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MODUK FOR DACU

OUR TELNO 2742 : WASHINGTON SUMMIT
SUMMARY

1. GENERAL VERDICT AMONG THE COMMENTATORS THAT ON THE SUBSTANCE THE SUMMIT WAS A SOLID IF UNSPECTACULAR SUCCESS AND THAT THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF US/SOVIET RELATIONS IS WELCOME. BUT DISAPPOINTMENT AT LACK OF AGREEMENT ON REGIONAL ISSUES OR HUMAN RIGHTS. THE PRESIDENT'S APPROVAL RATING NOW RISING AGAIN: VICE-PRESIDENT BUSH THE OTHER MAIN BENEFICIARY HERE.

DETAIL

2. THE AMERICAN MEDIA HAVE SPENT THE WEEKEND DIGESTING THE RESULTS OF THE SUMMIT. IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH, THE TV NETWORKS WERE INCLINED TO SEE THE OUTCOME AS A DISAPPOINTMENT (HAVING CONTRIBUTED LARGELY TO RAISED EXPECTATIONS IN THE FIRST PLACE). BUT THIS HAS NOW GIVEN WAY TO A MORE MEASURED ASSESSMENT. IN GENERAL, COMMENTATORS AND EDITORIAL WRITERS AGREE THAT THE SUMMIT WAS A SUCCESS IN THAT IT MARKED NOT ONLY THE CONCLUSION OF THE INF NEGOTIATIONS BUT ALSO STEADY PROGRESS ON START: AND A RETURN TO A MORE NORMAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SUPERPOWERS. AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS WIDESPREAD DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE PAUCITY OF RESULTS ON REGIONAL ISSUES (PARTICULARLY AFGHANISTAN) AND HUMAN RIGHTS. MOST OBSERVERS ARE SATISFIED THAT THE PRESIDENT PUT US VIEWS ON THE RECORD IN EACH CASE. BUT SEVERAL POINT TO THE CONTRAST BETWEEN GORBACHEV'S FAILURE TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON THE SPECIFIC ISSUES AND HIS GENERALISED APPEALS FOR MORE COOPERATIVE RELATIONS. SOME PUNDITS HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THIS FOCUS ON ARMS CONTROL LEFT THE SUMMIT CONCLUSIONS UNBALANCED: THAT GORBACHEV EFFECTIVELY SUCCEEDED IN HAVING THE ARMS CONTROL SUMMIT WHICH HE HAD BEEN SEEKING: AND THAT AS A RESULT THE IMPROVEMENT IN US/SOVIET RELATIONS STILL RESTS ON A NARROW BASE.

3. THERE IS ALSO UNEASE IN SOME QUARTERS (CF. KISSINGER IN THIS WEEK'S NEWSWEEK) ABOUT GORBACHEV'S MOTIVES IN PROMOTING

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BETTER SOVIET/AMERICAN RELATIONS, AND CONCERN THAT THE PRESSURE OF A 1988 SUMMIT IN MOSCOW MAY LEAD THE US TO CONCEDE TOO MUCH ON START. BY CONTRAST THE INF AGREEMENT CONTINUES TO GET FAVOURABLE TREATMENT FROM ALL BUT THE EXTREME RIGHT. ON THE REACTION IN EUROPE THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND THE WASHINGTON TIMES HAVE CARRIED ARTICLES CLAIMING THAT THERE IS DISQUIET IN WESTERN EUROPE ABOUT THE AGREEMENT. BUT THE US PRESS HAVE ALSO REPORTED STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE TREATY FROM THE PRIME MINISTER AND OTHER WEST EUROPEAN LEADERS: AND THE NEW YORK TIMES OF 14 DECEMBER GAVE A MORE TYPICAL VIEW: QUOTE EUROPE RESTS EASY AFTER THE SUMMIT UNQUOTE.

4. FOR PRESIDENT REAGAN, THE SUMMIT HAS, AS EXPECTED, PLAYED WELL IN MIDDLE AMERICA. WHITE HOUSE POLLS DURING THE SUMMIT SHOWED VERY STRONG SUPPORT FOR HIS HANDLING OF THE VISIT. A SUBSEQUENT WHITE HOUSE POLL SHOWED THAT HIS OVERALL APPROVAL RATING HAS NOW RISEN ABOVE 60 PERCENT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE IRAN/CONTRA AFFAIR BECAME PUBLIC. THE SUMMIT AND THE INF TREATY HAVE ALSO BROUGHT INTO THE OPEN TENSIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN GROWING FOR SOME TIME BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE FAR RIGHT OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY: A DEVELOPMENT WHICH MOST COMMENTATORS FIND REASSURING.

5. ON THE HILL, THIS SUCCESSFUL EXERCISE IN PRESIDENTIAL STATESMANSHIP HAS PRODUCED (AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT TERM) A NEW BIPARTISAN SPIRIT, WHICH SHOULD ENABLE CONGRESS TO COMPLETE WORK ON THE APPROPRIATIONS BILLS BY CHRISTMAS. AS FOR THE EFFECT ON PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDERS, THE CONSENSUS OF THE WEEKEND PRESS IS THAT VICE PRESIDENT BUSH HAS BEEN THE MAIN BENEFICIARY, AS A RESULT OF HIS CLOSE INVOLVEMENT IN THE SUMMIT EVENTS. DOLE WAS, BY CONTRAST, MUCH LESS IN THE LIMELIGHT, AND THE DEMOCRATIC CONTENDERS WERE OF COURSE CONFINED TO THE WINGS.

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