

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

UK COMMS ONLY

FM MOSCOW

TO DESKBY 030800Z F C O

TELNO 808

OF 030530Z JUNE 87

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, BONN, PARIS, UKDEL NATO, PEKING, TOKYO

INFO PRIORITY EAST EUROPEAN POSTS, HELSINKI, MODUK

SIC

MY TELNO 780: LANDING OF LIGHT AIRCRAFT IN RED SQUARE

1. I HAVE THE FOLLOWING FURTHER COMMENTS ON THIS INCIDENT, ARISING IN PART FROM DISCUSSION WITH MY FRG, US AND FRENCH COLLEAGUES ON 2 JUNE.

THE INCIDENT

2. RUST'S CESSNA LANDED ON THE BRIDGE WHICH LEADS INTO RED SQUARE AT 1900 HOURS ON 28 MAY AND TAXIED ACROSS THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE SQUARE CLOSE TO ST BASIL'S CATHEDRAL. THE FIRST REACTION OF THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES, APART FROM TAKING THE PILOT INTO CUSTODY, WAS QUICKLY (WITHIN 30 MINUTES) TO PAINT OUT THE FRG NATIONAL EMBLEM AND INTERNATIONAL IDENTIFICATION MARKINGS ON THE CESSNA: BUT IT TOOK THEM 9 HOURS TO ORGANISE THE REMOVAL OF THE AIRCRAFT FROM RED SQUARE, WHENCE IT WAS TRANSPORTED AT 0400 HOURS ON 29 MAY.

3. A MAP, WITH THE CESSNA'S ROUTE (LARGELY FOLLOWING THE LENINGRAD-MOSCOW RAILWAY LINE) MARKED ON IT WAS FOUND ON THE AIRCRAFT. THE CESSNA APPARENTLY HAD AN EXTRA FUEL TANK FITTED TO IT AND WHEN RUST LANDED IN MOSCOW HE STILL HAD SUFFICIENT FUEL FOR A FURTHER 2 HOURS FLYING. SO FAR AS THE FRG EMBASSY KNOW, RUST HAS NEVER VISITED THE SOVIET UNION, I.E. HE HAD MADE NO RECONAISSANCE ON THE GROUND OF HIS LANDING PLACE.

4. THE FACT THAT THE CESSNA LANDED IN RED SQUARE, WITHIN A FEW HUNDRED YARDS OF LENIN'S MAUSOLEUM, HAS STILL NOT BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE SOVIET MEDIA ALTHOUGH MOST MUSCOVITES APPEAR TO BE AWARE OF IT.

5. THE FRG CONSUL HAS VISITED RUST IN PRISON, ON 1 JUNE. RUST IS APPARENTLY AN UNFATHOMABLE CHARACTER: HE GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF HAVING LITTLE INTEREST IN PUBLICITY FOR HIS EXPLOIT AND HIS MOTIVES FOR CARRYING IT OUT ARE WHOLLY UNCLEAR - BUT MAY EMERGE IF AND WHEN HE GOES ON TRIAL. LIKE FALIN, ZAGLADIN HAS SPOKEN TO EGON BAHR IN TERMS WHICH SUGGEST THAT RUST WILL NOT BE DETAINED IN THE SOVIET UNION VERY LONG.

DISMISSALS

CONFIDENTIAL

16.

6. THE FACT THAT THE RETIREMENT OF THE EX-MINISTER OF DEFENCE SOKOLOV HAS BEEN RUMOURED AND ANTICIPATED FOR SO LONG IMPLIES THAT GORBACHEV MAY HAVE WISHED TO GET RID OF HIM, AS A SURVIVOR FROM THE OLD REGIME, BUT FOUND DIFFICULTY IN DOING SO: THIS WOULD IN TURN IMPLY STRONG SUPPORT FOR SOKOLOV WITHIN MILITARY AND OTHER CONSERVATIVE CIRCLES - HENCE GORBACHEV'S ALACRITY IN SEIZING THIS UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE SOKOLOV THE PUSH. IT MAY BE SIGNIFICANT, IN RETROSPECT, THAT GORBACHEV'S REFERENCES IN HIS SPEECH TO THE JANUARY PLENUM OF THE CC TO THE NEED FOR 'PERESTROIKA' IN THE ARMED FORCES WERE CONSIDERABLY WATERED DOWN IN THE PLENUM'S FINAL RESOLUTION, PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF PRESSURE FROM MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

7. THE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENCE, YAZOV, MAY HAVE ATTRACTED GORBACHEV'S ATTENTION WHEN THE LATTER VISITED THE SOVIET FAR EAST AT THE END OF JULY 1986, DURING YAZOV'S TENURE AS COMMANDER OF THE FAR EAST MILITARY DISTRICT (GORBACHEV WAS REPORTED TO HAVE MET UNIDENTIFIED MILITARY COMMANDERS IN Khabarovsk DURING HIS TOUR). THIS COULD HAVE LED TO HIS APPOINTMENT EARLY THIS YEAR TO THE POST OF DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENCE RESPONSIBLE FOR PERSONNEL MATTERS, I.E. TO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE 'PERESTROIKA' OF CADRES IN THE ARMED FORCES. IF THIS IS CORRECT, GORBACHEV IS NOW IN THE COMFORTABLE POSITION OF HAVING A MINISTER OF DEFENCE WHO OWES HIS RISE ENTIRELY TO GORBACHEV PERSONALLY.

8. AS I COMMENTED IN MY TUR, GORBACHEV'S HANDLING OF THE WHOLE EPISODE CANNOT BUT HAVE AROUSED BITTERNESS AND HOSTILITY IN THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES. THE FACT THAT HE HAS BEEN PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISK IS INDICATIVE OF HIS WHOLE APPROACH TO 'PERESTROIKA', NAMELY THAT HE SEES NO ALTERNATIVE TO FORGING AHEAD, ACCEPTING THE POLITICAL RISKS AS THEY ARISE, ESCHEWING THE PREPARATION OF LINES OF RETREAT AND APPARENTLY NOT TROUBLING OVERMUCH TO GUARD HIS BACK.

CARTLEDGE

MXHPAN 0811

LIMITED
SOV D
EED
WED
ACDD
DEF D
NEWS D
INFO D
PUSD
RES D
PLANNING STAFF
PS
PS/MRS CHALKER
PS/LADY YOUNG
PS/MR RENTON
PS/PUS
SIR J FRETWELL
MR BOYD
MR RATFORD

COPIES TO
ASSESSMENT STAFF, CABINET
OFFICE

PS/NO 10 DOWNING ST

MR D NICHOLLS DUSP MOD

DNUC (POL)SY MOD
DACU MOD
CDI MOD

2
CONFIDENTIAL