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OF 261030Z FEBRUARY 90

INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS, BONN, MADRID, UKDEL NATO, WASHINGTON

MADRID FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY

WASHINGTON TELNO 446 TO FCO: SOVIET VIEWS ON GERMANY

1. WE HAVE REPORTED THE VIEWS OF A WIDE RANGE OF SOVIET OPINION FORMERS AND OFFICIALS OVER RECENT WEEKS. SIR P CRADOCK'S VISIT HAS BROUGHT OUR KNOWLEDGE UP TO DATE. THE PICTURE IS PRETTY CLEAR. IT BOILS DOWN TO THE FOLLOWING.

UNIFICATION

2. THERE IS NO DOUBT AMONG RESPONSIBLE RUSSIANS THAT GERMAN UNIFICATION IS GOING TO TAKE PLACE. SINCE THE AUTUMN, GORBACHEV HIMSELF HAS BEEN VERY CAREFUL NEVER TO RULE OUT UNIFICATION AS THE LIKELY RESULT OF HISTORICAL CHANGE. WITH MODROW'S VISIT TO MOSCOW ON 29-30 JANUARY HE PUBLICLY RECOGNISED THAT HISTORY HAD NOW TAKEN CONTROL. THOSE LOWER DOWN THE OFFICIAL HIERARCHY HAVE BEEN SLOWER TO RECOGNISE THE INEVITABLE. IN MID-DECEMBER DEPUTY MINISTER ADAMISHIN, WHO HABITUALLY EXAGGERATES FOR NEGOTIATING EFFECT, WAS STILL ARGUING THAT THE FOUR POWERS COULD IN SOME WAY SHAPE OR EVEN PREVENT UNIFICATION IF THEY STUCK TOGETHER. BUT LAST WEEK HE ADMITTED TO SIR PERCY THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD VERY FEW LEVERS INDEED WITH WHICH TO INFLUENCE THE PROCESS AT ALL. SOME OF THE ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE LONG FORESEEN THIS OUTCOME. AND SOVIET TELEVISION, IN ITS EXTENSIVE AND ON THE WHOLE OBJECTIVE COVERAGE OF POLITICS IN BOTH GERMANIES, SPEAKS AS IF UNIFICATION IS A FOREGONE AND NOT VERY DISTANT CONCLUSION.

3. BUT EVEN IF THEY NOW SEEM READY TO SURRENDER TO THE INEVITABLE, THE RUSSIANS STILL HOPE THAT THEY CAN SOMEHOW INFLUENCE THE MANNER IN WHICH UNIFICATION TAKES PLACE, AND THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH A UNITED GERMANY WOULD BE PLACED. THEY HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GDR WILL RETAIN ENOUGH CREDIBILITY AFTER THE 18 MARCH ELECTION TO CARRY AT LEAST SOME NEGOTIATING WEIGHT WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. THEY HOPE THAT, ONCE THAT ELECTION IS OVER, THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES OF COMBINING THE FINANCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS OF BOTH GERMANIES WILL ACT AS A NATURAL BRAKE ON THE PROCESS. THEY

HOPE THAT THIS WILL GIVE THEM MORE TIME TO SECURE BINDING ASSURANCES FROM THE GERMANS AND THEIR WESTERN ALLIES OVER FRONTIERS AND FUTURE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.

4. THEY KNOW THEY CANNOT ACHIEVE THESE AIMS ON THEIR OWN. HENCE THEIR DESIRE FOR AN EARLY MEETING OF THE TWO PLUS FOUR, EVEN IF ONLY AT EXPERT LEVEL, BEFORE THE 18 MARCH ELECTION TILTS THE NEGOTIATING BALANCE EVEN MORE DECISIVELY AGAINST THE EAST GERMANS AND THEMSELVES. BUT EVEN IF THEY SECURED SUCH A MEETING, THEIR POSITION WOULD BE WEAKENED BY THEIR LACK OF A CLEAR AND CONVINCING CONCEPTION OF POST-UNIFICATION EUROPE TO SET AGAINST THE WESTERN IDEA OF A LIBERAL AND DEMOCRATIC GERMANY ANCHORED IN NATO AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

FRONTIERS

5. THE RUSSIANS' MOST IMMEDIATE AND CONCRETE REQUIREMENT IS FOR A BINDING LEGAL INSTRUMENT TO SETTLE GERMANY'S POST-WAR FRONTIERS AND BEYOND DOUBT. IT IS NOT ONLY THAT THEY FEAR THAT GERMANY'S ACTUAL FRONTIERS WITH POLAND ON THE ODER-NIESSE LINE MIGHT BE BROUGHT INTO QUESTION. BEYOND THAT, AS ADMISHIN TOLD SIR PERCY, THEY FEAR A REVIVAL OF GERMAN CLAIMS TO THE FORMER GERMAN TERRITORIES THEY HOLD THEMSELVES: EAST PRUSSIA, KOENIGSBERG AND ELSEWHERE. THIS MAY SEEM FANTASTIC TO US, AND IN THEIR COOLER MOMENTS IT PROBABLY SEEMS FANTASTIC TO THEM. BUT IT IS A REAL UNDERLYING FEAR.

6. THOUGH THEY TALK AS IF THESE MATTERS COULD BE SETTLED THROUGH THE CSCE PROCESS, WHAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD REALLY LIKE IS THE FORMAL CERTAINTY OF A PEACE TREATY. THEY HAVE BARELY BEGUN TO THINK HOW A PEACE CONFERENCE WOULD BE ORGANISED, WHEN IT WOULD BE HELD, NOR WHO MIGHT PARTICIPATE (THE BRAZILIANS, WHO JOINED THE ALLIED COALITION WHEN VICTORY WAS CERTAIN? THE ALBANIANS?).

SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.

7. INTELLECTUALLY, THE MORE SOPHISTICATED RUSSIANS CAN UNDERSTAND AND EVEN ACCEPT THE WESTERN ARGUMENT THAT GERMAN ADVENTURISM CAN BEST BE PREVENTED, AND THE MISTAKES OF VERSAILLES AND 1939 AVOIDED, IF UNITED GERMANY REMAINS IN NATO. BUT IN PRACTICE EVEN THE COOLEST OF THEM CANNOT-YET-SWALLOW THE PROPOSITION THAT THE SOVIET UNION SHOULD GIVE UP THE FRUITS OF VICTORY AND THE DEFENSIVE GLACIS IN EASTERN EUROPE, IN EXCHANGE FOR AN ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY SOVIET SECURITY WOULD IN EFFECT BE GUARANTEED BY GERMAN MEMBERSHIP OF A WESTERN ALLIANCE SET UP FORTY YEARS AGO TO OPPOSE THEM. HENCE THE FIRMNESS WITH WHICH AT PRESENT THEY REJECT THE IDEA.

8. HENCE ALSO THE TALK OF A 'NEW EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM'

BUILDING ON THE CONVENTIONAL ARMS NEGOTIATIONS AND THE CSCE PROCESS, AND THE CONCEPT OF THE 'COMMON EUROPEAN HOUSE'. ACCORDING TO ADAMISHIN, THIS WOULD GIVE NEW CONTENT TO THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF 'NEUTRALITY' AND 'SECURITY'. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT HE MEANS. I SUSPECT THAT THE RUSSIANS HAVE NO PLAN, BUT SIMPLY HOPE THAT THE PROCESS OF MULTI-LATERAL NEGOTIATION WILL SLOW THINGS DOWN AND - IN SOME UNFORESEEABLE WAY - CAST UP OPPORTUNITIES THEY CAN EXPLOIT.

9. MEANWHILE ALL OF OUR INTERLOCUTORS CLAIM THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE NOT REALLY AFRAID OF GERMAN EXPANSIONISM OR AGGRESSION. THOUGH THIS IS HARD TO RECONCILE WITH THEIR OBVIOUS AGITATION, I BELIEVE IT TO BE TRUE. AS ONE OF GORBACHEV'S CLOSEST ADVISERS HAS TOLD US, THE RUSSIANS WILL BE ABLE TO SORT OUT THE GERMANS AS LONG AS THEY RETAIN THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPON. NO DOUBT THIS IS WHY THE RUSSIANS SEEM INCREASINGLY RECONCILED TO THE DOCTRINE OF MINIMUM DETERRENCE.

10. THE RUSSIANS' BIGGEST PRACTICAL HEADACHE IN THE SHORT TERM IS THE SUBSTANTIAL FORCE THEY STILL MAINTAIN IN EAST GERMANY. FOR THE TIME BEING THEY BELIEVE THESE TROOPS CAN REMAIN THERE ON THE BASIS OF VICTORS' RIGHTS AND THE FOUR POWER AGREEMENTS. THEY HOPE THAT THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS AND THE CSCE PROCESS GENERALLY WILL PROVIDE A RESPECTABLE COVER FOR THEIR REDUCTION AND EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL. ONE CLOSE ADVISER TO GORBACHEV THINKS THE TROOPS MAY BE HOME IN TWO OR THREE YEARS. BUT THOUGH OUR INTERLOCUTORS ARE UNEASILY AWARE THAT EVEN THIS TIMETABLE COULD COLLAPSE UNDER THE HEADLONG PRESSURE OF THE GERMANS TO UNIFY, THERE IS NO SIGN THAT THEY HAVE YET GIVEN THOUGHT TO THE TERMS ON WHICH SOVIET TROOPS MIGHT REMAIN IN EAST GERMANY, AT LEAST PERHAPS FOR A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD AS IS NOW BEING SUGGESTED IN THE WEST.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

11. ALL OUR INTERLOCUTORS TELL US THAT THE GERMAN ISSUE STILL AROUSES GREAT POPULAR EMOTION, AND REMAINS A DOMESTIC HOT POTATO. THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT THEM. LIGACHEV MADE AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT THIS POPULAR SENTIMENT IN THE RECENT PLENUM. GORBACHEV FOUND IT NECESSARY TO RESPOND TO IT IN HIS PRESS INTERVIEW LAST WEEK. GORBACHEV'S GERMAN POLICY WOULD DOUBTLESS FIGURE IN THE INDICTMENT AGAINST HIM IF HE FELL. POPULAR EMOTIONS PROBABLY ACT AS A BRAE ON THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET POLICY. BUT I DO NOT HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY ARE IN ANY WAY DECISIVE. IF GORBACHEV CAN MANAGE THE DISENGAGEMENT OF SOVIET TROOPS FROM THE DDR AND EASTERN EUROPE WITHOUT INCIDENT, AND WITHOUT TOO OBVIOUS AN AFFRONT TO SOVIET PRESTIGE, THE PEOPLE WILL ACQUIESCE. THEY HAVE MORE PRESSING PROBLEMS AT HOME.

CONCLUSIONS.

12. IT FOLLOWS FROM THE FOREGOING THAT I AGREE WITH MUCH OF THE US ASSESSMENT IN WASHINGTON TELNO 446. GORBACHEV HAS BEEN VERY CAREFUL IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE NOT TO CLOSE OFF OPTIONS. EVEN ON THE MOST DIFFICULT QUESTION OF ALL - GERMAN MEMBERSHIP OF NATO - HE HAS BEEN MOST CIRCUMSPECT. UNLIKE SOME MORE JUNIOR SOVIET OFFICIALS, HE KNOWS THAT THERE IS NOT MUCH HE CAN DO ABOUT IT UNAIDED.

13. BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT HE FEELS THE NEED AT THIS STAGE OPENLY TO ACCEPT THE WESTERN LINE. GIVEN THE UNCERTAINTIES OF CURRENT GERMAN POLITICS, HE CAN REASONABLY HOPE TO SECURE USEFUL LIMITATIONS ON UNITED GERMANY'S PARTICIPATION IN WESTERN SECURITY: GENSCHER AND STOLTENBERG HAVE ALREADY SHOWN THE WAY. HE MAY CONCLUDE THAT, ON THIS ISSUE AT LEAST, TIME IS NOT NECESSARILY AGAINST HIM. I WOULD THEREFORE EXPECT SOVIET OFFICIALS TO CONTINUE FOR A WHILE TO SAY, AS ADAMISHIN DID TO SIR PERCY, THAT GERMAN MEMBERSHIP OF NATO IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE SOVIET UNION: AND TO PLAY ON GERMAN DOUBTS AS BEST THEY CAN MEANWHILE.

14. THE RUSSIANS WOULD LIKE TO BE INVOLVED IN EARLY TALKS EITHER BILATERALLY OR MULTILATERALLY. THEY HAVE THREE OBJECTIVES: TO SECURE ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENTS IF THEY CAN: TO EXPLOIT WESTERN DISARRAY WHERE IT EXISTS: AND TO BE SEEN - BY THEIR OWN PUBLIC AT LEAST - TO BE PARTICIPATING AS EQUALS IN THE REORGANISATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE. THEY DO NOT WANT TO APPEAR TO BE ACQUIESCING IN A DIKTAT CONCOCTED AMONGST THE WESTERN ALLIES.

15. AS SEEN FROM HERE, HOWEVER, THE IMMEDIATE TASK FOR ALL FOUR WESTERN ALLIES IS TO AGREE ON THEIR OBJECTIVE (GERMANY IN NATO AND BINDING LEGAL GUARANTEES FOR GERMANY'S FRONTIERS), ON THE MEANS OF ACHIEVING IT (PROCEDURES FOR PHASING OUT FOUR POWER RIGHTS AND SPECIAL TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FORMER GDR TERRITORY AND FOR THE SOVIET TROOPS THERE): AND ON PROCEDURES (TIMETABLE AND AGENDA FOR FOUR PLUS TWO MEETINGS: POLISH PARTICIPATION: OTHER 'PEACE CONFERENCE' - LIKE MEANS OF SETTLING THE FRONTIERS) AND SO ON.

16. I BELIEVE THAT THE RUSSIANS CAN IN TIME BE BROUGHT TO ACQUIESCE IN OUR MAIN OBJECTIVE. THEY HAVE LITTLE CHOICE IF THE ALLIES PLAY THEIR HAND PROPERLY. THERE IS MUCH TO BE SAID FOR DELAYING THE FOUR PLUS TWO TALKS WHILE WE SORT OURSELVES OUT, AS THE AMERICANS SUGGEST. BUT EVEN THIS WILL NOT ELIMINATE THE RISK OF THE RUSSIANS ATTEMPTING TO PREEMPT THE OUTCOME BY STRONG PUBLIC STATEMENTS INTENDED TO AFFECT GERMAN DOMESTIC POLITICS. THEY ARE ALREADY MOVING THAT WAY (SEE

STATEMENTS OF 24 FEBRUARY REPORTED IN MY TELEGRAM NO 322). SO THE FIRST PRIORITY FOR THE WEST IS TO STOP THE GERMANS WOBBLING: THOUGH THE BBC NEWS THIS MORNING WAS NOT VERY ENCOURAGING ABOUT CAMP DAVID, THE AMERICANS ARE STILL THE BEST PLACED TO DO THIS.

17. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE TALKING TO THE RUSSIANS MEANWHILE. ON THE CONTRARY, WE NEED TO KEEP THEM ENAGAGED AND TO KNOW HOW THEIR THINKING IS DEVELOPING. AND THERE ARE CONCRETE ISSUES TO DISCUSS - SUCH AS SOVIET IDEAS ON FOUR POWER RIGHTS AND TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THIER FORCES, ON THE NATURE OF A CONFERENCE ON FRONTIERS, AND ON THE SHAPE OF A FUTURE EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM. WE CAN PURSUE THESE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF GERMANY IN NATO. EARLY GUIDANCE TO OUR THINKING WILL BE USEFUL, OF COURSE. SO WILL INSTRUCTIONS THAT ENABLE ME TO INSIST ON APPOINTMENTS WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS, AND GORBACHEV'S PERSONAL ADVISERS, WHICH ARE NOT ALWAYS EASY TO COME BY.

18. FCO PLEASE ADVANCE IMMEDIATE TO CHARLES POWELL AND SIR P CRADOCK, NO 10 DOWNING STREET.

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