

PERSONS. THEY ARE PRESUMED TO BE CONNECTED WITH THIS MOVEMENT.

26 JAN 1040Z SSG/TM

PRESS

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FRG PAPER: USSR ACTED IRRESPONSIBLY IN SATELLITE INCIDENT

DW2 60955Y FRANKFURT FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE IN GERMAN 26 JAN 78 P 1 DW

(ARTICLE BY "G-N": "IRRESPONSIBLE")

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(TEXT) THE INDIANS AND ESKIMOS AT GREAT SLAVE LAKE IN NORTHWEST CANADA SAW THE SOVIET SATELLITE BURN AND FALL TO THE EARTH IN GLOWING PARTICLES AS IF IT WERE "A FLOWER OF FIRE." THE TOWN YELLOWKNIFE WAS SPARED A DISASTER. THE DEBRIS OF THE SATELLITE--AS FAR AS IT GOT THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERIC VOYAGE--HIT AN UNPOPULATED AREA.

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BURNING UP, HOWEVER, DOES NOT MEAN DISAPPEARING. NEITHER MATERIAL NOR ENERGY GETS LOST IN NATURE. BURNING UP MEANS CONTAMINATING THE ATMOSPHERE. THIS CONTAMINATION WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ENDED WITH THE FIRST TEST BAN AGREEMENT OF 1963. FOR YEARS AFTER THE ATMOSPHERIC TEST EXPLOSIONS, THE WIND WAS BLOWING THE DUST AROUND THE GLOBE BEFORE THE PARTICLES RAINED DOWN GRADUALLY. YOU CANNOT ACCUSE THE SOVIET UNION OF HAVING BROKEN THAT TREATY. BUT USING REACTORS IN SATELLITES CANNOT BE IN ACCORD WITH THE PURPOSE OF THE TREATY. SO FAR NOTHING HAS BECOME KNOWN WHICH COULD NOURISH THE SUSPICION THAT THE SATELLITE CARRIED A BIG LOAD OF ENRICHED URANIUM FOR OTHER PURPOSES THAN THE DECLARED AIM OF PRODUCING ELECTRIC ENERGY FOR ITS RADAR EQUIPMENT. NO HINTS INDICATE THAT THIS LOAD WAS A NUCLEAR WEAPON STATION IN OUTER SPACE--WHICH IS PROHIBITED BY THE 1976 OUTER SPACE TREATY.

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THIS AGREEMENT STIPULATES, HOWEVER, THAT EACH STATE IS LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGE CAUSED IN ANOTHER STATE BY AN OBJECT IT HAS LAUNCHED INTO SPACE. VIEWED FROM THIS ANGLE THE SOVIET BEHAVIOR IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE. MOSCOW HAD KNOWN FOR SEVERAL WEEKS THAT IT HAD LOST CONTROL OF THE SATELLITE. THE AMERICANS NOTICED THIS IN EARLY DECEMBER. THEY INQUIRED IN EARLY JANUARY. THE SOVIET UNION RELUCTANTLY GAVE INITIAL ANSWERS, BUT ONLY TO WASHINGTON, NOT TO THE MANY COUNTRIES WHICH WERE AFFECTED. THESE WERE ALERTED ONLY BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. FOR DAYS ALL THESE GOVERNMENTS HAD BEEN ON SECRET ATOMIC-ACCIDENT ALERT AND HAD CALCULATED THE COURSE OF THE SATELLITE. IN THE END THEY WERE LUCKY. THE GOVERNMENTS CANNOT BE BLAMED FOR TRYING TO PREVENT PUBLIC PANIC AND KEEPING SILENT FOR THIS REASON. BUT THE SOVIET UNION WILL NOT BE PARDONED FOR NOT CONVEYING THE WARNING ON ITS OWN AND FOR PERHAPS EVEN HOPING THAT NOBODY WOULD NOTICE ANYTHING--THUS RISKING A MISHAP TAKING ITS OWN COURSE LIKE DOOM. A GREAT POWER ACTED IRRESPONSIBLY.

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