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CONFIDENTIAL

FM WASHINGTON 112052Z MAY 79

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NO 1081 OF 11 MAY

INFO PRIORITY MODUK (DUS(P)) UKDEL NATO

Prime Ministerby  
14/5p.o.  
6/5  
18/5

FOLLOWING FROM ROBINSON

OUR TELNO 1052:SALT

1. WE HAVE COME ACROSS A NUMBER OF FURTHER INDICATIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S ANXIETY ABOUT HMG'S LIKELY POSITION ON OR PUBLIC REACTIONS TO THE SALT 2 AGREEMENT IN THE LAST TWO OR THREE DAYS. THIS ISSUE SEEMS INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE ISSUE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION, AND FOR CARTER PERSONALLY, IN THEIR FIRST CONTACTS WITH HMG. THE POINT HAS BEEN MADE, FIRMLY BUT FOR THE MOST PART WITHOUT AGGRESSIVITY, THAT THERE COULD BE FAR-REACHING DAMAGE TO HMG'S RELATIONS WITH THIS ADMINISTRATION IF THIS ISSUE IS ALLOWED TO GO WRONG. IT SEEMS LIKELY TO BE PARAMOUNT ON THE AMERICAN SIDE WHEN VANCE IS IN LONDON ON 21/22 MAY.

2. IN OUR TELNO 989 (NOT TO ALL), COMMENTING ON THE OUTLOOK FOR US FOREIGN POLICY, WE UNDERLINED THE CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SALT DEBATE AND THE PRESIDENT'S RE-ELECTION PROSPECTS, WITH THE ATTITUDES OF AMERICA'S NATO ALLIES PLAYING AN IMPORTANT AND PERHAPS CRUCIAL PART IN THE WASHINGTON DEBATE. WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS OVER AND THE SUMMIT NOW APPROACHING, PRESIDENT CARTER'S TOTAL PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO SALT IS BEING PUT ACROSS IN INCREASINGLY APOCALYPTIC TERMS. HE TOLD A PUBLIC MEETING YESTERDAY QUOTE I HAVE ONLY ONE LIFE TO LIVE ON THIS EARTH .... I THINK THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE ACHIEVEMENT THAT COULD POSSIBLY TAKE PLACE FOR OUR NATION DURING MY LIFETIME IS THE RATIFICATION OF THE SALT TREATY THAT WE HAVE JUST NEGOTIATED WITH THE SOVIET UNION .... REJECTION OF THIS TREATY .... WOULD BE A MASSIVE DESTRUCTIVE BLOW TO WORLD PEACE. UNQUOTE

3. AT GUADELOUPE IN JANUARY PRESIDENT CARTER OBTAINED VALUABLE SUPPORT FOR SALT FROM THE MAJOR EUROPEAN ALLIES. HE IS BANKING ON THIS SUPPORT REMAINING FIRM. YOU MAY HAVE GOT A FLAVOUR OF THIS DURING YOUR VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN FEBRUARY. THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN BRITAIN HAS LED THE ADMINISTRATION TO BECOME EVEN MORE SENSITIVE TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S OPPONENTS ON SALT MIGHT SEEK TO EXPLOIT AUTHORITATIVE BRITISH VIEWS AGAINST HIM AS EVIDENCE OF ALLIED DISQUIET. SOME RECENT BRITISH PRESS REACTIONS ARE LIKELY TO FEED ANXIETIES HERE. STATEMENTS ABOUT SALT BY HMG WILL BE SCRUTINISED WITH WHAT MAY SOMETIMES SEEM EXAGGERATED CARE BY

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THE AMERICANS IN ASSESSING THE NEW BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE. BUT THE ANXIETY RUNS DEEP, ESPECIALLY BUT CERTAINLY NOT EXCLUSIVELY AMONG THE PRESIDENT'S IMMEDIATE ADVISERS: THE INCIDENT REPORTED IN MY TELNO 1051 IS ONE EXAMPLE. (IN THIS CONTEXT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION WILL HAVE TO BE GIVEN TO REQUESTS FROM US VISITORS, PARTICULARLY SENATORS, FOR MEETINGS WITH UK MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS EUROPEAN ATTITUDES TO SALT: OUR TELNO 1052 IS A CASE IN POINT.)

4. PROBLEMS OF SUBSTANCE APART (NOTABLY THOSE RELATING TO NON-CIRCUMVENTION), THE AMERICANS HAVE, FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, INTRODUCED COMPLICATION FOR THEMSELVES FROM THE PROCEDURAL ANGLE. SINCE FEBRUARY THEY HAVE BEEN PRESSING THE UK AT THE OFFICIAL LEVEL TO TAKE THE LEAD IN DRAFTING LANGUAGE FOR THE PUBLIC NATO RESPONSE TO SIGNATURE ON SALT 2 WHICH THEY ENVISAGE WOULD BE MADE AT A NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL A WEEK OR TWO AFTER THE SUMMIT. WE SHOWED THEM A POSSIBLE DRAFT, AD REFERENDUM TO MINISTERS, ON 2 MAY, WHILE EXPLAINING OUR OWN INEVITABLE CONSTRAINTS. BUT WHILE THE AMERICANS HAVE BEEN ANXIOUS TO SET THE WHEELS TURNING WITHIN THE ALLIANCE AND TO START PRE-COOKING THAT LANGUAGE AT AN EARLIER MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL TO TAKE PLACE ABOUT A FORTNIGHT BEFORE THE SUMMIT, THEY HAVE AT THE SAME TIME DECLINED TO MAKE THE FULL TEXTS OF THE SALT AGREEMENT AND RELATED DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE ALLIES BEFORE THESE ARE SENT TO CONGRESS (PROBABLY A DAY OR TWO AFTER SIGNATURE AT THE SUMMIT). WE HAVE REPEATEDLY REMINDED THE AMERICANS THAT, HOWEVER GOOD THE ORAL BRIEFINGS THEY HAVE GIVEN US, THE ABSENCE OF FULL SALT TEXTS SETS A LIMIT TO THE DEGREE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT OR PREPARATORY WORK FOR IT THAT THE EUROPEAN ALLIES CAN GIVE. THIS DERIVES NOT FROM AN ABSENCE OF GOODWILL, BUT FROM THE DIFFICULTY OF SAYING PUBLICLY WE SUPPORT AN AGREEMENT WHICH WE MUST ADMIT TO NOT HAVING SEEN. THE AMERICANS PROFESS TO UNDERSTAND THIS BUT IN PRACTICE THEY ARE SLOW TO DRAW THE THE CONCLUSION THAT EITHER THE TEXTS MUST COME TO US SOONER OR PUBLIC SUPPORT AND WORK TO THAT END MAY BE DELAYED. THE ENSUING HIATUS RISKS MISGIVINGS ON EACH SIDE ABOUT THE MOTIVES OF THE OTHER.

JAY

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