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FM MOSCOW

TO DESKBY 251600Z FCO

TELNO 463

OF 251450Z MARCH 87

INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS, BONN, UNDEL NATO, WASHINGTON

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT: SOVIET PRESS COMMENT

SUMMARY

1. SO FAR ONLY ONE SUBSTANTIAL ARTICLE FROM PRAVDA'S LONDON CORRESPONDENT PUBLISHED ON 24 MARCH. CRITICISM OF TORQUAY SPEECH AND UK HUMAN RIGHTS. BRITAIN COULD HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN IMPROVING EAST WEST RELATIONS AND ON ARMS CONTROL. IT WAS UP TO LONDON.

2. COMMENTING ON 24 MARCH ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S TORQUAY SPEECH THE SOVIET MFA SPOKESMAN SAID THAT IT CONTAINED 'ELEMENTS OF A CHARACTER UNFRIENDLY TOWARDS US' BUT CONCLUDED WITH THE HOPE THAT THE VISIT WOULD PROVIDE A NEW IMPULSE FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS IN DIFFERENT FIELDS.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISITS TO PARIS AND BONN ARE REPORTED FACTUALLY IN IZVESTIYA OF 24 MARCH. MITTERRAND IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD NO MANDATE IN MOSCOW TO TALK ON BEHALF OF EUROPEANS ALTHOUGH HER OWN OPINIONS WERE 'EXTREMELY AUTHORITATIVE'.

DETAIL

4. MASLENNIKOV'S ARTICLE IN PRAVDA OF 24 MARCH BEGAN BY QUOTING REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND BY YOU WHICH DESCRIBED GORBACHEV'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF 29 FEBRUARY AS 'A USEFUL STEP FORWARD' AND THAT IT COULD 'IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE FOR ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS AND EAST/WEST RELATIONS IN GENERAL'. MASLENNIKOV ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO WHAT HE TERMED BRITISH NON-INSISTENCE ON A SIMULTANEOUS SOLUTION OF INF AND OPERATIONAL TACTICAL SHORT RANGE MISSILE QUESTIONS WHICH MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN UNDERSTOOD FROM INITIAL REPORTS FROM LONDON.

5. MASLENNIKOV BALANCED THIS RELATIVELY POSITIVE INTRODUCTION WITH SUBSEQUENT CRITICISM OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT TORQUAY 'WHICH COULD HARDLY BE CALLED CONSTRUCTIVE' ADVOCATING DEALING WITH THE SOVIET UNION FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH. SUCH AN 'OUT-DATED DICTIONARY' WOULD NOT REAP REWARDS. IT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN THAT SUCH AN APPROACH TO THE SOVIET UNION HAD NEVER PRODUCED ANYTHING EXCEPT DEADLOCK. THE ARTICLE CRITICISED WHAT IT TERMED THE RIGHT WING BRITISH PRESS FOR STATING THAT THE ZERO OPTION WOULD LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION AHEAD IN SRINF. THIS IGNORED THE 28 FEBRUARY PROPOSAL TO WITHDRAW SRINF FROM THE CDR

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AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND LAUNCH NEGOTIATIONS TO REDUCE AND ELIMINATE OTHER TACTICAL WEAPONS. ATTEMPTS TO FIND PRETEXTS FOR MAINTAINING AND BUILDING UP NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE SHOWED THAT 'VERY INFLUENTIAL CIRCLES' IN WESTERN EUROPE AND THE US WERE UNABLE TO GIVE UP THE CONCEPT OF NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND THE WISH, ASSOCIATED WITH IT TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE SOVIET UNION FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH.

6. THE POLICY OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HELPED TO SPREAD SUCH IDEAS E.G. THROUGH THE TRIDENT DECISION. MASLENNIKOV ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO YOUR RECENT SPEECH IN BRUSSELS, QUOTING YOUR REMARK THAT FOR THE TIME BEING 'EUROPEAN SECURITY WILL DEPEND ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS'. THIS ATTITUDE WAS CONTRASTED WITH THE LABOUR PARTY'S NON-NUCLEAR DEFENCE POLICY SUPPORTED BY 'MILLIONS OF BRITONS'.

7. MASLENNIKOV ALSO NOTED WHAT HE TERMED THE ANTI-SOVIET NATURE OF ARTICLES AND COMMENTARIES ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION NOW APPEARING IN THE BRITISH MEDIA, MUCH OF IT PRODUCED BY FORMER SOVIET CITIZENS. SUCH CIRCLES WERE FORMING NEW ANTI SOVIET ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS THE 'ASSOCIATION OF WIVES OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE DEFENCE OF SOVIET JEWRY'. IT WAS PEOPLE LIKE THAT WHO WERE ADVISING THE PRIME MINISTER TO SET UP A SORT OF EXAM ON DEMOCRATISATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN MOSCOW. THE SOVIET UNION DID NOT NEED LESSONS ON ITS CURRENT POLICIES ON RENEWAL AND DEMOCRATISATION FROM THE WEST, AND MORE PARTICULARLY FROM A COUNTRY WITH ALMOST 4 MILLION DEPRIVED OF THE ELEMENTARY RIGHT TO WORK SEMICOLON ONE AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE IN ULSTER DEPRIVED OF THE RIGHT TO RUN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS SEMICOLON MILLIONS OF COLOURED PEOPLE REGARDED AS SECOND CLASS CITIZENS SEMICOLON HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF HOMELESS SEMICOLON AND THOUSANDS OF COLOURED FAMILIES SEPARATED BY DISCRIMINATORY LAWS.

8. MASLENNIKOV NOTED THAT 'DESPITE ALL THIS' BRITISH POLITICAL OBSERVERS WERE INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBLE RESULTS OF THE FORTHCOMING DISCUSSIONS ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA OF ARMS CONTROL AND WHETHER BRITAIN HAD A CATALYTIC ROLE IN THE CONTEXT OF US/SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS.

9. HE CONCLUDED THAT BRITAIN HAD 'OBJECTIVE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE PROMOTION AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION'. 'HOWEVER BRITAIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THIS HISTORICAL PROCESS DEPENDED INITIALLY ON LONDON ITSELF'. THE ONLY NECESSITY WAS FOR THE POLITICAL AUTHORITY OF BRITAIN TO BE PLACED ON THE SIDE OF DISARMAMENT, TRUST AND DETENTE.

COMMENT

10. IT IS STANDARD SOVIET PRACTICE TO BE DISOBLIGING ABOUT LEADERS AND COUNTRIES WHOSE VIEWS HAVE PER FORCE TO BE RECKONED

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WITH MASLENNIKOV IS PRETTY DISOBLIGING MOST OF THE TIME
ANYWAY. HIS AGGRESSIVE REMARKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ARE IN KEEPING
WITH THE RECENT MOVE TO TAKE A LESS DEFENSIVE POSITION. BUT
MUCH OF IT READS LIKE AN ADMISSION OF VULNERABILITY AND OF A
DESIRE TO GET ONE'S OWN WORD IN FIRST.

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