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FM MOSCOW
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 1583
OF 031500Z NOVEMBER 87
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON
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WASHINGTON TELNO 2349: SHEVARDNADZE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

1. IN CASE IT MAY ADD ANYTHING TO BRIEFINGS GIVEN IN WASHINGTON, I OFFER THE FOLLOWING POINTS FROM THE ACCOUNT OF SHEVARDNADZE'S VISIT GIVEN BY MY US COLLEAGUE (PLEASE PROTECT) TO MY FRENCH AND GERMAN COLLEAGUES AND TO ME ON 3 NOVEMBER.
2. MATLOCK DESCRIBED GORBACHEV'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN AS VERY CONSTRUCTIVE. DATES FOR THE SUMMIT HAD BEEN FIXED QUICKLY AND WITHOUT ANY DIFFICULTY: GORBACHEV (AND SHEVARDNADZE) HAD BEEN AT PAINS TO EMPHASISE THAT ONLY GORBACHEV'S INESCAPABLE COMMITMENTS AT HOME PREVENTED HIM FROM SPENDING MORE THAN 2-3 DAYS IN THE US AND FROM DECLINING THE MORE ELABORATE PROGRAMME ENVISAGED BY THE PRESIDENT, MUCH AS THAT APPEALED TO HIM. GORBACHEV HOPED THAT THE BREVITY OF HIS VISIT WOULD NOT BE SEEN AS A PRECEDENT FOR REAGAN'S RETURN VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION.
3. THE SOVIET DRAFT OF THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT ON SUMMIT DATES AND OBJECTIVES HAD CONTAINED A REFERENCE TO THE AIM OF REACHING AGREEMENT ON NON-WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ABMT FOR 10 YEARS, ALONG WITH THAT OF REACHING AGREEMENT ON A 50 PER CENT REDUCTION IN STRATEGIC WEAPONS. WHEN THE AMERICANS BAULKED AT THIS SHEVARDNADZE (APPARENTLY AFTER CONSULTING MOSCOW) CONCEDED THE POINT: THE RUSSIANS DROPPED ALL IMPLIED PRE-CONDITIONS BOTH FOR THIS AND FOR THE RETURN SUMMIT AND MADE NO NEW DEMANDS.
4. FOR THE TIME BEING, AT ANY RATE, THE RUSSIANS HAVE SWITCHED THEIR CONCERNS FROM THE SDI AS SUCH TO PRESERVING THE INTEGRITY OF THE ABMT: THEIR PROFESSED PRIORITY IS NOW THE ASSURANCE OF 'PREDICTABILITY AND STABILITY' DURING THE PERIOD OF STRATEGIC REDUCTIONS (WASHINGTON TELNO 2350, PARA 4). THIS LINE, IF IT LASTS, SHOULD IN THEORY MAKE A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME TO START

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MORE FEASIBLE. THE PROBLEM AREA REMAINS THE PRECISE DEFINITION OF 'STRICT OBSERVANCE' OF THE ABMT.

5. I AGREE WITH MATLOCK'S ASSESSMENT THAT GORBACHEV'S UNEXPECTED HESITATION, DURING SHULTZ'S VISIT, TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO DATES FOR A SUMMIT WAS DUE TO THE ABSENCE FROM SHULTZ'S PRESENTATION OF ANY FIRM ASSURANCE OF SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION IN WASHINGTON OF START/ABMT. THE SHULTZ/GORBACHEV MEETING TOOK PLACE VERY SHORTLY AFTER THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM OF 21 OCTOBER WHICH WAS, AS WE NOW KNOW, TURBULENT IN SOME (DOMESTIC) RESPECTS (MY TELNO 1572): AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, GORBACHEV EVIDENTLY FELT THAT HE COULD TAKE NO CHANCES AND THAT HE MUST ONCE MORE CLEAR HIS LINES WITH HIS COLLEAGUES BEFORE SIGNING UP FOR WASHINGTON. HE PRESUMABLY DID SO AT THE POLITBURO MEETING WHICH APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE ON 25 OCTOBER AND SECURED APPROVAL OF HIS LETTER TO REAGAN AND FOR SHEVARDNADZE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON AS POSTMAN. SOME MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO MAY WELL BE UNHAPPY WITH THE FACT THAT, IN THE SUPER-POWER DIALOGUE, THE SOVIET UNION IS CONTINUING TO MAKE ALL THE CONCESSIONS. BUT EVEN THE CONSERVATIVES MUST APPRECIATE THAT THE POLITICAL DESIRABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS INCREASES IN PROPORTION TO THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH 'PERESTROIKA' IS ENCOUNTERING.

CARTLEDGE

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