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C O N F I D E N T I A L

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E.O. 12065: N/A
 TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, UR, AF
 SUBJECT: FURTHER LENINGRAD REACTIONS TO
 "AFGHANISTAN CRISIS"

1. SUMMARY: INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN CONTINUED TO DOMINATE THE WEEKLY WORLD REVIEW OF THE LENINGRAD ZNANIYE SOCIETY WITH THE SPEAKER OF FEBRUARY 23 MOVING TOWARD MORE OPEN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUBSTANTIAL INTERNAL AFGHAN OPPOSITION, INCLUDING ELEMENTS OF THE AFGHAN ARMY. HE AVOIDED CONFIRMING, BUT DID NOT DENY, REPORTS CITED BY A QUESTIONER THAT 3,000 SOVIET SOLDIERS HAD BEEN KILLED. A SOVIET CONTACT OF THE CONGEN MET A RETURNED SOLDIER FROM AFGHANISTAN WHO CLAIMED THAT HALF OF HIS DIVISION HAD BEEN WIPED OUT IN THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF FIGHTING, THAT A FRIEND OF HIS HAD LEG BURNS FROM GAS, AND THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN WERE VERY BAD. ANOTHER SOVIET CONTACT SAYS THAT IN LENINGRAD PARTY CIRCLES IT IS BEING SAID THAT THE REFERENCE IN BREZHNEV'S FEBRUARY 22 NOMINATION SPEECH TO THE POSSIBILITY OF UNDERSTANDING U.S. NEED FOR SECURE OIL SUPPLY ROUTES, HAS THE BASIS FOR SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE WITH THE U.S. END SUMMARY.

2. ZNANIYE SOCIETY LECTURER ON THE "WORLD MILITARY POLITICAL SITUATION" FEBRUARY 23RD MADE FOLLOWING POINTS IN CONTEXT OF PRESENTATION DEVOTED TO EXPLAINING THE SOVIET DECISION TO INTERVENE IN AFGHANISTAN AND TO BLAMING THE U.S. FOR CURRENT US-SOVIET TENSIONS:

--SPEAKER VOLUNTEERED THAT SITUATION OF AFGHANISTAN IS "EXTREMELY COMPLEX" WITH TROUBLE FROM SOME OF THE "HIGHLY UNEDUCATED" RELIGIOUS-INCLINED POPULATION INCLUDING PARTS OF THE AFGHAN ARMY.

--HE HEDGED, BUT DID NOT DENY FIGURE OF 3,000 DEATHS AMONG SOVIET TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN CITED BY QUESTIONER.

--SPEAKER OPENLY SPOKE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTE ON AFGHANISTAN ("106 COUNTRIES VOTED AGAINST US.") SAYING THAT, DESPITE THIS, THE USSR HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SEND ITS TROOPS INTO AFGHANISTAN.

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3. A SOVIET CONTACT WHO IS HOSTILE TO THE USSR'S INVITATION OF AFGHANISTAN PROVIDED THE GIST OF A CONVERSATION HE HAD WITH A SOLDIER WHO HAD RETURNED FROM THERE. HIS DESCRIPTION OF CONVERSATION, WHICH HE WROTE DOWN FOR SECURITY REASONS, WAS AS FOLLOWS: "THIS YOUNG MAN CAME FROM AFGHANISTAN NOT LONG AGO. HE SAYS THAT THE SOLDIERS AND OFFICERS ARE IN A VERY BAD MOOD. EVERYTHING IS VICIOUS AND DEPRESSING. OFFICERS WHO REMEMBER THE SECOND WORLD WAR SAY IT WAS NOT THIS TERRIBLE. HE SAID THAT NEW TROOPS WILL BE THROWN IN THERE. AN AMERICAN RIFLE FELL INTO THEIR HANDS. AN OFFICER TOLD THEM THAT IT WAS A VERY EXPENSIVE RIFLE AND WE DO NOT HAVE THIS KIND (THE SIGHT COSTS 90 ROUBLES); IT SHOOTS FROM 1,000 METERS JUST AS WELL AS IT DOES FROM FIVE.

4. ON HIS LEGS WERE BROWN SPOTS (KORICHNEVYE PYATNA). THERE HAD BEEN HOLES IN HIS UNIFORM AND THESE WERE THE TRACES OF GAS. AND MOREOVER, THEIR DIVISION ARRIVED IN AFGHANISTAN IN THE END OF DECEMBER AND IN THE MIDDLE OF JANUARY THERE REMAINED ONLY HALF OF THE DIVISION. ONE OF HIS FRIENDS WAS KILLED BY A BULLET WITH A SHIFTING CENTER OF GRAVITY (PRESUMABLY A TUMBLER AS IN THE M-16), THE BULLET WENT IN AT HIS STOMACH AND OUT THROUGH HIS THROAT. DESPITE ALL OF THIS, HE UNDERSTOOD THAT WE ARE THE AGGRESSORS. HE SAYS THAT IT IS A SECOND CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND EVEN WORSE. HE SPOKE THIS WAY: THEY (THE AFGHANS) KILL OFFICERS. THE FACT IS THAT WITH US, SOLDIERS FIERCELY HATE OFFICERS. THIS PART ABOUT KILLING OFFICERS HE TOLD WITH SATISFACTION. MANY OFFICERS WERE KILLED BY THEIR OWN MEN (THIS HE TOLD ME). HE ALSO SAID THAT WHAT THE VOICES SAY -- BBC, VOA, VOICE OF GERMANY--ALL OF IT IS TRUE." (END QUOTE)

5. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, ONE LENINGRAD CONTACT, A PARTY MEMBER, WENT TO SOME LENGTHS TO PERSUADE A CONGENOFF THAT THE PART OF CHAIRMAN BREZHNEV'S FEBRUARY 22 SPEECH WHICH SHOULD BE READ WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION IS THAT IN WHICH HE MENTIONED SECURITY OF U.S. OIL SUPPLY ROUTES. THE QUOTE IS AS FOLLOWS: IN WASHINGTON, THEY LOVE TO TALK

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ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF ENSURING THE SECURITY OF US OIL SUPPLY ROUTES. IT IS POSSIBLE IN A WAY TO UNDERSTAND THIS. (ETG YESHCHE KAK-TO MOZHNO PONYAT') THIS CONTACT APPEARED CONVINCED THAT THIS WAS SOMEHOW A BASIS FOR FUTURE US-SOVIET UNDERSTANDING.

6. COMMENT. THE ZNANIYE SOCIETY SPEAKER PRESENTED A VIEW OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS PRICE WHICH IS THE MOST SERIOUS WE HAVE HEARD TO DATE. THE GROWING ADMISSION OF OPPOSITION IN AFGHANISTAN MUST BE PAINFUL TO THE AUTHORITIES AS IT WEAKENS THEIR ARGUMENT THAT SOVIET FORCES WERE SENT IN RESPONSE TO CALLS FOR SUPPORT FROM A NEIGHBORING PEOPLE FOR ASSISTANCE AGAINST OUTSIDE IMPERIALISTS FORCES. APPARENTLY, THE SOVIET RUMOR MILL FED BY STORIES SUCH AS THE ONE RECOUNTED ABOVE, AND FURTHER REINFORCED BY THE FOREIGN "VOICES" HAS HAD AN EFFECT IN

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EDUCATING LENINGRADERS ABOUT THE EXTENT AND
PRICE OF THE INVASION AND IN FORCING AGITPROP
APPARATCHIKI* TO ACKNOWLEDGE
SOME OF THE REALITIES. CRUMP

END OF MESSAGE

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