

CONFIDENTIAL

FM MOSCOW

TO DESKBY 171400Z FCO

TELNO 1930

OF 171241Z NOVEMBER 89

INFO IMMEDIATE BONN, WASHINGTON, PARIS, EAST BERLIN, BMG BERLIN

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INFO ADDRESSEES: PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADORS

FCO TELS 1548/9: CALL ON SOVIET PRESIDENT, 17 NOVEMBER
SUMMARY

1. 30 MINUTE MEETING WITH GORBACHEV TO DELIVER PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY ON GERMANY. GORBACHEV IN EBULLIENT FORM: EXPRESSES WARM APPRECIATION OF MRS THATCHER'S INTEREST, WHILE KEEPING UP HIS END OF THE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE. GORBACHEV REFERS ALSO TO HIS TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH KOHL AND MITTERRAND, AND TO THE SUMMIT WITH BUSH. HE STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF ALLOWING CHANGE TO CONTINUE IN EASTERN EUROPE WITHOUT EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE: AND OF SUSTAINING AND DEVELOPING EXISTING INSTITUTIONS AND EXCHANGES. SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT REVANCHISM IN THE FRG, AND ABOUT WESTERN CLAIMS THAT SOCIALISM IS FINISHED. GORBACHEV SPOKE FRANKLY, AND HIS REMARKS SHOULD BE CLOSELY PROTECTED.

DETAIL

2. GORBACHEV (WHO HAD BEEN TAKEN UP YESTERDAY WITH THE WEEKLY POLITBURO MEETING) SAW ME FOR HALF AN HOUR ON THE MORNING OF 17 NOVEMBER. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY CHERNYAYEV, AND I BY MY POLITICAL COUNSELLOR.

3. WHEN GORBACHEV HAD READ MY TRANSLATION OF THE MESSAGE, I REINFORCED CERTAIN POINTS. WE APPRECIATED THE WAY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAD REACTED TO THE EVENTS IN GERMANY AND HAD BEEN STRUCK BY THE COMMON SENSE SHOWN BY THE LEADERS OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND BY THE GERMANS TO THIS UNEXPECTED SITUATION. GORBACHEV INTERJECTED THAT IT WAS NOT UNEXPECTED TO THE RUSSIANS. (CHERNYAYEV HAD SAID THE SAME TO ME BEFOREHAND). I SAID THERE HAD BEEN CONCERN ABOUT THE FEELINGS OF INSTABILITY, BUT NOTED THAT EAST GERMANS, THOUGH KEEN TO VISIT THE WEST, WERE NO LONGER STAYING THERE IN SUCH NUMBERS (GORBACHEV SAID THE QUEUES WERE NOW IN THE EASTWARD DIRECTION). TENSION HAD DECLINED. BUT IT REMAINED VERY IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE STABILITY, AS THE PRIME MINISTER HAD EMPHASISED TO THE PRESS AND IN HER GUILDHALL SPEECH. GORBACHEV SAID HE HAD READ THE GUILDHALL SPEECH YESTERDAY EVENING AT HOME.

4. I SAID THAT CONTACT AND COOPERATION IN MANAGING THE CHANGING SITUATION WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT, AND NOTED THE SUCCESSION OF MEETINGS BETWEEN WESTERN LEADERS AND BETWEEN EAST AND WEST WHICH WAS IN TRAIN. GORBACHEV REMARKED THAT PRESIDENT BUSH WAS GATHERING OPINIONS FROM WESTERN PARTNERS BEFORE THE MALTA SUMMIT. HE SAID JOCULARLY THAT HE HOPED THE PRIME MINISTER'S OPINION WOULD WEIGH LARGELY IN THE BALANCE.

5. I SAID THE KEY POINT TO US WAS THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE IN THE AFFAIRS OF EAST GERMANY. GORBACHEV SAID, ONLY HALF JOKING, THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO INTERFERE IN THE AFFAIRS OF WEST GERMANY: 'THERE WE SHOULD EXCLAIM.' I SAID THAT WE SAW FREE MULTI-PARTY ELECTIONS IN THE GDR AS A VITAL STEP TOWARDS INTERNAL STABILITY. AGAIN IN A SEMI-JOCULAR MANNER, GORBACHEV REPLIED THAT PUTTING IT THAT WAS CONSTITUTED INTERFERENCE. I SAID THAT I WAS EXPRESSING A JUDGEMENT: IT SHOULD BE LEFT TO THE PEOPLE TO DECIDE. TO THAT HE AGREED.

6. ON REUNIFICATION, GORBACHEV INTERPOSED REFERENCES TO VARIATIONS IN THE LINE TAKEN BY WESTERN LEADERS. IN PARTICULAR, MITTERRAND HAD NOT FOUND THE BEST FORM OF WORDS IN HIS OFF THE CUFF REPLY TO JOURNALISTS AFTER HIS MEETING WITH CHANCELLOR KOHL. I SAID THAT DUMAS HAD TAKEN A CLEAR LINE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY - AFTER SEEING GORBACHEV IN MOSCOW: HE NODDED. HE THEN DREW ATTENTION TO THE LINE HE HAD TAKEN IN THE STUDENTS' FORUM ON 15 NOVEMBER (MOSCOW TELNO 1920). THESE MATTERS WOULD FIND THEIR OWN SOLUTION OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS. LOOK, FOR EXAMPLE, AT THE TRANSFORMATION OF BRITISH/SOVIET RELATIONS OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS.

7. I CONCLUDED MY REMARKS BY EMPHASISING THAT WE WISHED TO REMAIN IN VERY CLOSE CONTACT, AT DIFFERENT LEVELS, INCLUDING CONTACTS BETWEEN SIR C MALLABY AND THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR, AND ESPECIALLY BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIMSELF. HE WELCOMED THAT.

8. GORBACHEV THEN GAVE HIS VIEWS. HE WAS VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN TOUCH ON THIS QUESTION. OUR VIEWS WERE NOT SO MUCH CLOSE AS MORE OR LESS IN AGREEMENT. HE HAD ALSO SPOKEN TO MITTERRAND AND KOHL, AND WOULD OF COURSE BE SEEING BUSH.

9. WHAT HAD HAPPENED WAS JUST THE FIRST STAGE. WHO COULD TELL WHAT THE SITUATION WOULD BE 2 OR 3 YEARS FROM NOW? WE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE. BUT THE TURN-AROUND HAD TAKEN PLACE - A HISTORIC TURN OF EVENTS. THE SITUATION WOULD BECOME MORE DIFFICULT IF ANYONE INTERFERED.

10. WE WERE ALL PART OF ONE CIVILISATION. IN THEIR PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION, THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES WOULD FEEL FREE TO ADOPT USEFUL IDEAS FROM ELSEWHERE - ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE, EVEN SOCIAL QUESTIONS. THERE WOULD BE LOCAL VARIANTS. THESE WERE DEEP CHANGES.

GORBACHEV SAID THAT IT WAS 'COLOSSALLY DIFFICULT' TO SUSTAIN THIS COURSE BOTH INSIDE HIS OWN COUNTRY AND IN EASTERN EUROPE. DIFFERING VIEWS, SOME OF A PRIMITIVE KIND WERE BEING EXPRESSED FROM THE BOTTOM TO THE TOP OF SOCIETY, EVEN AMONG THE INTELLIGENTSIA.

11. TURNING SPECIFICALLY TO THE GDR, GORBACHEV SAID THAT HIS VISIT TO EAST BERLIN HAD CONVINCED HIM OF THE NEED TO REACT QUICKLY. HE HAD FELT 'FOOLISH' WHEN FORCED TO STAND SIDE BY SIDE WITH HONECKER TO TWO AND A HALF HOURS WHILE THE CRODS WERE SHOUTING AT HIM TO HELP THEM. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HONECKER HAD DONE MUCH, BUT THE TIME HAD COME TO CHANGE. THIS WAS 'PAINFUL, BUT IT IS NOW UNDER WAY.'

12. GORBACHEV SAID IT WAS VITAL TO STAND FIRMLY BY THE HELSINKI PROCESS. THERE SHOULD BE NO TURNING BACK. HELSINKI I SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY HELSINKI II. THE PROCESS ALSO EMBRACED THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS, EC/CMEA RELATIONS, CONTACTS WITH NATO, AND THE IMPORT OF INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL. THE TWO SIDES WERE MOVING TOWARDS EACH OTHER.

13. HOWEVER, ON THIS POINT HE DID NOT SHARE THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTERPRETATION. AT THE STUDENTS FORUM, HE HAD HAD TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT HER REMARKS ON THE DECLINE OF SOCIALISM. GORBACHEV SAID, WITH A BEAM, THAT YESTERDAY HE HAD BEEN CROSS ABOUT THE 'IDEOLOGICAL ASPECT' INTRODUCED BY THE PRIME MINISTER: 'WE ARE CHANGING. SHOULDN'T PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND THE FRENCH CHANGE AS WELL? I THINK THAT YOU NEED PERESTROIKA.' HAVING MADE HIS POINT GORBACHEV HASTENED TO ADD THAT THIS WAS 'NOT A THREAT' (I SUSPECT HE HAD KHRUSHCHEV'S REMARK ABOUT BURYING CAPITALISM IN MIND) AND THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD ALREADY BROUGHT ABOUT GREAT CHANGES.

14. GORBACHEV SUMMARISED THE SOVIET POSITION AS BEING, FIRST, TO ENCOURAGE CHANGE BUT EXCLUDE EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE: AND, SECOND, TO SUSTAIN EXISTING INSTITUTIONS AND THE HELSINKI PROCESS. ON THE LATTER POINT, HE WAS PLEASED THAT A DIALOGUE HAD BEGUN BETWEEN NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT: HE SPOKE OF 'INTERPENETRATION.' THIS SHOULD CONTINUE. THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE TWO ALLIANCES SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE FORE. HE WAS ALL IN FAVOUR OF THE GENERALS FROM BOTH SIDES MEETING ONE ANOTHER: HE WELCOMED THE ANGLO-SOVIET MILITARY EXCHANGES WHICH HAD NOW GOT UNDER WAY. THE GENERALS SHOULD EXCHANGE VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN THE NEW SITUATION.

15. GORBACHEV SAID THAT HE FULLY AGREED WITH THE POINTS THAT I HAD MADE ABOUT STABILITY. THERE WERE TWO GERMANIES, TWO UN MEMBER STATES. THEY WERE INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS. HE HAD ACTED TO PREVENT PUBLIC SPECULATION IN THE SOVIET UNION (VIZ ABOUT THE GERMAN QUESTION), BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT WAS NOT SO SIMPLE TO CONTROL THE LINE IN THE WEST.

16. GORBACHEV REFERRED AGAIN TO HIS CONTACTS WITH THE LEADERS OF THE FRG, BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDING HIS TELEPHONE

CONVERSATIONS. HE SAID POINTEDLY THAT THERE WAS INDEED 'A BIT OF REVANCHISM' IN WEST GERMANY. WITH ELECTIONS COMING UP, THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT WAS AFRAID OF STAMPING ON THIS. HE HAD TOLD KOHL ON THE TELEPHONE NOT TO FORGET THAT THE DIVISION OF GERMANY WAS A RESULT OF GERMAN ACTIONS FIFTY YEARS AGO. KOHL HAD SOUGHT TO REASSURE HIM.

17. WINDING UP, GORBACHEV SAID TWICE MORE THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE. EAST/WEST EXCHANGES WERE USEFUL SO LONG AS THEY DIDN'T CONSTITUTE INTERFERENCE. AND IF THIS PROVISION WAS RESPECTED, THE CURRENT PROCESS OF TRANSITION SHOULD RESULT IN GREATER SECURITY, NOT LESS. BULGARIA WAS ANOTHER EXAMPLE: THE BULGARIANS WERE DECIDING FOR THEMSELVES. HE CONCLUDED BY SENDING WARM GREETINGS TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND THANKS FOR THE ATTITUDE SHE HAD TAKEN (WITH A LAUGH: - 'APART FROM THE IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS').

PRESS LINE

18. PENDING FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS, WE ARE SIMPLY TELLING THE PRESS THAT IT FALLS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLOSE DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS TO WHICH YOU REFERRED IN BONN.

19. FOR SOMMENT, SEE MIFT

BRAITHWAITE

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