

CONFIDENTIAL

155076
MDLIAN 7149

CONFIDENTIAL

FM MOSCOW

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 2161

OF 291307Z DECEMBER 89

INFO PRIORITY BONN, BMG BERLIN, EAST BERLIN, PARIS, WASHINGTON, ACTOR

THE GERMAN QUESTION: SOVIET COMMENT
SUMMARY

1. SOVIET OFFICIALS DISPLAY LITTLE NEW THINKING, BUT ASSESS THE SITUATION MORE CALMLY. THE SEVEN QUESTIONS POSED BY SHEVARDNADZE IN BRUSSELS REMAIN THEIR GUIDE. UNDERLYING MISTRUST OF GERMANS.
CONSIDERATION OF FOUR POWER ROLE.

DETAIL

2. THE MINISTER CALLED ON BONDARENKO, HEAD OF THIRD EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT (FRG, BERLIN, AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND) IN THE MFA ON 28 DECEMBER. HE ASKED FOR BONDARENKO'S VIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THEIR PREVIOUS MEETING AT THE END OF NOVEMBER.
3. BONDARENKO RECALLED ALL THE EXCHANGES THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE IN DECEMBER. THESE UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GERMAN QUESTION, AND THE FACT THAT IT INVOLVED THE INTERESTS OF ALL EUROPEAN STATES. LOGAN DREW ATTENTION TO RECENT BRITISH STATEMENTS ON SELF-DETERMINATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF EXISTING AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES. BONDARENKO AGREED THAT THERE WAS SOME SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE APPROACHES BEING TAKEN BY OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS. THERE WERE ALSO POINTS IN COMMON BETWEEN SOVIET AND FRENCH VIEWS, AND SOVIET AND AMERICAN VIEWS. SUCH DIFFERENCES AS EXISTED WERE ONES OF NUANCE. HE WAS NOT, HOWEVER, ADVOCATING A UNITED FRONT AGAINST THE GERMANS.
4. HE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT GERMAN ATTITUDES WERE EVOLVING. CHANCELLOR KOHL WAS NOW TAKING A MORE CAUTIOUS VIEW. HIS SPEECH IN THE BUNDESTAG ON 28 NOVEMBER HAD CREATED THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WANTED A RAPID PROGRAMME OF REUNIFICATION. NOW HE WAS TALKING OF THE LONGER TERM. THE RUSSIANS WOULD SEE WHAT HAPPENED: THEY WOULD NOT REACT TO ONE STATEMENT. WHEN GENSCHER HAD VISITED MOSCOW ON 4-5 DECEMBER HE HAD GIVEN A "BROAD INTERPRETATION" OF KOHL'S TEN POINTS. GENSCHER WAS A "FLEXIBLE POLITICIAN" (COMMENT: BONDARENKO'S INFLECTION MADE IT PLAIN THAT THIS WAS NOT A COMPLIMENT). MEANWHILE THERE WAS A WIDE RANGE OF OPINIONS IN BOTH GERMAN STATES. MECHANISTIC REUNIFICATION DID NOT SEEM POPULAR. BONDARENKO THOUGHT THAT THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF MUCH REFORMED GDR WAS NOW THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME.
5. LOGAN ASKED WHAT INSTRUMENTS WERE AVAILABLE TO THE SOVIET UNION

TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS IN GERMANY IF THESE APPEARED UNDULY PRECIPITATE TO THE RUSSIANS. BONDARENKO SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT AN EASY QUESTION: THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES WERE GIVING IT CONSTANT THOUGHT. IN HIS VIEWS MANY OF THE LEVERS WERE IN DIFFERENT HANDS. THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC FOR EXAMPLE COULD WORK TO STRENGTHEN THE GDR ECONOMY OR DESTABILISE IT. THE RUSSIANS HAD TOLD GENSCHER THAT THE FRG SHOULD NOT ABUSE THIS SITUATION. BONDARENKO ADDED THAT THE RISKS WOULD BE DIMINISHED IF OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES STEPPED IN TO COOPERATE WITH THE EAST GERMANS.

6. IN A LENGTHY DIGRESSION BONDARENKO DISMISSED THE CHANCELLOR'S COMMITMENT TO HELSINKI, IN THE ABSENCE OF A GERMAN STATEMENT ON NATIONAL FRONTIERS. HE RECALLED PREVIOUS GERMAN ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE BORDERS BY PEACEFUL MEANS IN THE SAAR AND SUDETENLANDS. PERSUASION HAD DRIFTED INTO SUBVERSION. 'I DO NOT WANT TO DRAW PARALLELS, BUT WE MUST NOT FORGET THE LESSONS OF HISTORY.' LOGAN DISPUTED BONDARENKO'S INTERPRETATION OF KOHL'S COMMITMENT TO HELSINKI.

7. BONDARENKO REFERRED TO THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE WARTIME ALLIES, AMONG ALL EUROPEAN STATES, IN THE TYPE OF EUROPE WHICH WOULD BE CREATED BY THE EXERCISE OF GERMAN SELF-DETERMINATION. THIS LATTER RIGHT COULD NOT BE GIVEN EXCLUSIVE PRECEDENCE.

8. REVERTING TO THE QUESTION OF SOVIET LEVERS, BONDARENKO SAID THAT THE RESIDUAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS IN GERMANY OF THE FOUR POWERS WERE STILL A POWERFUL POLITICAL MECHANISM. LOGAN ASKED FOR A REACTION TO THE FOUR AMBASSADORS' MEETING ON 11 DECEMBER. BONDARENKO SAID THIS HAD BEEN VALUABLE. HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT MEETINGS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS SHOULD CONTINUE. THIS WOULD POSE DIFFICULTIES FOR THE RUSSIANS, IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR PREVIOUS POSITIONS ON GDR COMPETENCE. BUT HE EXPECTED THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD PUT FORWARD IDEAS FOR FURTHER EXCHANGES IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WE HAD IT CONFIRMED AFTER THE MEETING THAT BONDARENKO WAS NOT (NOT) REFERRING TO MAXIMYCHEV'S PROPOSAL FOR AN EXPERTS' MEETING ON AVIATION.

COMMENT

8. BONDARENKO WAS NOTABLY LESS STRIDENT AND, TAKING HIS CUE FROM SHEVARDNADZE, LESS DOGMATIC THAN PREVIOUSLY ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE TWO GERMANIES IN THE LONG TERM. BUT RUSSIAN MISTRUST OF KOHL AND THE CDU WAS NOT FAR BELOW THE SURFACE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW THEY WILL TRY TO USE THE FOUR POWER MECHANISM TO MEDIATE THIS.

BRAITHWAITE

YYYY