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FOLLOWING PERSONAL FOR RATFORD (AUSS) AND HEMANS (SOVIET DEPT)

UNUSUAL ACTIVITY IN MOSCOW

SINCE MY TELEGRAM 153 OF 30 JANUARY, THE SENSE OF STRAIN SURROUNDING GORBACHEV'S REFORM POLICIES HAS CONTINUED. OBSERVERS SUCH AS KOROTICH BELIEVE THAT THE FORTHCOMING PLENUM ON AGRICULTURE AND THE ELECTIONS (EXPECTED AROUND 14-16 MARCH) WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT TEST. THOUGH WE HHAVE OBSERVED NONE OF THE LONGER TERM INDICATIONS LISTED IN TUR, THERE HAVE IN THE LAST FEW DAYS BEEN A NUMBER OF SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL EVENTS IN TOWN.

A) AT ABOUT 1900 HRS ON 6 MARCH, THERE WAS A MAJOR TRAFFIC JAM FROM MANEZHNYAYA (THE ROAD ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE KREMLIN), TAILING BACK ACROSS THE BOLSHOI KAMENNY BRIDGE TO THE NORTH SIDE OF THE RIVER. SOME DOZENS OF TROLLEY BUSES WERE INVOLVED. BECAUSE OF ROAD WORKS, ULITSA MANEZHNYAYA HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR MONTHS TO ALL EXCEPT TROLLEY BUSES AND DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL CARS. THE FRONT OF THE JAM, AND ITS CAUSED, WERE NOT OBSERVED

B) AT 1400 HOURS ON 7 MARCH, GERASIMOV RANG H OF C TO SAY THAT HE WOULD BE UNABLE TO RECEIVE ME LATER THAT AFTERNOON, BECAUSE SHEVARDNADZE WAS RETURNING FROM VIENNA ON 7 MARCH, INSTEAD OF 8 MARCH AS EXPECTED.

C) HEAVY TRAFFIC IN CENTRAL MOSCOW ON THE AFTERNOON OF 7 MARCH SLOWED UP MOVEMENT, ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE OF THE INFLUX OF PEOPLE AND VEHICLES ON THE EVE OF THE WOMEN'S DAY HOLIDAY.

D) ALSO ON THE AFTERNOON OF 7 MARCH, MOUNTED POLICE WERE REPORTED TO BE CONTROLLING A CROWD OUTSIDE THE CONSERVATIVE IN ULITSA GERTZENA. THE CROWD WAS SAID TO CONSIST OF PEOPLE TRYING TO GET TICKETS FOR A CONCERT BY THE EMIGRE VIOLINIST KREMER, WHO HAS NOT PLAYED IN THE SOVIET UNION SINCE HE DEFECTED IN THE EARLY 1970'S.

E) AT 1800 HRS ON 7 MARCH, A SPRINKLING OF POLICE WITH WALKIE TALKIES WAS OBSERVED ALONG THE ROAD IN FRONT OF LOMONSOV UNIVERSITY, AT THE APPROACH TO ULITSA GERTSENA. THE TWO BRIDGES ACROSS THE MOSCOW RIVER ON EACH SIDE OF THE KREMLIN WERE ALSO CLOSED. THE PRECAUTIONS WERE DOUBTLESS CONNECTED WITH THE BOLSHOI MEETING (PARAGRAPH 3 BELOW) AND MAY HAVE BEEN NO MORE EXTENSIVE THAN USUAL.

2. MEMBERS AND DEPUTY MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO HAVE BEEN ELECTIONEERING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY OVER THE LAST TEN DAYS. THE

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POLITBURO HELD ITS REGULAR MEETING LAST WEEK. THE MEETING WAS REPORTED IN THE PRESS TO HAVE DISCUSSED THE DIFFICULT SUBJECT OF AGRICULTURAL REFORM. UNUSUALLY (BUT NOT UNPRECEDENTEDLY) IT LASTED FOR TWO DAYS (2 AND 3 MARCH)

3. TOO MUCH WEIGHT SHOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE PLACED ON THESE PHENOMENA, EACH OF WHICH IS CAPABLE OF A SIMPLE EXPLANATION. MEANWHILE, TODAY'S PRAVDA AND IZVESTIA REPORT THAT GORBACHEV, VOROTNIKOV, ZAIKOV, RYZHKOV AND BIRYUKOVA (IN THAT ORDER) ATTENDED A FESTIVE MEETING ON THE EVENING OF 7 MARCH TO CELEBRATE WOMEN'S DAY. A NUMBER OF UNNAMED MINISTERS WERE ALSO PRESENT.

4. I AM REPORTING THESE EVENTS IN A RESTRICTED WAY BECAUSE, OF THEMSELVES, THEY ARE NOT A REASON FOR ALARM. IN GENERAL THE ATMOSPHERE (MEDIA, STREETS, MINISTRIES ETC) IS NOT/NOT ABNORMAL, BUT I THINK IT WORTH KEEPING OUR EARS CLOSE TO THE GROUND, PARTICULARLY IN THE RUN-UP TO THE PLENUM.

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