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TELEGRAM NUMBER 854 OF 8 MARCH

INFO PRIORITY MODUK, UKDEL NATO, BONN, PARIS, MOSCOW,
 INFO ROUTINE ALL OTHER NATO POSTS, UKDIS GENEVA, UKMIS VIENNA,
 UKMIS NEW YORK, TOKYO, BUDAPEST, BUCHAREST, BELGRADE, WARSAW,
 PRAGUE, SOFIA.

U S/SOVIET ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS: U S APPROACH**SUMMARY**

1. THE GENEVA TALKS STARTING ON 12 MARCH ARE SEEN AS THE FIRST ROUND (PERHAPS 4 TO 8 WEEKS LONG) IN A LONG PROCESS. BUT THE MOOD HERE IS BUOYANT. U S NEGOTIATING POSITION ON DEFENCE/SPACE SETTLED, BUT PRESIDENTIAL DECISIONS AWAITED ON START AND INF POSITIONS.

DETAIL

2. THE PRESIDENT GAVE THE U S NEGOTIATING TEAM A WHITE HOUSE SEND-OFF ON 8 MARCH, AND THE TEAM LEAVES FOR GENEVA TONIGHT ON FOUR AIRCRAFT, TWO CARRYING THE OFFICIAL DELEGATION AND TWO CARRYING CONGRESSIONAL OBSERVERS. THE FLAMBOYANCE REFLECTS THE SELF-CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION APPROACH THE RENEWED NEGOTIATIONS. THEIR BELIEF IS THAT, WITH THE ALLIANCE STEADY ON INF, THE SDI WELL LAUNCHED, THE RUSSIANS FORCED BACK TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR MX ON THE HILL FAR BETTER (THANKS TO THE GENEVA PROCESS) THAN SEEMED LIKELY, THE U S HOLDS MANY OF THE NEGOTIATING CARDS, AND THE RUSSIANS ARE ON THE DEFENSIVE.

3. THE GENERAL EUPHORIA IS ACCOMPANIED BY MUCH UNCERTAINTY ABOUT IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS. THE DELEGATION HAS BEEN DESPACHED WITHOUT THE EXPECTED FINAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT. AND THERE IS NO CONSENSUS ON HOW THE RUSSIANS ARE LIKELY TO PLAY THEIR HAND.

4. THE REASONS FOR THE DELAY IN PRESIDENTIAL DECISION-MAKING ARE UNCLEAR. BUT THE BASIC DECISION HE HAS YET TO TAKE IS WHETHER THE U S SHOULD TABLE AN EARLY NEW PROPOSAL (SPECIFIC IDEAS ARE ON HIS DESK) IN EITHER OR BOTH OF THE STRATEGIC AND INF NEGOTIATING GROUPS. THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE ARGUED THAT THE OVERALL U S STRATEGY SHOULD BE TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE IN BOTH NEGOTIATING GROUPS IN ORDER BETTER TO BE ABLE TO COUNTER SOVIET PRESSURE ABOUT SDI IN THE THIRD GROUP, AND SOVIET PROPOGANDA ABOUT LINKAGE U S INTRANSIGENCE ON SDI, AND CONTRASTING SOVIET REASONABLENESS. AGAINST

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THIS, THE PENTAGON HAVE ARGUED THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO RUSH INTO TABLING NEW PROPOSALS BEFORE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SOVIET APPROACH TO THE NEW NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN TESTED: THAT TO DO SO WOULD AMOUNT TO REWARDING THE RUSSIANS FOR WALKING OUT OF EARLIER START AND INF NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT THE FIRST ROUND SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO DISCUSSION OF PRINCIPLES, DEFINITIONS, AND AIMS.

5. MOST OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL MAKE UP HIS MIND OVER THE WEEKEND: SOME FEAR THAT UNSATISFACTORY COMPROMISE POSITIONS MAY EMERGE FROM THE RICH MENU OF POSSIBLE OPTIONS BEFORE HIM (SEE MY TWO HFTS, NOT TO ALL).

6. WHILE PRESS ATTENTION HAS FOCUSED ON SDI DEBATES, AGREEMENT ON THE U S POSITION IN THE DEFENCE/SPACE NEGOTIATING GROUP HAS IN FACT PROVED EASY AND UN-CONTENTIOUS: NO FURTHER PRESIDENTIAL DECISIONS IN THIS AREA ARE REQUIRED. THE PRIMARY U S OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO EXPLAIN THE SDI AND ADMINISTRATION THINKING ON THEIR "STRATEGIC CONCEPT" AND ON THE ROLE OF DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS. A FURTHER U S OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO QUOTE REVERSE THE EROSION OF THE ABM TREATY UNQUOTE, WHICH MEANS EXPLORING WITH THE RUSSIANS THE U S COMPLIANCE CONCERNS, AND SEEKING SATISFACTORY EXPLANATIONS. THERE WILL BE NO SPECIFIC NEW U S PROPOSALS (INCLUDING ON ASATS) IN THIS GROUP.

7. AS FOR THE RUSSIANS, SOME OFFICIALS BELIEVE THEY WILL MAKE NO SERIOUS PROPOSALS IN ANY OF THE THREE NEGOTIATING GROUPS, EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR TABLING A TREATY ON THE QUOTE DEMILITARISATION OF OUTER SPACE UNQUOTE, BUILDING ON THEIR 1983 INITIATIVE, AND WILL BE CONTENT TO HUNKER DOWN IN GENEVA WHILE ARGUING IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE THAT NO PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE IN EITHER OF THE OTHER GROUPS UNTIL THE U S SHOWS A SERIOUS WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE IN THE DEFENCE/SPACE GROUP. OTHERS EXPECT EYE-CATCHING SOVIET PROPOSALS IN THE OTHER GROUPS, AND SUGGESTIONS, IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE, THAT AGREEMENTS IN THESE TWO AREAS WOULD BE RELATIVELY EASY TO REACH IF THE BASE-LINE COULD BE ESTABLISHED, THROUGH THE U S ADOPTING A SERIOUS NEGOTIATING POSTURE ON DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS. ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS ARE ALSO PUZZLED BY THE RECENT ABSENCE OF SOVIET PROPAGANDA ABOUT ASATS. AND THERE IS WIDESPREAD SCEPTICISM ABOUT SOVIET NEGOTIATORS' ABILITY TO OBTAIN FROM CHERNENKO'S KREMLIN CLEARANCE TO CUT DEALS.

8. THE ADMINISTRATION EXPECT THE FIRST ROUND IN GENEVA TO LAST 4 TO 8 WEEKS, PERHAPS WITH A BREAK IN THE MIDDLE. ON PROCEDURE, THEY WILL ATTEMPT TO MOVE QUICKLY FROM FULL DELEGATION PLENARY MEETINGS TO SEPARATE MEETINGS OF THE THREE NEGOTIATING GROUPS. BUT SOVIET RESISTANCE, ON LINKAGE GROUNDS, IS EXPECTED.

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9. IT IS UNIVERSALLY AGREED HERE THAT THIS FIRST ROUND IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF A LONG HAUL. THE POLITICAL AND ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS ARE WELL RECOGNISED.

10. THE PRESIDENT UNDOUBTEDLY WANTS AN AGREEMENT: AND, WITH SHULTZ AND NITZE IN THE ASCENDANT, THOSE WHO DON'T, OR RATHER WANT ONLY ONE SO TOUGH AS TO BE UNNEGOTIABLE, ARE LYING FAIRLY LOW. THE CRUNCH MAY COME IF EVENTS AT GENEVA ERODE THE BELIEF THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE READY FOR SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS ON REDUCTIONS, DESPITE THEIR CONCERN ABOUT SDI. BUT THERE IS NO TALK YET OF A POSSIBLE CHOICE BETWEEN AN AGREEMENT AND UNCONSTRAINED SDI: THE SHOW HITS THE ROAD IN THE APPARENTLY CONFIDENT BELIEF THAT THE U S SHOULD HAVE, AND CAN HAVE, BOTH.

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