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FROM UKDIS GENEVA 101730Z MAR 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 19 OF 10 MARCH

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO, MOSCOW, PARIS

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1. MR HURD HAD HALF AN HOUR THIS MORNING WITH NITZE. NITZE SAID THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING THROUGH A 'GRUBBING' PERIOD WHICH WAS THE BEST THAT COULD BE EXPECTED AT PRESENT. HE FELT THAT SOME SMALL HEADWAY HAD BEEN MADE BOTH IN GENEVA AND IN MOSCOW ON THE BASIC ISSUES. THE SOVIET UNION WAS CONTINUING TO PRESS STRONGLY ITS ARGUMENTS FOR INCLUSION OF BRITISH AND FRENCH SYSTEMS: THEY MAY HAVE BEEN SURPRISED BY THE RESILIENCE WITH WHICH THE AMERICAN SIDE HAD STUCK TO ITS GUNS. HE HAD HAD PRIVATE AND VERY TENTATIVE INDICATIONS FROM THE SOVIET TEAM THAT MOSCOW MIGHT BE ABLE TO MOVE AWAY FROM THIS ARGUMENT IF SOME INDIRECT WAY COULD BE FOUND AROUND IT. HE REHEARSED AT LENGTH THE ARGUMENTS HE WAS USING ON THE POINT. HE SAID HE WAS NOT WORRIED. NITZE SAID THAT THE SOVIETS HAD ALSO TAKEN A COMPLETELY UNREASONABLE STAND ON DATA IN THE PUBLIC SESSIONS. THEY HAD REACHED THE POINT OF INCLUDING ALMOST ANY AMERICAN AND NATO WEAPON, EVEN THOSE BASED IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE FAR EAST, IN THE DATA EQUATION, ARGUING THAT THESE COULD ALSO BE A THREAT SHOULD ANY OF THEM BE MOVED TO WITHIN RANGE OF A WARSAW PACT STATE.

2. MR HURD ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW PUBLIC PROPOSAL FROM THE US BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS WENT INTO RECESS ON 29 MARCH. IT COULD BE PRESENTATIONALLY DIFFICULT IF THE ALLIANCE STAYED TOO LONG IN THE SAME NEGOTIATING POSTURE. NITZE SAID, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, THAT HE HAD TO LOOK AT THE POSSIBILITIES FROM A NEGOTIATING VIEWPOINT. HE WANTED THE BEST RESULT POSSIBLE FOR THE WEST. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO RELATE ANY POSSIBLE COMPROMISE TO OUR FUNDAMENTAL POSITION. OTHERWISE THERE WAS A RISK EITHER THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD POCKET CONCESSIONS WITHOUT RECIPROCATING THEMSELVES, (AS HAD HAPPENED AT SALT I), OR THAT THEY WOULD USE CONCESSIONS AS A MEANS OF NIBBLING AWAY AT THE WEST'S POSITION. ALL THE IMPLICATIONS, THEREFORE, HAD TO BE EXAMINED THOROUGHLY. NITZE AGREED THAT WORK WAS BEING DONE ON THESE QUESTIONS IN WASHINGTON, BUT HE AND HIS TEAM IN GENEVA WERE RIGHTLY NOT KEPT FULLY IN THE PICTURE.

3. MR HURD EXPLAINED THE POSSIBLE POLITICAL PROBLEM OF A LONG RECESS IF NO NEW NEGOTIATING FORMULA WAS ANNOUNCED. IN RECENT WEEKS THE PUBLIC DEBATE HAD GONE CLEARLY IN OUR FAVOUR. BUT EASTER WOULD BE A PERIOD OF ANTI-NUCLEAR DEMONSTRATIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE IN WHICH GOVERNMENTS COULD AGAIN LOSE THE ADVANTAGE. THE WAY THE NEGOTIATING RECESS WAS HANDLED WAS OF MUCH POLITICAL

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IMPORTANCE. IF THERE WAS NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS, WE WOULD NEED TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY HOW WE PRESENTED WHAT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR. WE NEEDED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO FIND WAYS OF SHOWING IN PUBLIC THE UNREASONABLENESS OF THE PRESENT SOVIET POSITION. MR HURD ADDED AS A PERSONAL SUGGESTION THAT A SHORTER RECESS THAN TWO MONTHS WOULD GIVE A BETTER PUBLIC IMPRESSION OF THE ALLIANCE'S COMMITMENT TO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. NITZE AGREED ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION AND FINDING THE RIGHT PUBLIC POSTURE. THIS WOULD NEED CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. THE RECESS DID NOT HAVE TO BE FOR 60 DAYS. THIS WAS A MATTER FOR JOINT DECISION BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. HE DID NOT THINK PERSONALLY THAT IT WOULD BE A PROBLEM TO PERSUADE THE SOVIETS TO AGREE TO A RECESS OF PERHAPS 30 DAYS.

4. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION NITZE SAID HE WAS NOT WORRIED BY THE SLIGHT DIFFERENCES OF EMPHASIS IN THE ARGUMENTS USED BY BRITAIN AND FRANCE TO JUSTIFY KEEPING THEIR OWN SYSTEMS OUT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. AFTER MR HURD AND ANDREANI HAD COVERED THE POINT IN SPEECHES THIS MORNING IN THE COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT, MR HURD PUT THE SAME QUESTION TO ANDREANI, WHO SAID HE WAS A LITTLE UNEASY THAT THE BRITISH ARGUMENTS MIGHT UNDERCUT THE FRENCH AND VICE-VERSA(UNDERLINED). MR HURD WENT OVER THE GROUND WITH HIM ON THE SAME LINES AS GILLMORE RECENTLY. HE UNDERTOOK THAT WE WOULD LET THE FRENCH KNOW IN ADVANCE IF AT ANY TIME WE PROPOSED TO ALTER OUR PRESENT VERY GENERAL WHITE PAPER FORMULA ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH WE MIGHT REVIEW THE NEED FOR OUR STRATEGICAL NUCLEAR FORCE.

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