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RR LITHUANIAN DISTRIBUTION

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LITHUANIA: VIEWS OF SHAKHNAZAROV

SUMMARY

1. FOLLOWING MY CALL ON USPENSKY (MY TELNO 998) I PUT THE SAME FORMULA ON INDEPENDENCE TO SHAKHNAZAROV, ONE OF GORBACHEV'S PERSONAL AIDES. HE TOOK NOTE. HE SAID GORBACHEV NEEDED ANOTHER GESTURE FROM THE LITHUANIANS BEFORE HE COULD AGREE TO NEGOTIATE.

DETAIL

2. I HAD A LONG CONVERSATION WITH GOERGY SHAKHNAZAROV, GORBACHEVS PERSONAL ADVISER, ON 31 MAY DURING WHICH WE HAD A BRIEF EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON LITHUANIA.
3. SHAKHNAZAROV SAID THAT IT WAS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE SOVIET UNION REMAINED INTACT. IF THERE WAS A COLLAPSE, THERE WOULD BE A RELEASE OF ENERGY 'LIKE AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION' WHICH COULD AFFECT THE WHOLE OF EUROPE. THE FEDERATION COUNCIL WOULD BE MEETING SOON TO DISCUSS THIS. SHAKHNAZAROV THOUGHT THAT THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD WOULD BE TO GET TOGETHER A REPRESENTATIVE DELEGATION FROM EACH REPUBLIC TO WORK OUT THE NEW STRUCTURES. MOSCOW'S RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH REPUBLIC COULD VARY. SOME REPUBLICS COULD HAVE FEDERAL STATUS: OTHERS, PERHAPS, CONFEDERAL STATUS. IN SOME CASES, ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT BE RATHER SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH: BUT OF COURSE, FOR GEOGRAPHICAL REASONS, TIES WOULD REMAIN MUCH CLOSER.
4. TURNING TO LITHUANIA, SHAKHNAZAROV SAID THAT THE STARTING POINT WAS THAT MOSCOW'S LEGAL POSITION WAS IRREPROACHABLE. TO JUSTIFY THIS, HE REHEARSED THE ARGUMENT FREQUENTLY USED BY GORBACHEV THAT EVEN ILLEGAL OR SHOTGUN WEDDINGS REQUIRE AN ORDERLY DIVORCE SETTLEMENT BASED ON SOUND LEGAL PRINCIPLES.
5. I THEN MADE THE POINTS IN YOUR TELNO 956 EXPLAINING THAT I HAD

BEEN ASKED TO PUT THESE TO CHERNYAEV, BUT THAT AS HE HAD BEEN TOO BUSY, I HAD PUT THEM TO USPENSKY. THE URGENT REQUIREMENT WAS TO GET NEGOTIATIONS STARTED. COULD NOT THE RUSSIANS ACCEPT THAT THE LITHUANIAN OFFER TO SUSPEND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR POST-INDEPENDENCE LEGISLATION WAS TANTAMOUNT TO A SUSPENSION OF THE INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION ITSELF? THERE MIGHT BE AN ELEMENT OF FICTION IN THIS, BUT IT WAS THE SORT OF FICTION THAT WAS NEEDED IF BOTH SIDES WERE TO BE ABLE TO AGREE TO BEGIN TALKING. I SAID THAT ONE THING THAT COULD BE LEARNT FROM THE DISMANTLING OF OUR EMPIRE - ABOUT WHICH RUSSIANS WERE ALWAYS ASKING ME - WAS THAT WE HAD ALWAYS ENDED UP TALKING TO THOSE WITH WHOM WE HAD INITIALLY REFUSED TO NEGOTIATE.

6. SHAKHNAZAROV TOOK CAREFUL NOTE OF THIS IDEA BUT DID NOT COMMENT DIRECTLY. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT MOSCOW STILL NEEDED ANOTHER GESTURE FROM THE LITHUANIANS. THE LAST LITHUANIAN OFFER HAD BEEN A CONCESSION: BUT THE LITHUANIANS HAD REPRESENTED IT IN PUBLIC AS A MAJOR VICTORY. THE SOVIET UNION, AS A MAJOR POWER, COULD NOT BE SEEN SIMPLY TO CAVE IN. SO THERE HAD TO BE ANOTHER CONCESSION FROM LITHUANIA. GORBACHEV HIMSELF STILL HAD A LITTLE FLEXIBILITY: BUT HE HAD TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF RUSSIAN PUBLIC OPINION. MOST RUSSIANS WERE NOT YET READY TO SEE THEIR EMPIRE DISMANTLED. YELTSIN TOO WOULD FIND THIS OUT. NOW THAT HE WAS PRESIDENT, HIS POSITION ON LITHUANIA WOULD CHANGE.

7. BEFORE ENDING THIS CONVERSATION, I TOLD SHAKHNAZAROV THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT LITHUANIA AND WOULD CERTAINLY BE WANTING TO DISCUSS IT WITH GORBACHEV.

8. I AM REPORTING SHAKHNAZAROV'S VIEWS ON GERMANY AND NATO BY SEPARATE TELEGRAM.

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