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FM MOSCOW 190730Z MAR 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO DESKBY 1000Z FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 143 OF 19TH MARCH 81

RFI ROUTINE WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO.

SAVING PARIS, BONN, KABUL, ISLAMABAD, UKDEL MADRID.

MY TEL 139 (NOT TO ALL): CALL ON GROMYKO.

WE SPEND AN HOUR AND A QUARTER MAINLY ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS, AFGHANISTAN AND T.N.F. GROMYKO WAS READY ENOUGH TO TALK, BUT WITHOUT DEVELOPING ANY NEW POINTS. HIS TONE WAS SERIOUS, BUT THE CONTENT WAS LARGELY NEGATIVE AND HE SPENT MUCH OF THE TIME ATTACKING THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION. IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE LANGUAGE USED IN PUBLIC BY MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION RANKLED AND THERE WAS AN UNDERLYING NOTE OF FRUSTRATION ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY OF ESTABLISHING SERIOUS CONTACT.

2. I OPENED BY ARGUING THAT THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS REFLECTED THE REAL AND WIDESPREAD CONCERN IN BRITAIN ABOUT SOVIET POLICY, THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR MILITARY POWER IN EUROPE AND THEIR ACTIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD, CULMINATING IN THE USE OF SOVIET ARMED FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN. IF WE WERE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WE NEEDED TO LOOK TO THE CAUSES. I THEN TOOK HIM THROUGH THE MAIN POINTS THE PRIME MINISTER HAD MADE TO POPOV: WE WANTED ARMS REDUCTIONS ON A PERMANENT TRUSTWORTHY AND RELIABLE BASIS: DETENTE WOULD BE EASIER TO DISCUSS ONCE SOVIET FORCES WERE WITHDRAWN FROM AFGHANISTAN: NATO WANTED TO DISCUSS TNF BUT THE FACT WAS THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS FAR AHEAD IN NUMBER, DESIGN AND SOPHISTICATION.

3. GROMYKO IN REPLY DEVELOPED FIVE THEMES:

- (A) BRITISH POLICY APPEARED TO BE A MERE ECHO OF THE UNITED STATES.
- (B) THE UNITED STATES SEEMED BENT ON MILITARY SUPERIORITY. THIS WOULD LEAD ONLY TO THE BOTTOMLESS ABYSS''. THE SOVIET UNION CONSTITUTED NO THREAT. IT HAD NO EXPANSIONIST AIMS. BUT EVERY SOVIET INITIATIVE RECEIVED A NEGATIVE REPLY. WHY COULD WE NOT SIT DOWN AND TALK WITHOUT DEMANDING A PRIOR ASSURANCE THAT THE TALK SHOULD BE PRODUCTIVE?
- (C) THE UNITED STATES DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE ANY REAL INTEREST IN TNF NEGOTIATIONS. ALL IT REALLY WANTED WAS TO FORCE THROUGH THE MODERNISATION PROGRAMME. BUT HE HOPED THAT LONDON AND OTHER WESTERN CAPITALS WOULD TAKE A COOL AND CONSIDERED DECISION AND REACT APPROPRIATELY TO BREZHNEV'S MESSAGE.
- (D) SOVIET POLICY ON AFGHANISTAN WOULD NOT CHANGE. THEY WANTED AND INDEPENDENT NON-ALIGNED AFGHANISTAN AND COULD BE RELIED ON TO WITHDRAW THEIR FORCES WHEN EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE CEASED.
- (E) THE STATE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS WAS SERIOUS. THE LANGUAGE

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USED BY THE UNITED STATES WAS WORSE THAN IN THE DIFFICULT POST WAR YEARS. BUT THE SOVIET UNION WANTED BETTER RELATIONS. BREZHNEV HAD SAID THAT HE WANTED ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS TO IMPROVE. THIS WAS IN THE OBJECTIVE INTEREST OF BOTH SIDES. WARTIME COOPERATION HAD BROUGHT VICTORY. COULD WE NOT RECREAT IT ?

4. ONLY ON AFGHANISTAN DID THE DISCUSSION COME TO LIFE. I TOOK HIS REFERENCE TO AN INDEPENDENT NON-ALIGNED AFGHANISTAN AS AN OPENING TO GO BACK OVER THE IDEAS PUT TO HIM BY YOU LAST YEAR AND FOLLOWED UP IN MY FRUITLESS TALKS WITH ZEMSKOV WHICH HAD MET THE EXPRESSED POINTS OF SOVIET CONCERN. GROMYKO MERELY CAME BACK REPEATEDLY TO THE NEED FOR BILATERAL PAKISTAN-AFGHAN TALKS. " WHY DON'T YOU SAY THIS TO THE PAKISTANIS AND GET THEM TO SIT DOWN AND TALK TO AFGHANISTAN" HAVING AT ONE TIME APPARENTLY WANTED TO GO AHEAD PAKISTAN NOW SEEMED TO HAVE CHANGED ITS MIND AND WAS FROZEN. WHEN I SAID THAT THESE BILATERAL TALKS WERE NOT THE COURSE TO PURSUE AND MENTIONED BREZHNEV'S REFERENCE TO THE "INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS" HE DID NOT FOLLOW THIS UP. NOR DID HE RESPOND TO A REFERENCE TO DE CUELLAR'S APPOINTMENT, OTHER THAN TO HARK BACK AGAIN TO PAKISTAN AS THE KEY.

5. REVERTING TO GROMYKO'S OPENING REMARKS I SAID THAT ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS WERE INDEED CLOSE AND I HOPED THEY WOULD REMAIN SO. THEY REFLECTED A REAL COMMUNITY OF INTEREST. I REMINDED HIM, THAT WE SHOULD ALSO BE TAKING OVER THE COMMUNITY PRESIDENCY IN JULY. ON THE TNF MORATORIUM I SAID THAT IT LOOKED LIKE AN ATTEMPT TO PERPETUATE AN IMBALANCE. GROMYKO REPLIED ONLY THAT IF ONE LOOKED AT THE OVERALL PICTURE THE SOVIET UNION DID NOT HAVE AN ADVANTAGE. I FINALLY REFERRED TO THE CONSTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS IN THE BREZHNEV REPORT , FOR INSTANCE ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES AND SAID THAT I HOPED THEY COULD ACCEPT THE REMAINING ELEMENTS OF THE FRENCH PROPOSAL. GROMYKO SAID HE HOPED THE WEST WOULD PROPOSE SOMETHING IN RESPONSE TO BREZHNEV'S REQUEST FOR A COUNTER CONCESSION. I SAID I DID NOT THINK THIS WAS FOR US TO DO. EUROPE WAS ALREADY COVERED ON THE WESTERN SIDE.

6. ON BILATERAL RELATIONS I REPEATED YOUR INTEREST IN AN EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE BUT THE QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE VISIT WAS NOT RAISED. I CONCLUDED BY REPEATING THAT SERIOUS SOVIET PROPOSALS WOULD BE EXAMINED SERIOUSLY AND THAT THE PRIME MINISTER ~~WOULD BE~~ REPLYING TO BREZHNEV.

7. A FULL RECORD FOLLOWS BY BAG . TEXT OF SOVIET PRESS STATEMENT IN IN M.I.F.T.

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RR WASHINGTON

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PS / MR E. DLET

PS / MR IHWS

PS / MR BLATICEK

MR BULLMAN

MR FERGUSON

Lord N. G. GUNDOX

SIR S. GORMAN

MR DONNAN

SIR A. ARLAND

MR P. MORSE

MR OAT

MR URE

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