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[TEXT]

FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

VISIT OF MR GORBACHEV: MESSAGE TO SHULTZ

1. Grateful if you would pass the following personal message from the Secretary of State to Shultz after the Prime Minister's meeting with President Reagan has taken place.

Copies to:—

BEGINS When we met at Chevening, I said I would let you have my own impression of our meetings with Gorbachev. As you know, I have been in China so that I am afraid I have not been able to send you my views before now. You will have had an account of course from the Prime Minister of how the visit went. Nevertheless, you may still find it helpful to have my impressions which may add /something

something to what the Prime Minister told the President.

The Prime Minister and I saw him for lunch and talks at Chequers for about five hours altogether on 16 December. I had three hours of formal talks with him the next day followed by lunch. So we saw a great deal of him in a fairly short space of time.

First, the man. He is relatively open, confident in manner and intelligent. He has a quick sense of humour and he listens carefully to what the other person says. He behaved considerately towards his colleagues and allowed them to contribute to the discussion without diminishing his own authority. His wife is far from being the usual Soviet woman. Her Doctorate of Philosophy could not conceal a forthcoming and attractive personality with a surprisingly wide knowledge of classical and modern English literature.

Although clearly not used to the sort of fundamental questioning he got from the Prime Minister, he kept cool and avoided the ~~usual~~ ^{Standard} Soviet reaction of reciting lengthy positions of principle. He was extremely well briefed, and spoke easily and impromptu on most subjects.

He does not have Gromyko's polemical, gramophonic style in argument and was much less inclined to point-scoring for its own sake. But he did not fail to get in a quick and generally well-judged response when opportunity arose. On substance he stuck pretty well to the accepted Soviet line. The impression he left was of a man

/who

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

who is completely loyal to the Soviet system, is prepared to listen, to have a genuine dialogue and to make up his own mind. In short, someone with whom it should not be impossible to do business.

At Chequers, he questioned the Prime Minister very closely on US motives and intentions at Geneva, which gave her the opportunity to make some strongly supportive remarks about the President personally, as well as to stress our solidarity with you. He was clearly interested to gain a first hand and informed impression of US personalities and policies.

On the content of the exchanges, the most striking point was the length of time devoted to outer space. The Russians said they would if necessary go ahead with their own version of SDI or, more probably, the development of nuclear weapons that would get past the US SDI defences. The Russians, Gorbachev argued, regard the ABM Treaty as the keystone to the arms control negotiations. Hence their insistence on the need for agreement on restraining SDI as an essential element for wider talks. Gorbachev emphasised more than once that, if events proceeded to the point where the ABM Treaty was irrevocably undermined, the prospect of any further agreements thereafter would be minimal. When we suggested that it was in ~~one~~^{none} of our interests to spend yet more of our resources on defence, there was vigorous assent from Gorbachev. The fact that they were prepared to discuss arms control issues seriously was reflected both in Gorbachev's careful preparation of his arms control material and in the inclusion of General Chervov in the team. Chervov, argued that a first strike strategy was an integral part of the SDI approach.

I put the case firmly to him that we did not see SDI in the same light, still less did we see it as linked in any way to a US first strike strategy. We urged Gorbachev to study carefully recent speeches by the President and yourself and stressed the President's profound sincerity in the search for balanced arms control and a reduction in nuclear weapons. He quoted critically from your New York speech the point that power and diplomacy must always go together. I replied by referring him to the balance of your Los Angeles speech: strength alone will never achieve a durable peace.

Gorbachev said that the Russians attached great importance to the Geneva talks. He added that there had been voices in the Soviet Government against agreeing to these, but they had decided to go ahead with this major step in a genuine effort to resume the search for agreement on arms control. I told him that the surest way for the Russians to bring about a failure of the talks would be to try to use them to drive wedges between the Allies. We were at one on this issue. Gorbachev said he recognised this. He stressed that the Russians see the Geneva talks as a completely new round which will cover the whole range of nuclear weapons including space, strategic and intermediate. The framework and agenda would be worked out at Geneva.

Gorbachev also raised the customary issue of counting in the UK and French systems at some point, while saying that the Russians did not expect us to disarm now, or to reduce our weapons in an unbalanced fashion. I replied along familiar lines that if substantial progress was achieved between the United States and the Soviet Union, we would review our position.

At Chevening I said I would take up the Nicaragua issue.

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I made plain to Gorbachev our commitment to the Contadora process and our conviction of the legitimacy of US interests in the region. I underlined the unwisdom of a continuing build-up of arms in Nicaragua. Gorbachev said that the Soviet Union would do nothing to increase tension in the area, but that they would maintain their support for the 'newly independent' state of Nicaragua.

On VE day, I emphasised the need to avoid isolating the FRG. I raised the idea that the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act might be the right forum for celebrating the achievements of 40 years of peace. Unfortunately we ran out of time before Gorbachev had a chance to respond. ~~The issue was however discussed at a meeting of British and Soviet officials later in the day, and we will let your people know the content of that exchange.~~

I raised both human rights and Afghanistan. The interesting point was that Gorbachev responded in some detail to both points (in contrast for instance to Gromyko, on every occasion when I have raised these points with him). He managed, while not departing from the Soviet official line, nevertheless to find some original turns of phrase.

I am very much aware that when you get to Geneva next month you will still have the same old Gromyko to deal with. It is hard to say how much of the apparently more open approach presented by Gorbachev will see the light of day in what Gromyko says to you. But I was left with the clear impression that the bulk of the Soviet leadership take the Geneva talks very seriously and that the decision to go was not taken without a good deal of thought on their part. Gorbachev stressed more than once their opinion that the world is at a very critical point in the search for

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possible progress on arms control. Good luck. ENDS