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CONTROVERSY OVER GORBACHEV'S INTERNAL POLICIES

SUMMARY

1. A CENTRAL COMMITTEE DECREE HAS GENERALLY ENDORSED THE LINE GORBACHEV TOOK ON HIS RECENT TOUR BUT A PRAVDA EDITORIAL APPEARED TO TAKE ISSUE WITH IT IN SOME RESPECTS. GORBACHEV RE-STATES HIS CONCERNS AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN MOSCOW. SIGNS THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP SHARE THE DOUBTS IN THE MIDDLE LEVEL OF THE PARTY ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF 'GLASNOST' AND DEMOCRATISATION.

DETAIL

2. A CENTRAL COMMITTEE DECREE 'ON THE RESULTS OF COMRADE GORBACHEV'S VISIT TO KRASNODAR AND STAVROPOL' WAS PUBLISHED IN THE CENTRAL PRESS ON 1 OCTOBER, THE FIRST TIME ONE OF GORBACHEV'S DOMESTIC TOURS HAS BEEN MARKED IN THIS WAY. THE DECREE ENDORSES IN GENERAL TERMS THE LINE GORBACHEV TOOK DURING HIS VISIT AND MAKES THE FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS:

A) GORBACHEV'S STATEMENTS DEVELOP THE LINE OF THE PARTY CONGRESS ON THE 'REVOLUTIONARY AND COMPREHENSIVE NATURE OF RESTRUCTURING' AND EXPLAIN HOW IT SHOULD BE APPLIED IN PRACTICE TO VARIOUS SPHERES OF SOCIAL LIFE.

B) THE COURSE OF RENEWAL WAS NOT BEING IMPLEMENTED WITH SUFFICIENT DYNAMISM. 'ALTHOUGH SOCIETY AS A WHOLE WAS FAVOURABLY DISPOSED TO CHANGES RECONSTRUCTION WAS PROCEEDING IN A 'COMPLEX DIFFICULT, CONTRADICTIONARY, AND UNEVEN WAY' RUNNING INTO 'VARIOUS SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS' AND ENCOUNTERING RESISTANCE FROM PEOPLE WHO 'FOR EGOTISTICAL REASONS WERE TRYING TO PRESERVE OUT-DATED METHODS AND PRIVILEGES'. THE DECREE REFERS TO BUREAUCRATIC DISTORTIONS IN THE WORK OF THE APPARAT, INDISCIPLINE AND IRRESPONSIBILITY WHICH WERE ACTING AS A BRAKE ON RESTRUCTURING.

C) THE DECREE CALLS FOR THE BROADENING OF 'GLASNOST' AND 'ALL FORMS OF DEMOCRATISATION' AND THE AIRING AT MEETINGS AND IN THE PRESS OF 'BURNING QUESTIONS' WHICH TROUBLE COMMUNISTS AND WORKERS ETC.

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D) CALLING FOR RESTRUCTURING "FROM BELOW AND ABOVE" THE DECREE NOTES THAT IMPORTANT POLITICAL DECISIONS BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND GOVERNMENT RAN UP AGAINST THE INERTIA OF MINISTRIES RELUCTANT TO SHED OLD HABITS SEMICOLON AND REFERS TO THE OLD SHAMEFUL PRACTICE WHEREBY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS OF CENTRAL ORGANS IS SURREPTITIOUSLY DELAYED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

3. GORBACHEV TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF OPENING AN ALL-UNION MEETING OF THE HEADS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES FACULTIES IN THE PRESENCE OF SIX OTHER MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO, THREE CANDIDATE MEMBERS AND ALL THE PARTY SECRETARIES TO MAKE A SPEECH REHEARSING, ON NOW FAMILIAR LINES, HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE RESISTENCE TO CHANGE. HIS ADDRESS OCCUPIED MOST OF THE FRONT PAGE OF PRAVDA ON 2 OCTOBER.

4. THE PRAVDA EDITORIAL PRINTED ALONGSIDE THE REPORT OF THIS SPEECH ALTHOUGH IT QUOTES A KEY PASSAGE FROM THE DECREE (PARA 2B ABOVE) ADOPTS IN GENERAL A VERY DIFFERENT EMPHASIS SEMICOLON AND IT COULD ALMOST BE SEEN AS A CORRECTIVE TO THE LINE GORBACHEV TOOK IN KRASNODAR.

5. DISCUSSING "GLASNOST" AND DEMOCRACY, PRAVDA STATES THAT CRITICISM HAS A HEALTHY EFFECT AND THE LEVEL OF CRITICISM SHOULD NOT BE LOWERED. "BUT DEMOCRACY IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF THE RIGHT TO CRITICISE BUT ALSO OF OBLIGATIONS. IT IS ALSO A QUESTION OF DISCIPLINE. DEMOCRACY IS NOT PERMISSIVENESS". THE EDITORIAL GOES ON TO COMPLAIN THAT "UNDER THE PRETEXT OF BROADENING DEMOCRACY SOME PEOPLE ARE SPREADING RIDICULOUS RUMOURS, GOSSIPING, SLANDERING HONEST PEOPLE, USING ANONYMOUS LETTERS."

6. ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR OFFICIALS TO GET AWAY FROM PAPER WORK AND MEET THE PEOPLE PRAVDA ADDS THE SURPRISING COMMENT:

"UNFORTUNATELY IN SOME PLACES "GOING TO THE PEOPLE" IS BEING REPRESENTED AS THE MAIN FEATURE OF RESTRUCTURING AND THE BROADENING OF DEMOCRACY, ALTHOUGH THESE VISITS SOMETIMES LEAVE NO PRACTICAL TRACES".

7. THIS LAST PASSAGE, IN AN EDITORIAL PEGGED TO GORBACHEV'S MUCH PUBLICISED TOUR, LOOKS LIKE EITHER VERY CARELESS DRAFTING OR A DELIBERATE PUT-DOWN. THE LATTER SEEMS MORE PROBABLE. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER INDICATIONS RECENTLY THAT SOME IN THE LEADERSHIP WERE NOT VERY HAPPY WITH GORBACHEV'S TOUR, EG:

A) THE FAILURE TO PUBLISH THE SPEECH HE MADE IN STAVROPOL (MY TELNO 1119).

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13.

B) THE FACT THAT THE POLITBURO DID NOT FORMALLY APPROVE THE VISIT AS IT DID GORBACHEV'S PREVIOUS TOUR OF THE SOVIET FAR EAST. (HOWEVER THE EARLIER DOMESTIC TOURS WERE NOT FORMALLY APPROVED EITHER.)

C) IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, PUBLISHED IN PRAVDA OF 2 OCTOBER LIGACHEV, WHILE ENDORSING 'GLASNOST' AND CRITICISM STRESSED THE DANGER OF DEMAGOGUERY WHICH GORBACHEV HAD CONFIDENTLY DISMISSED IN KRASNODAR.

8. ALTHOUGH THE EVIDENCE HAS SO FAR INCONCLUSIVE, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT ANXIETIES IN THE BUREAUCRACY THAT GORBACHEV'S CAMPAIGN FOR 'GLASNOST' AND DEMOCRATISATION MIGHT RISK UNDERMINING THE PARTY'S AUTHORITY ARE SHARED AT A HIGH LEVEL SEMICOLON AND THAT ON HIS RETURN FROM LEAVE GORBACHEV HAS COME UNDER FIRE FROM WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP. IF SO, THIS COULD HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR HIS APPROACH TO THE REYKJAVIK MEETING AND A FUTURE SUMMIT (SEE MY TELNO 1152).

CARTLEDGE

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