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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO, MODUK DS17,
UKDIS GENEVA

PROSPECTS FOR GENEVA: SOVIET ATTITUDES

SUMMARY

1. ON THE EVE OF THE SHULTZ/FROMYKO MEETING, THE SOVIET PRESS HAS GIVEN NOTHING SUBSTANTIVE AWAY ABOUT THE RUSSIAN NEGOTIATING POSITIONS. THE PUBLIC SIGNALS HAVE BEEN MIXED BUT CRITICISM OF THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO EXTINGUISH THE MESSAGE THAT PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE, PROVIDED THE US SHOW REALISM IN RESPONSE TO THE WELL-KNOWN SOVIET PROPOSALS.

DETAIL

2. THE COMMON THEME IN THE SOVIET PRESS IN THE RUN-UP TO GENEVA HAS BEEN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE US AND SOVIET ATTITUDES. THUS THE SOVIET UNION ARE READY FOR CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE, AN IMPROVEMENT IN US/SOVIET RELATIONS, AND 'THE MOST RADICAL SOLUTIONS'' IN ARMS CONTROL (A FORMULA FIRST USED BY CHERNENKO IN HIS MESSAGE TO THE 4TH CONGRESS OF INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS MY TELNO 1402 AND REPEATED BY GORBACHEV IN LONDON) ABOVE ALL THEY ARE FOR THE EXCLUSIVELY PEACFUL USE OF SPACE. THE 'PRINCIPLED' SOVIET APPROACH IS BACKED BY PRACTICAL DEEDS. THE US, HOWEVER, SHOWS A DIVIDED ATTITUDE DESPITE PRESIDENT REAGAN'S PROTESTATIONS OF A CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ARMS CONTROL. MOST TELLING IS THE ADMINISTRATION'S ATTITUDE ON SDI. THUS ZHUKOV'S REVIEW IN PRAVDA OF 30 DECEMBER SINGLED OUT THE PENTAGON'S PLANS TO LAUNCH A MILITARY SATELLITE ON 23 JANUARY AS EVIDENCE OF REAGAN'S INTENTION TO PURSUE THE 'STAR WARS'' PROGRAMME REGARDLESS OF THE GENEVA MEETING. AS FOR THE PROSPECTS FOR THE TALKS, HE RE-ITERATED THAT THE 'NEW SOVIET PROPOSALS'' SET OUT IN CHERNENKO'S STATEMENT IN RECENT MONTHS FORMED A GOOD BASIS FOR 'POSITIVE RESULTS''.

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3. MORE CAUTIOUSLY ZAGLADIN, IN AN ARTICLE IN SOVIETSKAYA ROSSIYA ON 27 DECEMBER TO WHICH THE US EMBASSY HERE ATTACHES PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE, STRESSED ONLY THE 'POSSIBILITY' OF NEGOTIATIONS ARISING OUT OF GENEVA AND THAT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO TALK ABOUT A TURN-AROUND IN US/SOVIET RELATIONS. IN MY VIEW HOWEVER, IT WAS NOTEWORTHY THAT HIS CONCLUSION WAS LESS PESSIMISTIC: DESPITE THE CONTRADICTIONS IN US POLICY, A TURN AROUND WAS POSSIBLE SEMI COLON AND OF THE TWO AVAILABLE OPTIONS - CONTAINED CONFRONTATION, OR NEGOTIATIONS AND NORMALISATION - THE SOVIET UNION WOULD STRIVE FOR THE LATTER.

4. FALIN IN IZVESTIA OF 3 JANUARY DESCRIBED THE AGREEMENT TO MEET IN GENEVA AS A 'POSITIVE, HOPEFUL' EVENT. HE WENT ON TO ATTACK THE ARGUMENT THAT WEAPONS IN SPACE WOULD MAKE WEAPONS ON EARTH REDUNDANT: THE SOVIET UNION SAW NO NEED FOR SPACE UMBRELLAS BUT WANTED NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO BE CONTROLLED BY 'RELIABLE BARRIERS' ON EARTH. THE US HAD NO INTEREST IN A MORATORIUM ON EITHER OFFENSIVE OR DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS EXCEPT AS THE OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS SEMI COLON THUS (AS WITH THE INF/START NEGOTIATIONS) ANY TALKS WOULD BE IN THE SHADOW OF A CONTINUING ARMS RACE. FALIN CONCLUDED WITH THE HOPE THAT THE OPPONENTS OF ARMS CONTROL, SPECIFICALLY PERLE, WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO PREVAIL.

CONCLUSION

5. COMPARED WITH THEIR POSITION OF ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO, WHEN THEY WOULD HAVE THE WORLD BELIEVE THAT IT WAS THE AMERICANS WHO PUT AN END TO THE INF/START NEGOTIATIONS, REFUSED TO TAKE YES FOR AN ANSWER ON OUTER SPACE, AND INSISTED ON THE UNREALISTIC STATUS QUO ANTE FORMULA, THE RUSSIANS HAVE NOW ADOPTED A MUCH MORE

COMFORTABLE PUBLIC RELATIONS STANCE. THEY CLAIM, HOWEVER IMPLAUSIBLY, THAT THE GROMYKO/SHULTZ MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE AT THEIR INITIATIVE, AND SOUND AN ENCOURAGING NOTE ABOUT THEIR OWN READINESS TO MAKE PROGRESS. BUT INSOFAR AS THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR POSITION IS CONCERNED, THEY ADHERE TO ALL THE OLD FORMULAE AND HAVE REVEALED NO SIGN OF NEW THINKING. GROMYKO THUS GOES TO GENEVA WITH NO PROPAGANDA HOSTAGES TO FORTUNE, HAVING LAID THE GROUND FOR CLAIMING CREDIT IF FEEL NEGOTIATIONS GET UNDER WAY, OR FOR PUTTING THE BLAME ON WASHINGTON IF AN IMPASSE IS REACHED. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THERE IS NO SUGGESTION THAT THEY ARE READY TO MEET THE AMERICANS HALF WAY.

SUTHERLAND

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EAST WEST & US/SOVIET RELATIONS

LIMITED

SOVIET D	PS/MR LUCE
DEFENCE D	PS/PUS
RESEARCH D	MR DEREK THOMAS
PLANNING STAFF	SIR W HARDING
EED	MR FERGUSSON
NAD	MR GOODALL
WED	MR JENKINS
ACDD	MR WESTON
FED	MR DAVID THOMAS
PS	
PS/LADY YOUNG	
PS/MR RIFKIND	

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