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*Parry 19/4*

GRS 550

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DESKBY 181500Z

FM FCO 181200Z APR 85

TO IMMEDIATE MOSCOW

TELEGRAM NUMBER 383 OF 18 APRIL

INFO IMMEDIATE TO WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO AND OTTAWA  
MY TELNO 380 (NOT TO ALL): EXPULSION OF SOVIET OFFICIALS

1. MR DEREK THOMAS SUMMONED THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR AT 1130 HOURS TODAY, 18 APRIL. THOMAS DREW ON THE SPEAKING NOTE IN MY FIRST IFT AND HANDED OVER THE AIDE MEMOIRE IN MY SECOND IFT.
2. IN REPLY POPOV WENT INTO A CHARACTERISTIC BLUSTER. HE ASSERTED THAT ALL THE ACCUSATIONS MADE ABOUT SOVIET OFFICIALS WERE ENTIRELY UNTRUE. NO SOVIET OFFICIAL IN BRITAIN HAD BEEN OR WAS ENGAGED IN IMPERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES. THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES WAS NOT MERELY UNFRIENDLY BUT HOSTILE. IT WAS A POLITICAL ACT WITH ALL THE CONSEQUENCES THAT FLOWED FROM THAT. IT COULD NOT BUT HAVE A VERY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS. THE BRITISH ACTION CONTRADICTED THE STATEMENTS THAT HAD BEEN MADE NOW AND EARLIER THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WISHED TO DEVELOP BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WAS BOUND TO BE AFFECTED SINCE THIS UNFRIENDLY ACTION WAS BEING TAKEN AGAINST OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE RELATIONS.
3. POPOV SAID THAT THE SOVIET SIDE COULD NOT ACCEPT ANY WARNINGS ABOUT THE FURTHER BRITISH MOVES IF THE SOVIET SIDE WERE TO TAKE MEASURES IN RESPONSE. SUCH WARNINGS CONTRADICTED EVEN FURTHER THE STATEMENTS BY THE BRITISH SIDE OF THEIR DESIRE TO DEVELOP ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS. AS FOR THE QUESTION OF MAKING THE BRITISH ACTION PUBLIC, HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE BRITISH SIDE WERE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF THE PRESS AND WORSEN THE ATMOSPHERE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. EVEN BEFORE HE HAD BEEN CALLED IN, THE EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED CALLS FROM THE PRESS ABOUT TWO OFFICIALS BEING EXPELLED AND OTHERS ALLEGED TO BE ENGAGED IN IMPERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES.

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4. POPOV SAID THAT THE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS UNFRIENDLY ACTION TOWARDS THE SOVIET SIDE LAY WITH THE BRITISH SIDE. THE SOVIET SIDE NATURALLY CONSIDERED THAT IT HAD THE RIGHT TO RETURN TO THIS MATTER IN DUE COURSE.
5. THOMAS REGRETTED THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED PRIOR CALLS FROM THE PRESS BUT HE STRESSED THAT THIS DECISION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TAKEN HAD THE EVIDENCE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THOSE CONCERNED NOT BEEN OVERWHELMING. HE HAD LOOKED INTO THE MATTER PERSONALLY AND WAS IN NO DOUBT THAT THE OFFICIALS HE HAD NAMED HAD ENGAGED IN UNACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES. HE COULD NOT THEREFORE ACCEPT THAT THIS WAS AN UNFRIENDLY OR HOSTILE ACT. THE DECISION NOT TO EXPEL PUBLICLY ALL THOSE CONCERNED NOR TO REDUCE THE CEILINGS IN RESPECT OF ALL OF THEM WAS A CLEAR SIGNAL OF OUR DETERMINATION TO TRY TO HANDLE THIS ISSUE WITHOUT AFFECTING THE WIDER RELATIONSHIP WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER AND I HAD MADE CLEAR WE WISHED TO DEVELOP. IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HANDLE THE TWO ISSUES SEPARATELY.
6. IN RESPONSE POPOV SAID THAT THE SOVIET SIDE JUDGED THE INTENTIONS OF ANY GOVERNMENT NOT ONLY BY THEIR WORDS BUT BY THEIR DEEDS. NONE OF THE OFFICIALS NAMED HAD BEEN OR WERE ENGAGED IN ANY IMPERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES. THAT WAS WHY HE TOOK THE VIEW THAT THERE WERE OTHER REASONS FOR THIS ACTION WHICH WAS AIMED NOT AT IMPROVING BUT AT WORSENING BILATERAL RELATIONS.
7. PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY NEWS DEPARTMENT AT 1230 HOURS 18 APRIL IS CONTAINED IN MY THIRD IFT.

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Relations : SOVIET UNION.

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