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MEETING WITH ALEXANDER YAKOVLEV

SUMMARY

1. RELAXED DISCUSSION WITH YAKOVLEV, WHO EXPRESSES WARM INTEREST IN THE FORTHCOMING BILATERAL SUMMIT. NOT YET DECIDED WHO WILL ACCOMPANY GORBACHEV TO THE UK. YAKOVLEV GIVES A CONVENTIONAL ACCOUNT OF THE MAIN SUBJECTS LIKELY TO COME UP, WITH SOME EMPHASIS ON DISARMAMENT. HE DEMONSTRATES THAT EVEN AT POLITBURO LEVEL THERE IS NO CLARITY OF THE NEXT STEPS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

DETAIL

2. WITH A VIEW TO MY VISIT TO LONDON NEXT WEEK, I PAID AN INTRODUCTORY CALL ON ALEXANDER YAKOVLEV (CHAIRMAN OF THE POLITBURO COMMISSION ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS) ON 1 FEBRUARY. HE WAS TO RECEIVE THE VISITING LABOUR PARTY DELEGATION LATER IN THE DAY. HE WAS THE SOUL OF GENIALITY, AND WE HAD A RELAXED CONVERSATION FOR 50 MINUTES. (FULL RECORD BY BAG). MAIN POINTS AS FOLLOWS.

GORBACHEV'S VISIT TO LONDON

3. YAKOVLEV COULD NOT SAY WHETHER HE WOULD ACCOMPANY GORBACHEV TO LONDON, OR WHETHER THE PARTY WOULD INCLUDE MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES. THE COMPOSITION HAD YET TO BE DISCUSSED. IN PLANNING HIS ITINERARY, GORBACHEV HAD CHOSEN TO STICK TO THE SCHEDULE AGREED FOR DECEMBER, AND WAS CONTENT WITH THE BROAD OUTLINE OF THE DECEMBER PROGRAMME. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO LEAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS. THERE WAS A VERY GOOD ATMOSPHERE IN THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS. YAKOVLEV REFERRED TWICE TO THEIR 'MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING' AND COMMENTED ON THEIR ABILITY TO DISAGREE ON POLITICAL QUESTIONS IN A NORMAL WAY, WITHOUT THIS AFFECTING THE OVERALL ATMOSPHERE. 'WE HAVE NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT THAT MRS THATCHER SINCERELY WANTS PEACE AND A MORE HEALTHY SITUATION IN EUROPE'.

SUMMIT TOPICS

4. YAKOVLEV SAID IT WAS NATURAL THAT WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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SHOULD HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. THIS WAS ALSO IN THE SOVIET INTEREST. I SAID WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SOME CLARIFICATION OF SOVIET THINKING ON THE COMMON EUROPEAN HOME. YAKOVLEV DESCRIBED THE COMMON EUROPEAN HOME AS A ''TENDENCY'' (NOT ''ARCHITECTURE'') LEADING TO THE GOAL OF A PEACEFUL DEMILITARISED EUROPE, INN WHICH THE TERRITORIAL STATUS QUO AND THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES WOULD BE RESPECTED.

5. ON ARMS CONTROL QUESTIONS, YAKOVLEV EXPECTED THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD EXPLAIN THEIR CURRENT APPROACH TO START, AND ALSO MENTIONED CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES. HE ACCEPTED THAT THERE WAS SOME SCEPTICISM ABOUT THE DATA PUBLISHED BY THE WARSAW PACT, AND AGREED THAT DATA REQUIRED BUSINESSLIKE DISCUSSION BETWEEN SPECIALISTS. HE SAID THE RUSSIANS WOULD HAVE TO BRING UP THE MODERNISATION OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS: I REPEATED OUR VIEW THAT THEY HAD ALREADY MODERNISED THEIR ARSENAL. REVERTING TO START, HE HIGHLIGHTED THE PROBLEM OF SLCMS, AND COMPLAINED ABOUT THE AMERICAN REJECTION OF SOVIET VERIFICATION PROPOSALS. SDI WAS STILL A PROBLE.

6. YAKOVLEV LISTED HUMANITARIAN AND REGIONAL QUESTIONS AS OTHER TOPICS. ON THE LATER, THERE WAS A PARTICULAR NEED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS OVER THE NEAR EAST, GIVEN THE DANGERS OF THAT REGION AND THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM. HE AGREED THAT THERE WAS SCOPE FOR MORE PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION OF TERRORISM BETWEEN US, AND COMMENTED THAT THOSE WHO WERE DRIVEN BY ''IDEOLOGICAL FANATICISM'' WERE NOT NORMAL PEOPLE.

US/SOVIET RELATIONS

7. YAKOVLEV ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WAS ANALYSINNG THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF US EXTERNAL POLICY BEFORE TRYING TO DEFINE ITS POSITIONS. HOWEVER, AT THE NEW YORK MEETING, BUSH HAD SHOWN THAT HE ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND ALSO TO ECOLOGY. YAKOVLEV SAID THE RUSSIANS WERE NOT HIDING THEIR ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS, AND HAD DISCUSSED THEM WITHIN EUROPE. I COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS OF INTEREST TO US TOO, AND MENTIONED THE OZONE LAYER CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

8. FROM A FAIRLY DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS (INCLUDING THE NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES FROM THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, OF WHICH YAKOVLEV IS A MEMBER), IT WAS CLEAR THAT MUCH REMAINS TO BE DECIDED CONCERNING THE NEXT STEPS. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE DOUBTS WHETHER THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES PROCEDURES WERE CORRECT, YAKOVLEV SAID FIRMLY THAT THE MATTER WAS CLOSED AND THEY WOULD NOT BE SUBJECTED TO REVIEW

BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION. PROCEDURES FOR WINNOWING OUT EXCESS CANDIDATES FOR THE NEXT ROUND HAD NOT YET BEEN WORKED OUT. THIS WOULD BE DONE ''OVER TIME''. THE ELCTIONS HAD LED TO A NUMBER OF GRUMBLES (FOR EXAMPLE, HE HIMSELF REGRETTED THE FAILURE OF SAGDEEV TO WIN NOMINATION), BUT THAT WAS PART OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

COMMENT

9. YAKOVLEV SAID NOTHING PARTICULARLY SURPRISING. ALTHOUGH HE RECEIVES MANY WESTERN VISITORS, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT HE HAD RECEIVED THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR. HIS MANNER, AND THE FACT OF GRANTING THIS APPOINTMENT AT FAIRLY SHORT NOTICE, IS ANOTHER INDICATOR OF THE MOOD ENGENDERED BY THE FORTHCOMING SUMMIT. AS IN MY CONVERSATION WITH CHERNYAYEV (MY TELNO 91), THERE WAS NO DOUBTING THE SINCERITY OF HIS TRIBUTE TO THE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GORBACHEV AND THE PRIME MINISTER. WE WERE ABLE TO TOUCH ON SEVERAL CONTENTIOUS POINTS, SUCH AS HUMAN RIGTS AND MILITARY DATA, WITHOUT ANY SHARPENING OF HIS TONE.

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REPLACEMENT OF KULIKOV AS C-IN-C WARSAW PACT

1. Marshal Kulikov (aged 67) has been replaced as C-in-C Warsaw Pact after 11 years in the post, by General Lushev. He will become an Inspector in the Defence Ministry (the retirement position for superannuated senior generals).
2. Lushev (65) is currently First Deputy Defence Minister for General Affairs. Before that he was C-in-C Group of Soviet Forces Germany (GSFG) and before that Commander of the politically important Moscow Military District (MMD). In his numerous writings he has stressed the increased reliance on conventional forces, rather than nuclear. He has also written on discipline. His new appointment reflects his experience in GSFG and the MMD, rather than patronage by Gorbachev. In his new post he will be responsible for ensuring that the plans formulated by the Soviet General Staff for restructuring of WP forces resulting from Soviet withdrawals and NSWP forces cuts, effectively co-ordinated with the national Ministries of Defence.
3. Earlier this week our DA in Moscow reported that he had heard that a decision had been taken on 6 January to replace both Kulikov and his Chief of Staff, Gribkov, with Lushev and Colonel General Lobov (aged 53, currently First Deputy Chief of the General Staff and the "front man" for comments on the troop reductions), respectively but there had been Czech and East German resistance to the plan. Lushev was apparently in hospital after a heart attack.

4. The C-in-C Warsaw Pact is largely a political figurehead but he is responsible for Pact cohesion and the transmission of Soviet policy to Pact allies. In time of war we believe that operational matters in the West would be run by the Q-in-C of the relevant Theatres of Military Operations with the C-in-C WP being responsible for Pact cohesion and security of the rear areas and lines of communication.

EA Drou

for H BURKE

3 February 1989