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SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO LONDON, 14-15 JULY

SUMMARY

1. UNCERTAINTY ON SUMMIT DATES LIKELY TO CONTINUE UNTIL US RESPOND (POSSIBLY LATER THIS MONTH) TO SOVIET PROPOSALS AT GENEVA. SHULTZ/SHEVARDNADZE MEETING PROBABLY IN SEPTEMBER. OTHER ASPECTS OF US/SOVIET RELATIONS MIXED, WITH HUMAN RIGHTS A BLACK SPOT. SOME THOUGHTS ON POINTS TO STRESS WITH SHEVARDNADZE.

DETAIL

2. THE LAST SIX MONTHS HAVE BEEN FRUSTRATING FOR THOSE HERE WHO WANT TO SEE PROGRESS IN THE US/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP. ALTHOUGH THERE NOW SEEM TO BE SIGNS OF MOVEMENT AT GENEVA, THE AMERICANS HAVE SO FAR FAILED TO RE-ENGAGE THE RUSSIANS IN A MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE. THEY ARE RESIGNED TO THE FACT THAT THERE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT BE A SHULTZ/SHEVARDNADZE ENCOUNTER UNTIL THE REGULAR SEPTEMBER MEETING IN THE MARGINS OF THE UNGA. THAT WILL LEAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME FOR THE NECESSARY SPADEWORK, IF THERE IS TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT IN 1986. ON THE TIMING, IT IS NOW GENERALLY AGREED THAT GORBACHEV WILL NOT SET A DATE FOR THE SUMMIT UNTIL HE HAS A CLEARER IDEA OF WHAT BUSINESS IT MIGHT TRANACT, AND IN PARTICULAR UNTIL HE HAS SEEN THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO HIS GENEVA PROPOSALS.

3. THERE IS STILL ALL TO PLAY FOR HERE ON THE SUBSTANCE AND TIMING OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY. AN INFLUENTIAL BODY OF OPINION WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION BELIEVES THAT THE NEW SOVIET PROPOSALS AT GENEVA INDICATE SOME SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS THERE. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PRESIDENT AT THE VERY LEAST WANTS TO SEE THAT PROPOSITION FULLY TESTED. BUT THE OLD DIVISIONS REMAIN, AND THE SCEPTICS LED BY WEINBERGER CONTINUE TO GENERATE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT HOW THE ADMINISTRATION WILL RESPOND. THE DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS IS NOW UNDERWAY. THE KEY QUESTION OF COURSE IS WHETHER THE US SHOULD SIGNAL AT THIS STAGE ANY WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT CONSTRAINTS ON SDI AS PART OF AN AGREEMENT ON SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN OFFENSIVE NUCLEAR FORCES. THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE WHITE HOUSE WOULD LIKE TO PRESS THE DEBATE TO A CONCLUSION SOON: BUT EVEN SO IT MAY BE THE END OF JULY OR LATER BEFORE THE PRESIDENT TAKES DECISIONS AND HIS RESPONSE CAN BE GIVEN.

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4. MANY HERE BELIEVE THAT GORBACHEV MUST ALSO BE CALCULATING THAT IF HE ACCEPTS A SUMMIT DATE IN NOVEMBER/DECEMBER HE WOULD RISK BEING HERE JUST BEFORE, OR JUST AFTER, THE MOMENT AT WHICH THE US EXCEEDS THE SALT II LIMITS. THAT WOULD PRESUMABLY BE VERY DAMAGING FOR HIM AT HOME, AND HE WILL THEREFORE NEED REASSURANCE IN ADVANCE EITHER THAT THE US WILL NOT BREACH THE CEILING, OR THAT THE ISSUE WILL BY THEN BE IRRELEVANT BECAUSE OF PROGRESS TOWARDS A NEW FRAMEWORK OF RESTRAINT AT GENEVA.

5. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, THE UNCERTAINTY OVER THE SUMMIT IS LIKELY TO ENDURE FOR SOME TIME YET. BUT MOST OF OUR SENIOR CONTACTS STILL BELIEVE THAT THE PRESIDENT AND GORBACHEV WILL STICK TO THEIR AGREEMENT TO MEET IN THE US IN 1986.

6. MEANWHILE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE US/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP PRESENT A MIXED PICTURE:

(I) ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WANT TO REACH AN AGREEMENT IN THE CDE BEFORE 19 SEPTEMBER AND ARE INCREASINGLY HOPEFUL THAT THIS WILL BE POSSIBLE. THE RECENT AGREEMENT ON A US/SOVIET DIALOGUE WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS ON NUCLEAR TESTING ISSUES COULD TURN OUT TO BE A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT. BILATERAL TALKS HAVE BEEN HELD AS AGREED AT GENEVA ON REGIONAL ISSUES, RISK REDUCTION CENTRES AND FUSION RESEARCH (THOUGH WITHOUT MUCH MEETING OF MINDS).

(II) ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, THE RUSSIANS HAVE BEEN DRAGGING THEIR FEET ON STUDENT EXCHANGES AND THE OPENING OF A US CONSULATE IN KIEV. AND HUMAN RIGHTS ARE A BLACK SPOT. JEWISH EMIGRATION IS AT ITS LOWEST LEVEL SINCE THE 1960'S, AND THE INTENSIFIED CLAMP-DOWN ON JEWISH DISSIDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN WIDELY REPORTED HERE. DOBRYNIN AT LEAST MUST BE AWARE THAT THERE WILL NEED TO BE A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE IF A GORBACHEV VISIT TO THE US IS NOT TO BE MARRED BY HUGE DEMONSTRATIONS.

7. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE ESPECIALLY VALUABLE (AND VERY WELCOME HERE) IF YOU COULD PUT OVER THREE MESSAGES TO SHEVARDNADZE NEXT WEEK:

(1) CONSULTATION WITH THE AMERICANS IN THE ALLIANCE ON ALL THE MAJOR ISSUES INCLUDING ARMS CONTROL IS EXCELLENT. THE EUROPEAN ALLIES ARE FULLY SATISFIED WITH THESE CONSULTATIONS. THERE IS NO FUTURE IN WEDGE-DRIVING.

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(ii) THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ADMINISTRATION ARE TAKING THE NEW SOVIET PROPOSALS AT GENEVA VERY SERIOUSLY. THERE ARE AS ALWAYS DIFFERING VIEWS IN WASHINGTON ON HOW TO RESPOND. BUT THE PRESIDENT HAS SPOKEN OF A POSSIBLE TURNING POINT IN GENEVA AND WE ARE CONVINCED OF HIS DETERMINATION TO HAMMER OUT SIGNIFICANT ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS DURING HIS TERM IN OFFICE. AND HE IS FAR BETTER PLACED TO GET SUCH AGREEMENTS THROUGH THE SENATE THAN ANY LIKELY SUCCESSOR.

(iii) THERE IS NOT MUCH TIME LEFT, AND THE RUSSIANS SHOULD GET BACK INTO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS QUICKLY. IF AGREEMENTS ARE TO BE RATIFIED BEFORE THE PRESIDENT LEAVES OFFICE, THEY MUST BE REACHED BEFORE THE END OF 1987. THE IMPETUS MUST THEREFORE BE GIVEN BEFORE THE END OF 1986. HENCE THE IMPORTANCE OF A SUMMIT THIS YEAR.

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EAST WEST & US/SOVIET RELATIONS

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