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TELNO 241
OF 271200Z FEBRUARY 86

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FOLLOWING PERSONAL FOR THOMAS (DUSS) OR HEAD OF SOVIET DEPARTMENT

YOUR TELNO 330 TO WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S REPLY TO GORBACHEV'S 15 JANUARY PROPOSALS

1. NOT HAVING SEEN THE TEXT OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER ABOUT HIS REPLY TO GORBACHEV'S ARMS CONTROL PROPOSALS OF 15 JANUARY, I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THAT MESSAGE SUMMARISED THE WHOLE OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY OR CONFINED ITSELF ONLY TO HIS SPECIFIC PROPOSALS ON INF. THIS TELEGRAM MAY, THEREFORE, DUPLICATE WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN IN LONDON, IN WHICH CASE PLEASE SUPPRESS IT.

2. AT THE WEEKLY MEETING OF THE 4 (US, FRENCH, FRG AND UK AMBASSADORS) ON 26 FEBRUARY, MY US COLLEAGUE GAVE US A FAIRLY FULL SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT OF REAGAN'S LETTER TO GORBACHEV, OTHER THAN THE DETAILED PROPOSALS ON INF OF WHICH HE ASSUMED WE WERE ALREADY AWARE. IN GIVING THIS ACCOUNT OF THE REST OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER, I THINK THAT HARTMAN MAY HAVE BEEN EXCEEDING HIS BRIEF. I SHOULD THEREFORE BE GRATEFUL IF HIS CONFIDENCE COULD BE VERY CLOSELY PROTECTED: I LEAVE IT TO YOU TO LIMIT DISTRIBUTION (AND DECIDE ON POSSIBLE REPETITIONS, E.G. TO WASHINGTON) ACCORDINGLY.

3. THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER BEGAN WITH WHAT HARTMAN DESCRIBED AS A 'PHILOSOPHICAL' PASSAGE, DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A 'POSITIVE' LEAD-IN TO THE MORE SUBSTANTIAL PARAGRAPHS WHICH FOLLOWED. REAGAN SAID THAT HE SHARED GORBACHEV'S VISION OF A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD AND WAS ENCOURAGED BY GORBACHEV'S CONCEPT OF WORKING TOWARDS THAT GOAL THROUGH A SERIES OF STEPS. THE PRESIDENT NEVERTHELESS TOOK A DIFFERENT VIEW FROM THAT PUT FORWARD IN THE 15 JANUARY PROPOSALS OF THE NATURE OF THE STEPS WHICH WERE REQUIRED.

4. THE PRIME REQUIREMENT WAS TO CREATE GREATER TRUST AND CONFIDENCE, WITHOUT WHICH THE ULTIMATE GOAL COULD NEVER BE ATTAINED. THIS CONFIDENCE COULD BE CREATED BY FURTHER WORK IN THREE AREAS: FIRSTLY, IN THE CRUCIAL AREA OF VERIFICATION ON WHICH THE NEGOTIATING TEAMS IN GENEVA SHOULD BE URGED TO INTENSIFY THEIR EFFORTS: SECONDLY, THROUGH RECOGNITION THAT THE BASIC SECURITY CONCERNS OF THE USA AND THE USSR HAD TO GO HAND IN HAND WITH THE OTHER IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, NAMELY REGIONAL ISSUES, THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND PURELY BILATERAL CONCERNS: AND, THIRDLY, BY A COOPERATIVE APPROACH TOWARDS REGIONAL CONFLICTS THEMSELVES ON WHICH, THE PRESIDENT NOTED, THE RELEVANT PARTS OF GORBACHEV'S 15 JANUARY PROPOSALS SEEMED TO BE IN LINE WITH THE PRESIDENT'S OWN UNGA SPEECH LAST YEAR.

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THE PRESIDENT STATED CLEARLY THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS WERE FOR THE TIME BEING, ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO DETER NOT ONLY NUCLEAR BUT ALSO CONVENTIONAL ATTACK. HE DREW ATTENTION, IN THIS CONTEXT, TO THE CONTINUING IMBALANCE BETWEEN THE CONVENTIONAL FORCES OF NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT, IN THE LATTER'S FAVOUR.

6. REPEATING THAT HE SHARED GORBACHEV'S GOAL OF A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD, REAGAN THEN SET OUT HIS OWN VIEWS ON THE STEPS BY WHICH THAT GOAL COULD BE APPROACHED. THE FIRST SHOULD BE MAJOR ETQUCTIONS IN THE NUCLEAR ARSENALS OF THE TWO SUPER-POWERS. THERE COULD THEN BE SUBSEQUENT STEPS, INVOLVING THE UK, FRANCE, AND CHINA. GORBACHEV'S PROPOSALS WOULD NEED MODIFICATION TO ENSURE THAT, AT EACH STAGE OF THE REDUCTIONS PROCESS, EQUAL LIMITS WERE SET TO COVER EACH CATEGORY OF WEAPON: THE CRITERION FOR THESE LIMITS SHOULD BE THE CAPABILITIES OF A GIVEN WEAPON RATHER THAN ITS INTENDED PURPOSE. LRINF SHOULD NOT BE EXCLUDED FROM THE REDUCTIONS PROCESS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL DEPLOYMENT (IE LIMITS SHOULD BE GLOBAL).

7. ON SDI, THE PRESIDENT POINTED OUT THAT THE SOVIET POSITION ON RESEARCH WAS AMBIGUOUS AND NEEDED CLARIFICATION. THE PRESIDENT ALLOWED THAT IF THE GOAL OF ELIMINATING NUCLEAR WEAPONS WERE EVENTUALLY TO BE ACHIEVED, THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR A DEFENCE AGAINST THEM: HE NEVERTHELESS BELIEVED THAT THE SHIFT OF EMPHASIS FROM OFFENSIVE TO DEFENSIVE WEAPONS COULD IN ITSELF HAVE A HEALTHY AND HELPFUL EFFECT ON THE EAST/WEST RELATIONSHIP AND THAT, THEREFORE, SDI RESEARCH SHOULD BE MAINTAINED.

8. ON A NUCLEAR TEST MORATORIUM, THE PRESIDENT STATED FRANKLY THAT FOR SO LONG AS NUCLEAR WEAPONS EXISTED, NUCLEAR TESTS WOULD BE ESSENTIAL BOTH IN ORDER TO CHECK THEIR OPERATIONAL RELIABILITY AND ALSO FOR SAFETY REASONS.

9. ON THIRD COUNTRY SYSTEMS, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE COULD ENTER INTO NO COMMITMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OR FRANCE, NOR COULD HE CONTEMPLATE ANY BILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION ON UK OR FRENCH NUCLEAR CAPABILITY.

10. THE PRESIDENT THEN SET OUT HIS DETAILED PROPOSALS ON INF, DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE ZERO-ZERO IN THREE YEARS (THESE PROPOSALS ARE ALREADY KNOWN TO YOU AND I NEED NOT REPRODUCE THEM).

11. THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER CONCLUDED WITH A FAIRLY BRIEF REFERENCE TO THE DESIRABILITY OF PROGRESS IN THE CDE, ON A CW BAN AND ON MBFR.

CARTLEDGE

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MR DEREK THOMAS

MR GOODALL

MR JAUNT

MR RATFORD

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MR C. FOWELL

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