



*Chairman*

*We spoke.*

MR HALL

*Mr. Poyall CD? 30/18  
worth reading*

*Moran 30/18*

cc Mr Burke  
Mr Wordsworth

*le. 30/18*

RIFT IN SOVIET LEADERSHIP?

1. My immediate reaction to today's report in the IHT is -
  - a. that there was a row at the Plenum: very probable. The economist, Bogomolov, hinted to Sir B Cartledge that it had been an unpleasant occasion;
  - b. that the row was between Eltsin and Ligachev: quite likely. There is a history of disagreements between them, beginning at the Party Congress, when Ligachev indirectly rebuked Eltsin for supporting a Pravda article condemning the "swampy layer" of officials, an article which Ligachev considered had gone too far;
  - c. that Eltsin also accused Gorbachev of indulging in a "cult of personality": less easy to believe, but possible. Eltsin may have been concerned to show he was not acting as the General Secretary's running dog. He may also have been letting his Quixotic streak get the better of him. Gorbachev is becoming vulnerable to charges of over-promoting himself (and his wife). Eltsin himself is not immune from that charge, but has been fairly quiet recently.
  - d. that the row lay behind Gorbachev's hawing over the Summit: attractive, but not supported by convincing enough evidence as yet. A neat scenario could be made, which goes:

Gorbachev, shaken by the Plenum on 21 October, puts Shultz off, but, after a special Politburo meeting on 25 October (strongly rumoured, according to Moscow Telno 1451), feels strong enough to set the summit plans in motion again. (I note in passing that Gray Hodnett of the CIA said in a meeting with Mr Burke this morning that Gorbachev had remarked to Shultz, "you have only one person to report back to, I have many".)

2. The fate of Eltsin will be of immediate interest. If he has indeed resigned and is only being kept on till after the celebrations, or until a successor can be found, this is a serious blow for Gorbachev. Eltsin was clearly a Gorbachev appointee and epitomised the new type of Party leader. His departure would not only remove a supporter of Gorbachev (in overall terms, despite I(c) above), but it would show the leadership to be less than united and thus encourage the resistance to Gorbachev at lower levels.

*Martin Nicholson*

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