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SOVIET UNION/GDR: VISIT OF MODROW

SUMMARY

1. MODROW PAYS BRIEF WORKING VISIT, AT WHICH THE FUTURE OF GERMANY DOMINATES. HE DESCRIBES HIS TREATY-BASED COMMUNITY AS A STEP TO CONFEDERATION, AND SPEAKS OF THE PERSPECTIVE OF UNIFICATION. THE RUSSIANS 'PAY DUE ATTENTION TO THESE NEW IDEAS'. GORBACHEV TELLS PRESS THAT 'NO ONE CASTS DOUBT (SIC TASS IN ENGLISH)' ON THE QUESTION OF GERMAN UNITY.

DETAIL

2. PRIME MINISTER MODROW OF THE GDR PAID A BRIEF WORKING VISIT TO MOSCOW ON 29-30 JANUARY. HE HAD A MEETING WITH GORBACHEV, RYZHKOV AND SHEVARDNADZE.

3. ACCORDING TO THE TASS ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING, THE MEETING CONCENTRATED ON THE SITUATION IN THE GDR. THE SIDES AGREED ON THE NECESSITY OF CONTINUING THE PAN-EUROPEAN PROCESS ON THE BASIS OF EXISTING POLITICAL AND TERRITORIAL REALITIES. MODROW PUT FORWARD A NUMBER OF IDEAS ON THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWO GERMAN STATES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP. 'THE TREATY-BASED COMMUNITY, AS A PRACTICAL STEP TOWARDS CONFEDERATION BASED ON JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE AND THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE, WOULD SERVE THE INTERESTS OF STABILITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE NEW REGION.' TASS SAID THAT THE SOVIET SIDE HEARD THESE NEW FORMULATIONS WITH DUE ATTENTION, HAVING REFERRED TO THE NEED FOR ALL DIRECTLY INTERESTED STATES TO TAKE PART IN DISCUSSIONS ON THEM.

4. AT THE PHOTO-CALL BEFORE THE TALKS, GDR TELEVISION ASKED GORBACHEV ABOUT THE GERMAN QUESTION. HE IS REPORTED BY TASS TO HAVE REPLIED THAT THE QUESTION WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. 'BASICALLY NO-ONE CASTS ANY DOUBT ON IT. HOWEVER, THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVENTS IN THE WORLD, IN THE GDR AND THE SOVIET UNION REQUIRES A PROFOUND ASSESSMENT

AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO A SOLUTION OF THE ISSUE, WHICH IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF EUROPEAN AND WORLD POLITICS. TIME ITSELF IS HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE PROCESS AND LENDS DYNAMISM TO IT. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ACT RESPONSIBLY AND NOT TO SEEK A SOLUTION TO THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE ON THE STREETS. THERE ARE TWO STATES. THERE ARE THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE FOUR POWERS, AND THERE IS THE CSCE PROCESS. ALL SHOULD BE COMBINED IN COMMON INTERESTS WITHOUT DETRIMENT TO ANY SIDE.' THE WEST GERMAN EMBASSY HAS HEARD FROM AN EAST GERMAN JOURNALIST WHO WAS BRIEFED ON THE TALKS, THAT GORBACHEV ALSO SAID 'WHEN WE SAY HISTORY WILL DECIDE, THAT REMAINS OUR POSITION. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THAT HISTORY IS ALREADY MAKING CORRECTIVES.'

5. QUESTIONED AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, MODROW SAID THAT GORBACHEV 'DID NOT RULE OUT THE PROSPECT (OF REUNIFICATION) IN THE FUTURE AND AT THE SAME TIME, DID NOT SET ANY TIME-LIMIT FOR IT.' THE TWO LEADERS HAD TALKED ABOUT THE RIGHT OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE TO SELF-DETERMINATION, THE QUESTION OF UNITING BOTH GERMAN STATES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EUROPEAN INTERESTS, UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REALITY. HE ALSO SAID 'UNIFICATION IS A PERSPECTIVE AHEAD OF US. THE SITUATION OF ONE NATION BEING IN TWO STATES WILL BE OVERWHELMED IN THE EUROPEAN PROCESS'.

6. IN HIS OPENING REMARKS TO THE PRESS, MODROW SPOKE OF THE NEED FOR THE TWO GERMANIES TO DEVELOP THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN A POSITIVE WAY, CREATING A UNITY OF TRUST IN A FREE ALLIANCE. A CONFEDERATION WAS ONE POSSIBLE WAY OF ACHIEVING THIS.

7. THE SOVIET MEDIA GAVE PROMINENCE TO MODROW'S REPLY THAT HE WAS NOT IN FAVOUR OF RE-UNIFICATION BECAUSE OF THE IMPLICIT PROBLEM OF GERMANY'S BORDERS. A UNIFIED GERMANY IN ITS 1937 BORDERS WAS NOT A POSSIBILITY. THE EXISTING FRONTIER ALONG THE ODER-NIESSE LINE WAS INVIOABLE.

COMMENT

8. ALTHOUGH THE WESTERN PRESS HAVE FOCUSED ON GORBACHEV NOT RULING OUT REUNIFICATION, HIS STATEMENT AS OPAQUELY TRANSLATED BY TASS SEEMS TO US TO BE LARGELY A COSMETIC ADJUSTMENT TO THE POSITION: PLACING THE ISSUE FIRMLY IN THE WIDER EUROPEAN CONTEXT AND REMINDING THE GERMANS OF OTHERS' LEGITIMATE INTEREST IN THE OUTCOME.

9. SEEN FROM HERE, IT IS MODROW WHO HAS ADVANCED HIS POSITION IN PRESENTING CONFEDERATION TO THE RUSSIANS AS A NATURAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE TREATY-BASED COMMUNITY.

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