMPLETE FAILURE WERE DISAPPOINTED.

THE MESSAGE FOR THE SOVIET PEOPLE

6. WE CAN EXPECT AUTHORITATIVE AND REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY FOR SOME TIME TO COME. BUT THE IMMEDIATE IMPRESSION CREATED FOR THE DOMESTIC PUBLIC BY THE FAIR AND EVEN SYMPATHETIC COVERAGE HAS A NUMBER OF ELEMENTS:-

(A) THE SUMMIT WAS A SERIOUS BUSINESSLIKE OCCASION WITH A GREAT DEAL OF DETAILED NEGOTIATION AND FRANK RECOGNITION OF WIDE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PARTIES.

(B) THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY DOUBT IN ANYONE'S MIND THAT THIS WAS A SUMMIT BETWEEN SUPER-POWERS OF EQUAL STATUS.

(C) A NUMBER OF USEFUL PRACTICAL AGREEMENTS WERE REACHED.

(D) A PROCESS HAS BEEN LAUNCHED IN WHICH BOTH SIDES WISH TO SEE IMPROVED RELATIONS IN REAL TERMS. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO BREAK THROUGH IN SPECIFIC ARMS CONTROL MEASURES, AS GORBACHEV SAID AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE THE WORLD IS NEVERTHELESS PROBABLY A SAFER PLACE AS A RESULT OF THE SUMMIT.

(E) GORBACHEV'S OWN STATURE AND STATUS IS EVEN MORE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED.

(F) REAGAN'S IMAGE HAS ALSO INEVITABLY SOFTENED AND WITH ANNUAL SUMMITS IN PROSPECT AND A HIGHER LEVEL OF CONTINUING DIALOGUE, A GREATER AIR OF REALISM AND OF POSITIVE PROSPECTS IS IN EVIDENCE.

COMMENT

7. IN THE RUN-UP TO THE SUMMIT THE RUSSIANS FOCUSED ALMOST

177 REAGAN'S IMAGE HAS ALSO INEVITABLY SOFTENED AND WITH ANNUAL SUMMITS IN PROSPECT AND A HIGHER LEVEL OF CONTINUING DIALOGUE, A GREATER AIR OF REALISM AND OF POSITIVE PROSPECTS IS IN EVIDENCE.

COMMENT

7. IN THE RUN-UP TO THE SUMMIT THE RUSSIANS FOCUSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON ARMS CONTROL AND SDI. REAGAN HAD BEEN STRONGLY CRITICISED FOR SEEKING TO DIVERT THE SUMMIT TO OTHER AREAS. HOWEVER IN THE EVENT NOT ONLY WAS GORBACHEV FORCED TO CONCEDE PUBLICLY THAT AGREEMENT ON ARMS CONTROL HAD NOT PROVED POSSIBLE, BUT HE PUT HIS NAME TO A JOINT STATEMENT IN WHICH THE AREAS OF CLOSEST AGREEMENT ARE THOSE FURTHEST FROM PUBLICLY DECLARED SOVIET PRIORITIES AND FOCUS MOST ON BILATERAL RELATIONS AND NOT AT ALL ON SDI. HE WAS ALSO SEEN TO APPLAUD REAGAN'S CONCLUDING STATEMENT IN WHICH HE GOT IN AN IMPLIED PLUG FOR SDI ('GOING OVER TO NON-NUCLEAR SYSTEMS OF DEFENCE, THAT IS SYSTEMS WHICH MAKE OUR WORLD MORE SECURE'), FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ('WILL THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM BE ADVANCED - THE PEOPLES OF AMERICA, THE SOVIET UNION AND THE WORLD ARE READY TO ANSWER YES') AND FOR RESOLUTION OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS ('SO THAT THE PEOPLES LIVING IN ASIA, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA CAN DETERMINE THEIR OWN FATE WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE'). NO DOUBT THIS IMBALANCE WAS WHY GORBACHEV FOCUSED SO EXCLUSIVELY ON ARMS CONTROL IN HIS LONG AND REPETITIVE PRESS STATEMENT. HE CLEARLY FELT THE NEED TO RE-STATE SOVIET PRIORITIES IN THE FACE OF WHAT HAD IN ESSENCE BEEN A SUMMIT MORE ON AMERICAN THAN ON SOVIET TERMS.

8. THE COVERAGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ELEMENTS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN STRANGELY MUTED. THE MINIMAL REFERENCE IN THE JOINT STATEMENT SEEMS NOT TO HAVE BEEN PICKED UP AND THERE WERE NO QUESTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT GORBACHEV'S PRESS CONFERENCE, ALMOST AS IF A BAN HAD BEEN IMPOSED. SO MUCH FOR THE STRONG RUMOURS OF JEWISH EMIGRATION (MY TELNO 1432 - NOT TO ALL). PERHAPS IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE AMERICANS TO SHOW RESTRAINT IN THE FACE OF THE FACT THAT BOTH SIDES NEEDED TO BE ABLE TO PRESENT THE SUMMIT AS AT LEAST A PARTIAL SUCCESS AND AS THE START OF A PROCESS OF COOPERATION IN WHICH NEITHER SIDE WILL BE ABLE, FOR A SECOND TIME, TO APPEAR TO HAVE SWEEPED QUITE SO MUCH UNDER THE CARPET.

CARTLEDGE

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