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11-MAR-2003 15:16 FROM FCO LCC

TO

P. 04/05

rom: on behalf of Tim Barrow  
ient: 11 March 2003 11:15  
o:  
subject: FW: PERSONAL/CONFIDENTIAL: IRAQ/RUSSIA

As requested.

-----Original Message-----

From: 11 March 2003 09:44  
Sent: Tim Barrow  
To: FW: PERSONAL/CONFIDENTIAL: IRAQ/RUSSIA  
Subject:

-----Original Message-----

From: Roderic Lyne Moscow -Conf  
Sent: 10 March 2003 14:55  
To: Peter Ricketts  
Cc: Michael Jay; William Ehrman; Edward Chaplin; Jeremy Greenstock \* UKMIS New York -Conf; Tony Brenton Washington -  
Conf; Paul Lever \* Berlin -Conf; David Gowan Moscow -CONF; John Holmes(Paris) \* Paris -  
Conf  
Subject: PERSONAL/CONFIDENTIAL: IRAQ/RUSSIA

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your fax letter (not to all) and the copy of your New York letter.

Having read the Putin/PM record of 7 March, received here yesterday, I have been asking myself if there is anything to be done at the 11th hour to turn the Russians on our current text.

I regret that I continue to draw a blank. That is to say, I think the Russians would only move if:

- the French moved;
- and/or major amendments were made to the Resolution
- or if the Americans had brokered a bilateral deal so heavily weighted towards Russian interests that it outweighed the downside of splitting from the French position.

I think the Americans have now left it too late. They could and should have been more specific in various contacts over the past few months, and should have tried to lock the Russians into a deal. They have throughout been over-confident about avoiding a Russian veto. There is hardly time; and Putin would have a handling problem domestically if the French and Germans continued to oppose, as it would be obvious that he had sold out.

Ana Palacio "cannot understand why the Russians would veto" our revised Resolution (your letter of 6 March from New York).

Putin's conversation with the PM, most of which I take at face value, shows why.

He doesn't want a breach with the Americans, for well-known reasons; and this explains the repeated Russian encouragement (now from their Ambassador in Washington) to just go ahead and do it in a way which does not implicate Russia in approving war.

But he's not going to put himself out for them, or take risks on their behalf. Why (in Russian eyes, deliberately oversimplified)?

(a) They have not picked up the Russian hints from mid-2001 onwards that there is a price tag attached - the debt, the "Russian economic interests" etc.

(b) They did not cut the Russians in on the discussion. They proclaimed the "axis of evil", which worries the Russians mightily; they deployed their forces; they then demanded acceptance of their Resolution within a tight time-frame and without a smoking gun or trigger. If the Russians buy into this, what else are they buying into? War on N. Korea or Iran? [It's not impossible that the Russians could be brought to subscribe to a tougher approach to proliferation, but they would need to be carried along stage by stage.] So the Russians are very susceptible to the French line of

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argument that the Americans are trying to drag us all down a very dangerous road, for reasons of far Right ideology rather than rationality, and that the time to make a stand is now.

Almost everyone around Putin, as well as (I assume) Chirac and Schroeder, has been dripping anti-Americanism into his ear for a long time. US behaviour has played into their hands. 7 March was not the first time the PM has had to listen to Putin's grievances against the Americans: he had a bucket-load of this at Zavidovo last October, as David Manning warned Condi. Rightly or wrongly (actually wrongly - but it's perceptions which count), the political class here have a crude belief that Russia has not been given its due reward for supporting the Americans on various issues, or for not opposing them on others (eg SDI).

(d) Chechnya: Crude though it may be to our way of thinking, the Russians hoped/expected/assumed that they would be given a blank cheque to do what they liked in Chechnya after 11 Sept - to which add after Dubrovka. Chechnya matters to Putin in the way that Iraq matters to Bush. He started it. It's his mess. We know from sources that the plan to which he is currently working is to get international opinion to buy into his internal settlement and belt up about human rights, while his military make another effort to beat the living daylights out of the rebels before the Russian election campaigns are in full swing in the autumn. The French have spotted this, and Chirac did a dirty deal with Putin in Paris. The Americans have done a bit of a deal (listing 3 Chechen organisations), but they wanted a CHR Resolution last year (so did we) and who's to say they won't support one again this year?

(e) Domestic politics: On Iraq, Putin is not under as much pressure as any Western leader. Nevertheless, the popular course is to oppose the Americans and to oppose war. American hegemony, for obvious reasons, is not a vote-winner in Russia! Putin could deliver the Russian vote with relatively little criticism if everyone else was going that way. But it's much harder for him to justify if the French and Germans stand firm in what 98% of Russia would say was the correct position.

So I don't agree with Colin Powell that the Russians are just playing a game of chicken, though I'd love to be proved wrong. I think their game is "watch the French".

In which case, the only way we are now likely to get them on board would be to drop the authorisation of war and go for something on the lines proposed by the Russian Ambassador in Washington.

If you ended up down that road, you would want to make certain at the Putin level, before committing yourselves, that the Russians were going to vote in favour - and were going to tell their French and German friends that this was their unshakeable decision. Whether this would be sufficient to get you what you wanted from the French is not for me to say. The Russians would accept, without too much hesitation, that it was a precursor to war, as they are convinced that the Americans are going to attack, come what may. Would the French be prepared to be equally obliging?

Up to you to copy further if you wish: I don't have email to David Manning and Matthew Rycroft.

Yours ever,

Roderic

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