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INFO ROUTINE ALL OTHER NATO POSTS, SOFIA, BELGRADE, BUCHAREST, BUDAPEST, EAST BERLIN, WARSAW, PRAGUE, UKDIS GENEVA IN NEW YORK, UKDIS VIENNA, UKMIS NEW YORK, HELSINKI, STOCKHOLM, MODUK (DS17)

INFO SAVING TO PEKING, ULAN BATOR, TOKYO

EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND INF : SOVIET POLICY AND PROPAGANDA

1. I HAVE AN IMPRESSION, SHARED BY MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES, OF LACK OF DIRECTION IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP. IT IS ALSO THE VIEW OF THE DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN SPECIALIST IN SOVIET AFFAIRS, SEWERYN BYALER, WHO IS VISITING MOSCOW AND WHO IN THE PAST TEN DAYS HAS SEEN A VERY BROAD RANGE INDEED OF SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ESTABLISHMENT. BYALER, WHO WAS LAST HERE IN MAY AND WHO THEN DETECTED A SPIRIT OF INNOVATION INITIATED BY ANDROPOV, HAS DESCRIBED THE SOVIET UNION TO A MEMBER OF MY STAFF AS A 'GROUNDED SHIP', PERVADED BY LOSS OF PURPOSE, PESSIMISM, AND EVEN FEAR OF WAR.
2. THIS MALAISE AFFECTS THE EXTERNAL AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIANS. BUT IT STRIKES ME AS PARTICULARLY ACUTE IN THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY. IN MIRROR IMAGE OF THE WEST'S PRIORITIES, THE MAIN PROBLEM FOR THE SOVIET UNION REMAINS THE HANDLING OF RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. 1983 HAS SEEN THE RUSSIANS COMPREHENSIVELY DEFEATED BY THE PROBLEM, NO MORE SO THAN IN THE INF TALKS, WHERE THEY HAVE FAILED TO STOP NATO DEPLOYMENT AND HAVE HAD TO DAMAGE THEIR 'PEACE' CREDENTIALS BY THE UNILATERAL SUSPENSION OF THE TALKS AND THEIR DECISION TO TAKE MILITARY COUNTER-MEASURES. ANDROPOV'S STATEMENTS OF 28 SEPTEMBER ON US/SOVIET RELATIONS (MOSCOW TEL NO 1091) AND 24 NOVEMBER ON INF (MY TEL NO 1354) ARE A MEASURE OF THE FAILURE OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY WHERE ITS INTERESTS ARE MOST VITALLY ENGAGED.
3. ALL THIS HAS HAD TO BE SUITABLY EXPLAINED TO A DOMESTIC AUDIENCE. UNLIKE THE ECONOMY, FOREIGN POLICY IS AN AREA WHERE THERE CAN BE NO ADMISSION IN PUBLIC OF FAILURE OR OF DEFICIENCIES. SINCE ANDROPOV'S 24 NOVEMBER STATEMENT, THERE HAS BEEN IN THE PRESS A FLOW OF FOLLOW-UP ARTICLES, LETTERS, INTERVIEWS, AND REPORTS OF MEETINGS. TELEVISION COVERAGE HAS BEEN IN SIMILAR VEIN. THOUGH THE TONE HAS BEEN LESS STRIDENT AND ALARMIST THAN IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, THE MESSAGE HAS BEEN CLEAR: THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, IN ITS UNAVOIDABLE RESPONSE TO NATO DEPLOYMENT, HAS THE FULL BACKING OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE. THE MORAL DRAWN HAS BEEN LARGELY ONE WITH DOMESTIC APPLICATION: THAT A DIFFICULT WORLD SITUATION REQUIRES PEOPLE TO WORK HARDER AND BE VIGILANT I.E. TO REINFORCE THE PRINCIPAL PRESCRIPTIONS WHICH, IN THE ABSENCE OF RADICAL REFORM, HAVE BEEN SET BY ANDROPOV AS A CURE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES.

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4. THE DOMESTIC DIMENSION TO SOVIET INF PROPAGANDA TO WHICH I HAVE ALLUDED IN CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT OVER THE PAST MONTHS IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME TO HAVE AN ENHANCED IMPORTANCE HERE, THE MORE SO IF THE IMPENDING PLENARY MEETINGS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND SUPREME SOVIET FAIL TO CLEAR UP DOUBTS ABOUT ANDROPOV'S FUTURE AND THE AUTHORITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. LESS CLEAR IS THE LINK BETWEEN PROPAGANDA AND POLICY EXTERNALLY, NOW THAT NATO DEPLOYMENT HAS BEGUN AND THE RUSSIANS HAVE LEFT GENEVA. SO LONG AS THERE IS STILL A CHANCE THAT PUBLIC AND PARLIAMENTARY OPINION CAN BE EFFECTIVELY MOBILISED AGAINST PERSHING AND CRUISE, THE RUSSIANS WILL TARGET THEIR PROPAGANDA ACCORDINGLY (THEIR LATEST LINE FOLLOWING THE VOTES IN THE COMMONS AND THE BUNDESTAG IS THAT THE BRITISH AND FRG PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITIES DO NOT ACCURATELY REFLECT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE). THE NEED TO PUT THE BLAME ON THE UNITED STATES FOR THE BREAK-DOWN AT GENEVA IS ALSO A MAJOR PREOCCUPATION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: THIS WAS ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF THE LATEST ZAMYATIN-KORNIENKO-OGARKOV PRESS CONFERENCE (MY TEL NO 1394). AN IZVESTIA CORRESPONDENT NOTED WITH ALARM ON 7 DECEMBER THAT THE CND CONFERENCE AT SHEFFIELD HAD EXPRESSED REGRET AT SOVIET COUNTER-DEPLOYMENTS. ALL THIS SAID, WE DO NOT KNOW IN WHAT DEGREE PROPAGANDA WILL BE AN INSTRUMENT OF SOVIET POLICY IN ARMS CONTROL IN 1984, SINCE, IN ALL PROBABILITY, THE POLICY HAS NOT ITSELF YET BEEN DECIDED.

5. IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT THE MAIN INSTRUMENT FOR SECURING SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN THE INF TALKS BEFORE THEIR SUSPENSION WAS THE APPLICATION OF PROPAGANDA TO WESTERN OPINION, IN THE EXPECTATION THAT THIS WOULD ENABLE THE SOVIET UNION TO OUTFLANK THE US NEGOTIATORS AT GENEVA. THIS WAS FROM THE START A HIGH-RISK POLICY WHICH CONSTRAINED THE SOVIET NEGOTIATING POSITION. IT PINNED THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP PUBLICLY TO A MAXIMALIST POSITION ON MAINTAINING ITS EUROPEAN MONOPOLY IN LRINF AND TO THE ARTIFICIAL DEVICE OF A LINK BETWEEN SS-20S AND THE BRITISH AND FRENCH NUCLEAR SYSTEMS. WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT NATO'S RESOLVE WOULD HOLD, THE RUSSIANS WERE CAUGHT IN A TRAP OF THEIR OWN MAKING, UNABLE TO SHOW FLEXIBILITY WITHOUT UNACCEPTABLE LOSS OF FACE.

6. HAVING FAILED TO SECURE THEIR MAIN OBJECTIVE - AN INF MONOPOLY - THE RUSSIANS WILL NOW SEEK TO SECURE THEIR FALLBACK POSITION: THE PRESERVATION OF THE GREATEST POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE IN THIS CATEGORY OF WEAPON. I BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE NOT YET DECIDED HOW BEST TO ACHIEVE THIS AND THAT IT IS POSING DIFFICULT DILEMMAS. ON THE ONE HAND, THEY HAVE EVERY INTEREST IN RETURNING TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AND REACHING AN AGREEMENT BEFORE NATO DEPLOYMENT GATHERS MOMENTUM. THERE IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE FURTHER PRESSURE IN THIS DIRECTION FROM SOME OF THE EAST EUROPEAN ALLIES. ON THE OTHER, ISSUES OF PRESTIGE AND FACE WILL MAKE IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO DO SO SOON AND THERE WILL BE THOSE IN MOSCOW WHO WILL ARGUE THAT WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION CAN YET BE BROUGHT TO

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HALT NATO DEPLOYMENT. THE DIFFICULTY IS COMPOUNDED BY THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: BY THE CHOICE BETWEEN GIVING THE EXPONENTS OF THE CRUSADE AGAINST SOCIALISM NO GRATUITOUS FILLIPS IN ELECTION YEAR, AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD GET A BETTER DEAL FROM A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WHOSE PROSPECTS WOULD GAIN FROM A MAJOR ARMS-CONTROL AGREEMENT.

7. WHICH WAY WILL THE RUSSIANS JUMP ? ANDROPOV'S 24 NOVEMBER STATEMENT TAKEN WITH SUBSEQUENT PRESS COMMENT, KORNIENKO'S REMARKS TO MY US COLLEAGUE (MY TEL NO 1388), AND THE NEWS CONFERENCE REFERRED TO IN PARAGRAPH 5 ABOVE OFFER ALMOST NO HOPE THAT THE RUSSIANS WILL RETURN TO THE GENEVA TALKS AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED. WESTERN EXPECTATIONS THAT THE TALKS WILL BE RESUMED AFTER A SHORT BREAK HAVE BEEN SPECIFICALLY CHALLENGED (MY TEL NO 1388). ON THE OTHER HAND, OGARKOV AND KORNIENKO DID NOT RULE OUT AT THEIR PRESS CONFERENCE THE POSSIBILITY OF A START/INF MERGER. BEYOND THIS, THE CLUES ARE FEW. MANY OF OUR SOVIET CONTACTS IN THE ARMS CONTROL FIELD ARE REFUSING TO SEE MEMBERS OF MY STAFF. THE AMERICANS ARE EXPERIENCING SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES. THIS COULD BE JUST BAD TEMPER. THE ATTITUDE IS ONE OF INJURED ARROGANCE. BUT IT VERY MUCH LOOKS AS THOUGH, IN THE ABSENCE OF MAJOR DECISIONS, THERE IS NO SUITABLE LINE TO TAKE WITH FOREIGNERS.

8. IN A SITUATION THEREFORE WHERE THE SOVIET LEADERS ARE, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, FEELING BRUISED AND HARD DONE BY: WHERE ELEMENTS MAY BE ARGUING FOR GREATER ASSERTIVENESS ELSEWHERE TO RESTORE SOVIET CREDIBILITY; AND WHERE ANDROPOV'S ILLNESS MAY MEAN THAT THE AUTHORITY TO FORCE THROUGH DIFFICULT POLICY DECISIONS HAD BECOME TOO DIFFUSE, THE ALLIANCE SHOULD DO WHAT IT CAN TO ENCOURAGE THE RUSSIANS TO DECIDE IN FAVOUR OF QUIET NEGOTIATION, NOT PUBLIC DECLAMATION. AS IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, THIS CALLS FOR SOMETHING LIKE A MUTUAL MORATORIUM ON HOSTILE PROPAGANDA. THOUGH THEY MAY NOT IN TRUTH DESERVE TO BE HAULED DOWN FROM THEIR OWN PETARD, THIS WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE RUSSIANS TO RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AT SOME JUNCTURE WITHOUT BEING SEEN TO EAT HUMBLE PIE. IN SHORT, THE RECIPE FOR GETTING EAST/WEST RELATIONS OUT OF THEIR PRESENT DANGEROUS TROUGH IS TO DEMONSTRATE YET AGAIN THE ALLIANCE'S UNSHAKEABLE DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE DEPLOYMENT IF THE SOVIET UNION MAKES THIS NECESSARY, BUT TO ESCHEW THE MEGAPHONE DIPLOMACY TO WHICH THE RUSSIANS FEEL OBLICED TO RESPOND IN KIND (I DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD HAVE SO CATEGORICALLY DISMISSED AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF INF TALKS NOTWITHSTANDING DEPLOYMENT HAD NOT CERTAIN WESTERN SOURCES PUBLICLY SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY).

I ADVISE THAT THE IDEAS, INCLUDING GENSCHER'S, FOR A NATO MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON EAST/WEST SHOULD BE JUDGED IN THIS LIGHT. A SIGNAL TO THE RUSSIANS IN ANY DECLARATION THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO DEFUSE EAST-WEST RHETORIC COULD BE AN INVALUABLE FIRST

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STEP. BOTH SIDES HAVE NOW MADE THEIR POINT: THE ALLIANCE IN  
DEPLOYING, THE RUSSIANS IN COUNTER-DEPLOYING. THERE IS NO FURTHER  
NEED TO SUBJECT ARMS CONTROL TO A PUBLIC TEST OF POLITICAL WILLS.

FCO PASS SAVING TO PEKING, ULAN BATOR, TOKYO.

SUTHERLAND

BT

STANDARD  
SOU D  
NAD  
CABINET OFFICE

( Repetition to REYKJAVIK  
referred for departmental decision,  
repeated as requested to other posts. )

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