

~~ADVANCE~~

RESTRICTED

FM MOSCOW

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 283

OF 200828Z FEBRUARY 90

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO, ACTOR

INFO PRIORITY EAST EUROPEAN POSTS

MIPT: SHEVARDNADZE'S INTERVIEW: INTERNAL ASPECTS.

1. DISCUSSION OF SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND EASTERN EUROPE, LED SHEVARDNADZE TO A DEFENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY.
2. HE AGAIN AGREED THAT THE ONLY COMPROMISES THAT HAD BEEN MADE WERE TO COMMON SENSES. OPEN SKIES HAD BECOME A REAL PROSPECT AFTER 30 YEARS DELAY. DIPLOMACY WAS FOUNDED ON THE ART OF THE COMPROMISE.
3. A JOURNALIST COMMENTED THAT THE IMPRESSION HAD BEEN CREATED THAT IT HAD BEEN A PAINLESS DECISION TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM HUNGARY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA. YET A FEW MONTHS AGO, THE IDEAS WOULD HAVE BEEN TREATED WITH CAUTION, EVEN UNEASE, IN MOSCOW. WHAT HAD CHANGED? SHEVARDNADZE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE HAD. THEY NOW REGARDED SUCH DEVELOPMENTS CALMLY 'SOME PEOPLE CRITICISE US...BUT THEY FORGET WE INTRODUCED OUR FORCES INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA AFTER THE WARSAW TREATY WAS SIGNED. WE HAVE NOW CONDEMNED THIS ACTION. WHAT GROUNDS DO WE HAVE FOR KEEPING OUR TROOPS THERE....THE SAME APPLIES TO HUNGARY.'
4. AFTER A JOURNALIST QUESTIONED WHETHER A NEUTRAL GERMANY WOULD ENHANCE EUROPEAN SECURITY, SHEVARDNADZE BROKE OFF FROM HIS ANSWER (THAT HE DID NOT ACCEPT THIS LINE) TO SAY 'THE WORLD IS CHANGING AT A BEWILDERING PACE. BUT WHAT IF SOMETIME, SAY IN FRANCE, SAY IN ENGLAND, YOU HAD A DICTATOR? OR IN THE SOVIET UNION? AT THE PLENUM, I SAID THAT IF PERESTROIKA COLLAPSES, THERE IS A RISK THAT WE COULD HAVE A DICTATORSHIP. YOU CAN'T RULE THIS OUT IN POLAND, EITHER. THAT'S WHY I PUT SUCH STRESS ON THE EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE''.
5. THE NEXT QUESTION WAS WHY WERE SOVIET 'CONSERVATIVES' PLAYING THE GERMAN CARD AND PAINTING THE FUTURE OF EUROPE IN GORY COLOURS? WHY DID THEY ACCUSE GORBACHEV OF HAVING WROUGHT ALL THIS? SHEVARDNADZE WAS CLEAR: 'WHY? TO HALT PERESTROIKA, TO DEFAME THE LEADERSHIP. THEY QUESTION EVERYTHING - OUR INTERNAL POLICIES, AND OUR FOREIGN ONES. DEMOCRACY TOO, AND THE PLURALISM WE HAVE CONCEDED.

EVEN THOUGH THEY KNOW VERY WELL THAT WE COULD NOT, DID NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO ACT ANY DIFFERENTLY''.

6. HE WENT ON. ''OUR COMRADE AT THE PLENUM SAID 'NOT LONG AGO THE USSR WAS A GREAT POWER, WITH AUTHORITY WHICH THE WHOLE WORLD ADMIRER. EASTERN EUROPE WAS THE GUARANTEE OF OUR SECURITY...IT SEEMS WE'VE DESTROYED IT ALL: OUR GREATNESS AND OUR GUARANTEE'. WHAT'S BEHIND ALL THIS? WE KNOW HOW WE WERE ADMIRER. WE SENT OUR TROOPS INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND DESTROYED ALL THE PROGRESSIVE TENDENCIES. DO THEY THINK THE WORLD RESPECTED THIS? WE 'RESTORED ORDER' IN HUNGARY IN '56. WAS EUROPE DELIGHTED? WE WENT INTO AFGHANISTAN. WHAT WAS IT CALLED - INTERNATIONALIST DUTY. REALLY IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN CALLED AN INVASION. WAS THE WORLD AWE-STRUCK? 128 COUNTRIES CONDEMNED OUR AFGHAN POLICY. AND OCCASIONALLY SOMEONE AT HOME STILL ASKS HOW OUR 5 MILLION STRONG ARMY COULDN'T DEAL WITH THE AFGHANS EXCLAMATION MARK''.

7. ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD RELAY HIS VIEW OF THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT, THAT PLURALISM AND OPPOSITION WERE NOT NECESSARILY A BAD THING, SHEVARDNADZE SAID ''I HAVE BEEN THINKING THIS OVER FOR A LONG TIME. I REMEMBER HOW, 2 YEARS AGO, THIS WAS DEBATED IN A RESTRICTED GROUP. WE HAD TO PUT ON THE RECORD, IN A VERY SERIOUS DOCUMENT, THAT WE WERE IN FAVOUR OF PLURALISM. THE MAJORITY OF OUR COMRADES AT THE MEETING WERE IN UPROAR. WHAT IS THIS PLURALISM? AND SO WE REMOVED THE WORD. BUT I AM CONVINCED THAT IF WE HAD ADMITTED THE LEGITIMACY OF A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM THEN, MANY PROCESSES IN OUR SOCIETY WOULD NOT BE SO PAINFUL TODAY.''

BRAITHWAITE

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