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Foreign Policy

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TO ROUTINE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 447 OF 30 JULY

INFO WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO...

SAVING FOR INFO ALL EC POSTS, UKDIS GENEVA, UKDEL VIENNA, UKMIS
NEW YORK, TOKYO, PEKING

US/SOVIET RELATIONS

1. SINCE PRESIDENT REAGAN'S WESTMINSTER SPEECH THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED HARDENING IN SOVIET COMMENT ON U S POLICIES. THERE ARE ALSO SIGNS OF A GROWING CONSENSUS WITHIN THE SOVIET ESTABLISHMENT THAT TENDS TO DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONSTRUCTIVE US/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP DURING REAGAN'S TERM OF OFFICE. THE CURRENT MOOD WAS EXEMPLIFIED BY A TASS COMMENT ON 21 JULY THAT THE ONLY POSITIVE THING TO SAY ABOUT REAGAN WAS THAT HE HAD ALREADY COMPLETED ABOUT HALF HIS TERM. WE HAVE HEARD SIMILAR COMMENTS FROM SENIOR SOVIET OBSERVERS.

2. OTHER POINTERS INCLUDE :-

(A) THE NOW ROUTINE PRESENTATION IN THE SOVIET PRESS OF U S WORDS AND DEEDS AS INSPIRED BY AN ANTI-SOVIET CRUSADE AND EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE MILITARY SUPERIORITY OVER THE USSR (E.G. THE CREATION OF A MILITARY SPACE COMMAND AND RECENT U S ANNOUNCEMENTS ON CTB AND TTB):

(B) PESSIMISTIC COMMENTS ABOUT THE INF AND START NEGOTIATIONS. APART FROM REPORTS THAT MEETINGS IN EACH SERIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE, LITTLE NOW APPEARS IN THE SOVIET PRESS BEYOND BRIEF COMMENTS, AS IN PRAVDA'S WEEKLY INTERNATIONAL REVIEW ON 25 JULY, THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GENEVA TALKS SO FAR DOES NOT INDICATE ANY U S MOVEMENT TOWARDS "MORE REALISTIC POSITIONS", I.E. TO MOVE AWAY FROM U S OPENING POSITIONS. PRIVATELY RUSSIAN ACADEMICS AND JOURNALISTS INCREASINGLY TAKE THE LINE THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR AGREEMENT UNDER REAGAN ARE BLEAK:

(C) PARALLELS DRAWN IN PRESS COMMENT AND SPEECHES WITH THE 1930'S AND THE THREAT POSED BY HITLERITE GERMANY. THE DANGERS OF THE AMERICAN ARMS BUILD UP AND MILITARY DOCTRINES, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LESSONS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, HAVE LONG BEEN REGULAR FEATURES OF SOVIET COMMENT. BUT THE PARALLELS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN GIVEN A SHARPER FOCUS, EG A LETTER FROM A WORKER CARRIED ON PRAVDA'S INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PAGE ON 24 JULY WHICH SPOKE OF A DANGEROUS SIMILARITY BETWEEN PRESENT U S FOREIGN POLICY AND THAT OF HITLERITE GERMANY. THE U S IS ALSO DAILY IMPLICATED IN THE "FACIST" ATROCITIES OF THE ISRAELIS IN THE LEBANON. RESTRAINT HAS NOT, HOWEVER, BEEN COMPLETELY THROWN TO THE WINDS: A SOVIET ACADEMIC

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/ TOLD ME

TOLD ME TODAY THAT A CAREFULLY RESEARCHED ANALOGY BETWEEN HITLER'S "LEBENSRAUM" POLICY AND U S CLAIMS TO "AREAS OF VITAL INTEREST" HAD BEEN FIRMLY STRUCK OUT OF ONE OF HIS ARTICLES BY HIS EDITOR:

(D) MORE FREQUENT CRITICISM OF REAGAN BY NAME AND ABUSIVE COMMENTS SUCH AS PRAVDA'S (25 JULY) THAT THE LIE HAS BECOME THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTE OF U S POLICY.

3. MUCH OF THIS SEEMS DESIGNED AS USUAL TO CREATE A CLIMATE IN THE SOVIET UNION WHICH PUTS A PREMIUM ON IDEOLOGICAL VIGILANCE AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS (SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, DEFENCE MINISTER USTINOV'S ARTICLE IN PRAVDA ON 12 JULY, REPORTED IN MY TEL NO 418). SOME OF IT IS NO DOUBT AIMED AT WESTERN, PARTICULARLY EUROPEAN, OPINION. THE RUSSIANS PUBLICLY CONTEND (AND PROBABLY BELIEVE) THAT ONLY FEARS EXPRESSED BY EUROPEAN AND, TO SOME EXTENT, US PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT THE ARMS RACE AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS FORCED THE U S ADMINISTRATION TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AT GENEVA. THERE IS ALSO THE NEED TO RAISE THE VOLUME TO MATCH WHAT IS PERCEIVED HERE AS A PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE EMANATING FROM WASHINGTON. BUT BEHIND THIS A GENUINE, INCREASINGLY NEGAAMNITAVMASSESSMENT OF US/SOVIET RELATIONS UNDER REAGAN IS DISCERNIBLE, TOGETHER WITH A FREQUENTLY VOICED AND BY NOW PROBABLY REAL APPREHENSION THAT EAST/WEST RELATIONS ARE DRIFTING DANGEROUSLY.
4. PRESIDENT REAGAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT AT WESTMINSTER OF A "CRUSADE" AGAINST SOCILISM STUCK ESPECIALLY FIRMLY IN THE SOVIET GULLET. AMONG OTHER THINGS IT CONFIRMED SOVIET FEARS THAT PRESENT U S POLICIES WERE BEING DANGEROUSLY SHAPED BY STRONG IDEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS, WHICH QUESTIONED, FOR EXAMPLE, POLAND'S PLACE IN THE SOCIALIST CAMP, RATHER THAN BY WHAT WAS IN RUSSIAN EYES DURING THE NIXON ERA A REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE CURRENT BALANCE OF MILITARY POWER AND LEGITIMATE SOVIET, AS WELL AS AMERICAN, INTERESTS. THE CRUSADE IS NOW CONSTANTLY PRESENTED IN THE SOVIET PRESS AS THE MOTIVATING FORCE BEHIND AMERICAN ATTITUDES TO POLAND, EAST-WEST TRADE AND ARMS CONTROL. REAGAN'S SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF CAPTIVE NATIONS WEEK HAS ADDED FUEL TO THE FLAMES. PRAVDA ON 22 JULY DESCRIBED IT AS THE NORM FOR THE REAGAN -ROUTINELY ANTI-SOVIET AND ANTI-COMMUNIST - BUT ALSO HYSTERICAL AND UNPRECEDENTED IN ITS CRUDENESS AND CYNICISM. PRAVDA'S WEEKLY INTERNATIONAL REVIEW ON 25 JULY ADDED THE COMMENT THAT THE SPEECH HAD PROBABLY BROKEN ALL WESTERN RECORDS, INCLUDING CHURCHILL'S, FOR ANTI-COMMUNISM AND ANTI-SOVIETISM. RUSSIANS TO WHOM WE SPEAK ARE IMPERVIOUS TO THE ARGUMENT THAT IF THEY SAY THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE IS AN OBJECTIVE REALITY THEY CAN HARDLY COMPLAIN ABOUT IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM OF THEIR SYSTEM.
5. THERE ARE SIGNS NONETHELESS THAT THE RUSSIANS HAVE NOT ABANDONED ENTIRELY THE HOPE OF DEVELOPING A CONSTRUCTIVE US/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP UNDER REAGAN. THEY HAVE BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO PREJUDGE

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SHULTZ PUBLICLY. OFFICIAL CONTACTS ON AFGHANISTAN, AGREED BY GROMYKO AND HAIG HAVE TAKEN PLACE AND THE RUSSIANS SEEM KEEN TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE WITH THE U S ON REGIONAL PROBLEMS GENERALLY. THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN CAUTIOUS ON THE LEBANON TO THE POINT OF LAYING THEMSELVES OPEN TO ARAB CHARGES OF INACTIVITY AND IN REGARD TO THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR AND CURRENT TROUBLES IN SOMALIA HAVE BEEN CIRCUMSPECT IN THEIR REACTIONS.

6. THIS IS BECAUSE AGREEMENT IN THE ARMS CONTROL FIELD REMAINS A FUNDAMENTAL SOVIET OBJECTIVE. PROGRESS OR OTHERWISE IN THIS DIRECTION WILL BE IN SOVIET EYES THE MAIN DETERMINANT OF US/SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE AND OF THE USEFULNESS OF A REAGAN-BREZHNEV SUMMIT WHERE THEY WANT ARMS CONTROL TO BE AT THE CENTRE OF THE AGENDA. SUCH COMMENT AS HAS APPEARED ON THE TWO SETS OF TENEVA TALKS HAS BEEN PESSIMISTIC. IT IS NOT THEREFORE SURPRISING THAT, DOUBTS ABOUT BREZHNEV'S HEALTH APART, RUSSIANS NOW PREFER BOTH IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE NOT TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF A SUMMIT (EXCEPTIONALLY GROMYKO MENTIONED IT IN HIS SPEECH AT UNSSOD II BUT NO LONGER SPOKE OF OCTOBER OR ANY OTHER SPECIFIC TIMING). THE PREVAILING MOOD IS PROBABLY REFLECTED BY THE IZVESTIA AND TELEVISION COMMENTATOR BOVIN WHO TOLD ME RECENTLY THAT ON PRESENT FORM A SUMMIT WOULD BE POINTLESS.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING TO ALL E.C. POSTS, UKDI'S GENEVA, UKDEL VIENNA, UKMIS NEW YORK, TOKYO AND PEKING.

BROOKE TURNER

[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]

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