

GRS 700

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TO: [unclear]	
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- 3 APR 1987	
INDEX	REGISTRY
	Action Taken

MIPT: PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO MOSCOW: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

1. THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT STILL HAS ONE DAY (IN GEORGIA) TO GO: BUT IT IS ALREADY CLEAR THAT IT HAS BEEN A REMARKABLE, AND PROBABLY UNIQUE, EVENT BOTH IN UK/SOVIET RELATIONS AND IN EAST/WEST RELATIONS AS A WHOLE. THIS IS NOT BECAUSE IT HAS PRODUCED A BREAKTHROUGH IN ANY CURRENT AREA OF EAST/WEST NEGOTIATION: OR BECAUSE IT HAS PRODUCED BILATERAL AGREEMENTS, USEFUL THOUGH THOSE (ON SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION IN SPACE, UPGRADING THE HOT-LINE, EXPANDING CULTURAL AND INFORMATION ACTIVITIES AND ON EMBASSY SITES) SHOULD PROVE TO BE. IT IS, RATHER, BECAUSE THE VISIT HAS BEEN THE OCCASION FOR MORE CANDID AND COHERENT EXCHANGES ON NEARLY ALL ASPECTS OF THE EAST/WEST RELATIONSHIP THAN HAVE, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, EVER TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN A SOVIET LEADER AND THE HEAD OF A WESTERN GOVERNMENT. AS THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD THE PRESS, SHE COULD NOT REMEMBER EVER HAVING SPENT SO MUCH TIME IN DISCUSSION WITH ANOTHER WORLD LEADER.

2. A NOTABLE FACTOR OF THE VISIT HAS BEEN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN ITS ATMOSPHERE, IN TERMS OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S RELATIONS BOTH WITH GORBACHEV HIMSELF AND WITH THE SOVIET PEOPLE AT LARGE AND ITS SUBSTANCE. ALTHOUGH WIDELY DIVERGENT VIEWS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED, BOTH IN PRIVATE AND - IN SPEECHES, ON SOVIET TV AND TO THE WORLD PRESS - IN PUBLIC WITH PROBABLY UNPRECEDENTED FRANKNESS AND VIGOUR, THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IS AT LEAST AS WARM, IF NOT WARMER, AT THE END OF THE VISIT THAN IT WAS AT ITS OUTSET: WHILE PUBLIC INTEREST IN AND ENTHUSIASM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER EXCEEDS ANYTHING WHICH I CAN RECALL DURING A VISIT BY A FOREIGN STATESMAN. AT A SMALL PRIVATE DINNER PARTY - IN ITSELF, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, WITHOUT PRECEDENT - ON 31 MARCH, GORBACHEV JOVIALY DESCRIBED HIS TALKS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AS HAVING BEEN 'TEMPESTUOUS BUT WITH GREAT CLARITY'.

3. THE VISIT'S IMPORTANCE LIES IN THE FACT THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO A MORE COMPREHENSIVE, RATIONAL AND TOTALLY UNFUDGED EXPOSITION OF CENTRAL WESTERN VIEWPOINTS THAN, PROBABLY, IT HAS EVER ENCOUNTERED. THE TALKS REVEALED THAT, HOWEVER INTELLIGENT AND SOPHISTICATED GORBACHEV AND HIS SENIOR COLLEAGUES MAY BE BY COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS GENERATIONS OF SOVIET LEADERS, THEY STILL HARBOUR AN EXTRAORDINARY DEGREE OF MISCONCEPTION AND MISINFORMATION ABOUT WESTERN LIFE AND VALUES: IF THERE WERE EVER DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER GORBACHEV IS A 'BELIEVER',

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THE PRIME MINISTER'S DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM HAVE DISPELLED THEM. THE SAME APPLIES A FORTIORE TO RYZHKOV. DISPELLING THESE MISCONCEPTIONS AND REPLACING THEM WITH A LESS DISTORTED VIEW OF INTERNATIONAL REALITIES WILL BE A LONG BUT IMPORTANT TASK. TO THIS, THE DISCUSSIONS WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER HAS HAD HERE - WHILE CONTAINING A CERTAIN ELEMENT OF SHOCK TREATMENT - HAVE MADE AN INVALUABLE BEGINNING. IN THE LONGER TERM, AS THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF KEY POINTS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRESENTATION GRADUALLY SINKS IN, THE EAST/WEST RELATIONSHIP CAN ONLY BENEFIT. THE VISIT HAS BROUGHT A GUST OF FRESH AIR INTO BOTH THE EAST/WEST AND OUR BILATERAL DIALOGUE. THE TRADITIONAL FLANNEL IN WHICH BASIC DISAGREEMENTS HAVE ON SO MANY OCCASIONS BEEN WRAPPED UP HAS BEEN REMOVED: BOTH SIDES NOW KNOW MUCH MORE CLEARLY WHERE THE OTHER STANDS.

4. BILATERALLY, THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON CULTURE, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION IS MUCH MORE SPECIFIC THAN ANY SIMILAR DOCUMENT TO WHICH THE SOVIET UNION HAS HITHERTO SUBSCRIBED, AT LEAST WITH A WESTERN COUNTRY, AND PROVIDES A GOOD INSTRUMENT WITH WHICH TO HOLD OPEN THE WINDOW OF 'GLASNOST'. OF MORE IMMEDIATE IMPORTANCE ARE THE COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS, AMOUNTING TO CLOSE ON £400 MILLION, WHICH WERE EITHER HASTENED ALONG BY THE PROSPECT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT OR - IN THE CASE OF JOHN BROWN'S CONTRACT, SIGNED LATE ON 31 MARCH - WERE SECURED THROUGH ACTIVE INTERVENTION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

5. A MORE CONSIDERED ASSESSMENT WILL FOLLOW WHEN WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DIGEST THE IMPACT OF THE VISIT, EG FROM MEDIA COMMENT WHEN IT IS OVER, AND THE FULL RANGE OF SOVIET REACTIONS TO IT.

CARTLEDGE

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FCO / WHITEHALL (PR LICE)

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