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TELNO 2638

OF 152200Z OCTOBER 86

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MR RENTON'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON: NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL: CALL ON NITZE

SUMMARY

1. NITZE ADVISES CONSIDERATION BY HMG OF UK AND ALLIANCE IMPLICATIONS OF PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH ALL BALLISTIC MISSILES BY 1996. DISCUSSION OF INF/SDI LINKAGE, DEVELOPMENTS ON NUCLEAR TESTING, AND SOVIET POSITIONS ON ABMT AT REYKJAVIK.

DETAIL

2. MR RENTON SAID WE WERE VERY GRATEFUL FOR SHULTZ'S BRIEFING OF THE NAC ON 13 OCTOBER. THIS HAD BEEN A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO ALLIANCE COHESION.

3. MR RENTON SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH ALL BALLISTIC MISSILES BY 1996, WHICH HAD BEEN MADE WITHOUT PRIOR CONSIDERATION WITHIN THE ALLIANCE, RAISED TWO MAJOR QUESTIONS: WHAT WERE THE IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A PROPOSAL FOR THE NATO STRATEGY OF FLEXIBLE RESPONSE, AND WHAT WERE ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR UK PLANS FOR TRIDENT. SHULTZ WAS QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS HAVING SAID ON 14 OCTOBER THAT THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT ELIMINATE THEIR OWN BALLISTIC MISSILES AND LEAVE OTHER COUNTRIES WITH THEIR (MY TELNO 2637). THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF ELIMINATING BALLISTIC MISSILES NEEDED MUCH CAREFUL THOUGHT. A PARTICULAR CONCERN OF HMG WAS THAT DEFENCE POLICY, INCLUDING UK TRIDENT, WOULD BE A MAJOR ISSUE AT THE NEXT ELECTION.

4. NITZE SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HOPED THAT THE ALLIES AND OTHER NUCLEAR POWERS WOULD INDEED CONSIDER AND BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THEIR OWN POSITIONS IN RELATION TO THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL FOR THE ELIMINATION OF BALLISTIC MISSILES. HE REMINDED MR RENTON THAT THE ISSUE HAD COME UP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO GORBACHEV OF 25 JULY. THE PRESIDENT'S ORIGINAL DRAFT HAD SAID THAT, IF THERE WERE TO BE US/SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ELIMINATION OF BALLISTIC MISSILES, THEN THE PRESIDENT ASSUMED THAT OTHER NUCLEAR POWERS WOULD WISH TO TAKE PART. NITZE AGREED WITH THIS. HOWEVER, HMG HAD EXPRESSED A STRONG PREFERENCE FOR THE DELETION OF THIS PASSAGE IN THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE AND THE PRESIDENT HAD AGREED TO THIS. BUT THE UNDERLYING ISSUE WAS STILL THERE. THE RUSSIANS HAD RAISED THIRD COUNTRY SYSTEMS IN REYKJAVIK, ALTHOUGH THERE HAD NOT BEEN EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION AND CERTAINLY NO US/SOVIET AGREEMENT ON THE MATTER. NITZE FULLY AGREED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL WAS RELEVANT TO

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FLEXIBLE RESPONSE AND THAT THE ALLIANCE SHOULD DO SOME SERIOUS THINKING ABOUT THE MATTER. GORBACHEV'S POSITION IN REYKJAVIK HAD BEEN DIFFERENT. IT HAD SEEMED TO BE THAT ALL STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS (NOT JUST BALLISTIC MISSILES) SHOULD BE ELIMINATED DURING THE 10 YEAR PERIOD UNDER DISCUSSION. THIS WAS OF COURSE A DIFFERENT PROPOSITION RAISING A DIFFERENT SET OF CONSIDERATIONS SINCE IT ENVISAGED THE ELIMINATION OF STRATEGIC AIR BREATHING SYSTEMS BUT THE POSSIBLE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF SHORTER RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILES. BOTH THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL AND THE APPARENT SOVIET POSITION NEEDED CAREFUL THINKING THROUGH.

5. MR RENTON NOTED THAT THAT SOVIET LINE SINCE REYKJAVIK ON THE LINKAGE BETWEEN AN INF AGREEMENT AND A RESOLUTION OF THE SPACE/DEFENCE ISSUES SEEMED TO HAVE VARIED. WHAT DID NITZE THINK THE REAL SOVIET POSITION WAS? NITZE SAID THAT THE SOVIET POSITION HAD APPEARED TO BE QUITE CLEAR AT REYKJAVIK. THEY HAD STRESSED THAT LINKAGE BETWEEN ALL PARTS OF THE ARMS CONTROL AGENDA, INCLUDING INF, AND SDI WAS EXTREMELY TIGHT. HE THOUGHT THAT THE RIGHT APPROACH BY THE ALLIANCE NOW WOULD BE SIMPLY TO ASSUME, IN DEALINGS WITH THE RUSSIANS, THAT THE EARLIER SOVIET COMMITMENT TO A SEPARATE INF AGREEMENT STILL STOOD AND ALSO THAT THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS MADE IN REYKJAVIK REMAINED ON THE TABLE. THIS WOULD SMOKE THE RUSSIANS OUT. THE EXTENT OF THE LINKAGE THEY WERE INSISTING ON WOULD NO DOUBT EMERGE QUITE SOON IN GENEVA.

6. MR RENTON NOTED THAT THE UK HAD A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE US/SOVIET DIALOGUE ON TEST BAN ISSUES BOTH BECAUSE OF THE JOINT UK/US TESTING PROGRAMME AND BECAUSE OF THE VERY HIGH LEVEL OF POLITICAL INTEREST IN THE UK IN A CTB. IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR US TO REMAIN IN VERY CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE ADMINISTRATION IN THIS AREA. NITZE FULLY AGREED. THE LANGUAGE ON NUCLEAR TESTING ISSUES WORKED OUT IN THE REYKJAVIK WORKING GROUP WAS AS FOLLOWS QUOTE THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION WILL BEGIN NEGOTIATION ON NUCLEAR TESTING. THE AGENDA FOR THESE NEGOTIATIONS WILL FIRST BE TO RESOLVE THE MANY VERIFICATION ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXISTING TREATIES. WITH THIS RESOLVED, THE US AND SOVIET UNION WILL IMMEDIATELY PROCEED, IN PARALLEL WITH REDUCTIONS IN NUCLEAR SYSTEMS, TO ADDRESS FURTHER STEP BY STEP LIMITATIONS ON NUCLEAR TESTING LEADING ULTIMATELY TO A COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN UNQUOTE. THE RUSSIANS HAD NOT QUARRELLED WITH THIS LANGUAGE AS SUCH NOR WITH THE AGENDA ENVISAGED FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS. HOWEVER, THERE HAD BEEN US/SOVIET DISAGREEMENT ON HOW THESE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE DESCRIBED: THE RUSSIANS HAD WANTED TO DESCRIBE THEM AS NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO A COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN AND HAD WANTED THIS POINT MADE EARLY IN THE DRAFT LANGUAGE. FOR THE US, THIS REMAINED A LONG-TERM AIM.

7. MR RENTON ASKED ABOUT THE SOVIET POSITION ON ABM TREATY ISSUES AT REYKJAVIK. HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT THERE HAD BEEN TWO STICKING POINTS FOR THE RUSSIANS. THE FIRST WAS THEIR INSISTENCE ON A HIGHLY RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE ABM TREATY. THE SECOND, AND PERHAPS THE POINT WHICH THEY HAD FOUND MOST UNACCEPTABLE, WAS THE IMPLICATION IN THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL

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THAT SDI DEPLOYMENTS WOULD DEFINITELY PROCEED AT THE END OF THE TEN YEAR PERIOD. NITZE AGREED THAT THESE WERE THE TWO POINTS PRIMARILY AT ISSUE. THE RUSSIANS CLEARLY FOUND IT POLITICALLY VERY DIFFICULT TO BLESS THE IDEA OF SDI DEPLOYMENTS TAKING PLACE AFTER THE TEN YEAR PERIOD WITHOUT NEGOTIATION. THEY HAD ARGUED FOR A PERIOD OF TIME (PERHAPS 3-5 YEARS) AFTER THE INITIAL TEN YEAR PERIOD DURING WHICH THERE WOULD BE US/SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENTS. THIS HAD EFFECTIVELY MEANT THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE STILL ARGUING FOR A PERIOD OF UP TO 15 YEARS DURING WHICH SDI SYSTEMS COULD NOT BE DEPLOYED. ON HOW THE ABM TREATY SHOULD BE INTERPRETED/AMENDED DURING THE TEN YEAR PERIOD, THE SOVIET POSITION WAS UNCLEAR. NITZE THOUGHT THAT THE RUSSIANS WANTED AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD OVERRIDE THE ABM TREATY RATHER THAN AN AMENDMENT TO IT. GORBACHEV'S POSITION AT REYKJAVIK HAD BEEN THAT THE CUT-OFF POINT BETWEEN PERMITTED AND PROHIBITED ACTIVITY WOULD BE AT THE LABORATORY DOOR. SINCE REYKJAVIK, HOWEVER, THE RUSSIANS HAD SIGNALLED THAT THIS WAS NOT NECESSARILY THE CASE. THEY APPEARED NOW TO BE SUGGESTING THAT THE KEY POINT FOR THEM WAS A PROHIBITION ON TESTS OF ABM SYSTEMS AND COMPONENTS IN EARTH ORBIT AS WELL AS IN SPACE. THIS DIFFERED FROM THE PROVISIONS OF THE ABM TREATY. THESE PROHIBITED THE TESTING OF ABM SYSTEMS AND COMPONENTS AGAINST A BALLISTIC MISSILE IN FLIGHT TRAJECTORY, WHICH HAD SO FAR BEEN INTERPRETED BY BOTH SIDES AS MEANING THAT TESTING IN EARTH ORBIT, BUT NOT IN SPACE, WAS PERMITTED.

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