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SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHANGE IN GERMANY AND EUROPE

1. MY US COLLEAGUE DESCRIBED THIS MORNING THE EXCHANGE AT THE END OF LAST WEEK BETWEEN YAKOVLEV (POLITBURO) AND BRZESINSKI, WHO HAD BEEN HERE FOR A US/SOVIET ROUND TABLE ON EAST EUROPEAN AFFAIRS. THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE PROTECTED.
2. BRZESINSKI ASKED YAKOVLEV HOW HE WOULD CHARACTERISE THE CURRENT CHANGES IN EASTERN EUROPE. YAKOVLEV REPLIED THAT THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, AS FAR AS THE SOVIET UNION WAS CONCERNED, WERE FREE TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN PATH. THE CHANGES WHICH HAD ALREADY TAKEN PLACE IN POLAND AND HUNGARY HAD HAD NO EFFECT ON THOSE COUNTRIES' OFFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE USSR (ALTHOUGH YAKOVLEV SAID SKUBISZEWSKI'S REFERENCE TO POSSIBLE REPARATIONS FROM THE SOVIET UNION HAD CAUSED RESENTMENT HERE). IT WAS OF COURSE IMPORTANT THAT THE CHANGES IN EASTERN EUROPE SHOULD PROCEED WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM THE WEST, WHICH WOULD COMPLICATE THINGS. (YAKOVLEV AT NO POINT GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE THOUGHT SUCH INTERFERENCE WAS OCCURRING).
3. BRZESINSKI ASKED YAKOVLEV TO COMMENT ON THE RECENT STATEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES BY SHISHLIN, ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME SOVIET DELEGATION LED BY PRIMAKOV, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WERE FREE TO LEAVE THE WARSAW PACT. YAKOVLEV HAD SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT THE OFFICIAL VIEW: THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT DID NOT FAVOUR INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES LEAVING THE PACT. BRZESINSKI COMMENTED THAT THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS OF THE TWO ALLIANCES SHOULD BE RETAINED AS A MEANS OF MANAGING CHANGES SMOOTHLY.
4. BRZESINSKI ASKED ABOUT THE CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN EAST GERMANY. YAKOVLEV SAID THAT WAS QUOTE THEIR BUSINESS UNQUOTE. PRESSED FURTHER BY BRZESINSKI, WHO ARGUED THAT A GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC GDR WOULD LOSE ITS REASON FOR SEPARATE EXISTENCE, YAKOVLEV SAID OBSCURELY THAT STATES OF CENTRAL EUROPE SHOULD BE DEMOCRATIC, NOT ARMED. IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO IGNORE ATTITUDES DATING FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR. POLAND AND HUNGARY WERE ONE THING. 'BUT GERMANY IS GERMANY'. THE

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SOVIET REFORMS WERE HELPING THE EAST GERMANS TO RECONSTRUCT THEIR SYSTEM.

5. BRZEZINSKI ASKED WHETHER A VARIETY OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN EASTERN EUROPE WAS COMPATIBLE WITH SOVIET SECURITY. YAKOVLEV SAID THAT IT WAS, PROVIDED NONE OF THE STATES ON THE SOVIET BORDERS WERE ACTUALLY HOSTILE. IT WAS OF COURSE SOVIET POLICY THAT THE TWO ALLIANCES IN EUROPE SHOULD BE DISSOLVED. BUT WHATEVER HAPPENED, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT USE ITS ARMED FORCES IN THIS CONTEXT.

6. BRZEZINSKI ASKED WHETHER, PENDING THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ALLIANCES, THE RUSSIANS ENVISAGED THE CLOSER DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN THE TWO HALVES OF EUROPE. YAKOVLEV SAID THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO FORESEE HOW THE EXISTING INSTITUTIONS WERE GOING TO EVOLVE: FOR EXAMPLE, THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WAS NOT CLEAR. HE FAVOURED THE DEVELOPMENT OF LINKS. BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE TWO SIDES SHOULD 'AVOID GETTING ON ONE ANOTHER'S NERVES'.

COMMENT

7. YAKOVLEV IS AN INFLUENTIAL AND ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTOR TO THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY, AND HIS REMARKS ON THIS OCCASION CARRY WEIGHT. NEVERTHELESS THEY REINFORCE MY IMPRESSION, AND THAT OF MY AMERICAN AND GERMAN COLLEAGUES, THAT SOVIET THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE, AND ESPECIALLY GERMANY, IS AT A VERY EMBRYONIC STAGE. THEORY, AND EVEN DAY TO DAY POLICY MAKING, ARE UNABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE PACE OF EVENTS.

8. THE SEMINAR ON EASTERN EUROPE REFERRED TO ABOVE DID NOT, ACCORDING TO MATLOCK, SHED ANY ADDITIONAL LIGHT. HOWEVER, BRZEZINSKI'S OWN CONTRIBUTION AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST: WE ARE TRANSMITTING IT BY BAG.

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PAGE 2  
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23

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PAGE 3  
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