

CONFIDENTIAL
FM MOSCOW
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 909
OF 270545Z MAY 89

FCO TELS 687 AND 688, AND MY TELNO 906.
EXPULSIONS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

SUMMARY

1. MESSAGE TRANSMITTED THROUGH FIRST DEPUTY MINISTER KOVALEV. HE:
 - A. SPEAKS OF THE LEADERSHIP'S CONCERN TO PROTECT THEIR DIGNITY AT A SENSITIVE TIME.
 - B. ACKNOWLEDGES BRITISH SUPPORT FOR PERESTROIKA.
 - C. WARMLY RECIPROCATES THE INTENTION OF CONDUCTING BUSINESS AS USUAL.
 - D. WILL IF POSSIBLE TRY TO ARRANGE THE ''SYMBOLIC GESTURE'' OF A MEETING WITH SHEVARDNADZE.
 - E. MAKES A PITCH FOR IMPROVED CONDITIONS FOR THE RUSSIANS IN LONDON.

DETAIL

2. SHEVARDNADZE INSTRUCTED KOVALEV TO RECEIVE YOUR MESSAGE FROM ME ON THE EVENING OF 26 MAY. SHEVARDNADZE IS GENUINELY TIED UP WITH THE CONGRESS OF PEOPLES DEPUTIES. BUT IS ALSO BECAME CLEAR THAT KOVALEV WISHED TO VET MY DEMARCHE BEFORE EXPOSING HIS MINISTER. FRIGIDITY COMES NATURALLY TO KOVALEV. ON THIS OCCASION, HE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO BE WARM FROM THE BEGINNING.
3. HANDING OVER YOUR MESSAGE (WITH THE AMENDMENT IN MY TUR), I SAID THAT YOU VALUED YOUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SHEVARDNADZE AND HAD THEREFORE INSTRUCTED ME TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO HIM. I EMPHASISED THREE POINTS
 - YOUR AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S STRONG SUPPORT FOR PERESTROIKA, A PROCESS WHICH WAS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY FOR THE SOVIET UNION BUT FOR THE WORLD. YOU WOULD BE FOLLOWING THE CONGRESS OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES WITH PARTICULAR INTEREST.
 - OUR INTENTION TO CONDUCT BUSINESS AS USUAL, WHICH WE THOUGHT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT RECIPROCATED. I GAVE EXAMPLES.
 - OUR WILLINGNESS TO CONDUCT A RATIONAL DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF THE MOSCOW CEILING. THE DETAILS WERE OF COURSE NOT A MATTER FOR MINISTERS.
4. I SAID THIS WAS THE POLITICAL MESSAGE I HAD TO CONVEY FROM YOU TO SHEVARDNADZE, WHOM I WISHED TO SEE, HOWEVER BRIEFLY.
5. KOVALEV SHOWED SOME RELIEF THAT I HAD NO RABBITS UP MY SLEEVE.

HE ACCEPTED AND WOULD REPORT WHAT I HAD SAID ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDE TO PERESTROIKA. HE HAPPILY REPEATED THAT BUSINESS AS USUAL WAS ALSO THE SOVIET APPROACH. THE SOVIET UNION HAD NOT INITIATED THIS EPISODE, BUT ON A RECIPROCAL BASIS HAD PLAYED THE PART OF THE 'REACTING SIDE.' WE HAD TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE 'DOSTOINSTVO' (DIGNITY/SELF-RESPECT) AND PRESTIGE OF THE SOVIET SIDE, PARTICULARLY AT A TIME LIKE THIS (REFERRING TO THE CONGRESS).

6. ON THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE KOVALEV:

- SOUGHT TO JUSTIFY SOVIET HANDLING OF THE BRITISH JOURNALISTS.
- COMPLAINED VIGOROUSLY ABOUT THE VERY DIFFICULT WORKING CONDITIONS, UNDER THE LIMITS OF OUR CEILING, OF SOVIET REPRESENTATIVES IN LONDON.
- LOOKED AHEAD TO FURTHER DETAILED DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND 2ND EUROPEAN DEPT, BUT URGED US TO THINK OF SOLUTIONS TO THE SOVIET SIDE OF THE PROBLEM.

7. HAVING READ YOUR MESSAGE, KOVALEV ACKNOWLEDGED THE 'SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE' OF A MEETING WITH SHEVARDNADZE, TO EXPRESS THE 'WILL OF OUR POLITICAL LEADERS.' SHEVARDNADZE WAS EXTREMELY BUSY, BUT KOVALEV WOULD RECOMMEND THAT HE SEE ME. HE DID NOT KNOW IF EVEN TEN MINUTES WOULD BE POSSIBLE. IF NOT, THIS WOULD SIMPLY BE THE RESULT OF SHEVARDNADZE'S TIMETABLE.

8. IN CONCLUSION, I REMINDED KOVALEV THAT FOR US IT WAS A MATTER NOT ONLY OF SELF-RESPECT BUT OF SECURITY. WE WOULD NOT COMPROMISE ON OUR VITAL NATIONAL INTERESTS AND SECURITY.

COMMENT

9. WHETHER OR NOT I GET TO SEE SHEVARDNADZE, THIS MEETING HAS SERVED THE INTENDED PURPOSE. THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE FEELING KOVALEV WISHED TO CONVEY. HE IN TURN DID NOT QUESTION BRITISH MOTIVES AND WILL CONVEY THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO THE LEADERSHIP. IF THERE ARE NO FURTHER TWISTS IN THE PUBLIC ARENA, I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE ON THE WAY TO CONTAINING THE QUESTION OF SECURITY AND SOVIET MISBEHAVIOUR, AND TO ESTABLISHING THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION. THAT DISCUSSION WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT IN ITS OWN RIGHT. WE SHALL KNOW MORE WHEN THE RUSSIANS REPLY TO SIR J FRETWELL'S DEMARCHE, PERHAPS EARLY NEXT WEEK.

BRAITHWAITE

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