

RESTRICTED
FM MOSCOW
TO DESKBY 281300Z FCO
TELNO 527
OF 281156Z MARCH 89
INFO PRIORITY PARIS, BONN, WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO
INFO PRIORITY EAST EUROPEAN POSTS

MY TELNO 523: PRELIMINARY SOVIET ELECTION RESULTS: FIRST THOUGHTS

SUMMARY

1. FIRST RESULTS SUGGEST THE ELECTIONS WILL GIVE A MAJOR JOLT TO THE POLITBURO STRUCTURE. THE SOVIET ELECTORATE HAVE SEIZED THIS OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE VENT TO THEIR FRUSTRATIONS. GORBACHEV AND OTHERS HAVE A LOT OF HARD THINKING TO DO.

DETAIL

2. THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT YET BEGUN TO PUBLISH THE ELECTION RESULTS SYSTEMATICALLY. SO FAR ONLY A SMALL PROPORTION OF THE RESULTS ARE KNOWN. BUT IT IS ALREADY CLEAR THAT THESE ELECTIONS REPRESENT A MUCH BIGGER POLITICAL UPSET THAN SEEMED POSSIBLE EVEN A FEW DAYS AGO. THE PARTY APPARATUS WILL HAVE HAD AN EMBARRASSING SHOCK.

3. THE MOST STARTLING RESULT SO FAR IS THAT IN LENINGRAD. HERE THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A MASSIVE VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN THE LOCAL PARTY MACHINE. THE FUTURE OF SOLOVYOV, A CANDIDATE MEMBER OF THE POLITBURO, AND SOME OF HIS SENIOR PARTY COLLEAGUES MUST NOW BE IN DOUBT. THE SAME IS TRUE TO A LESSER EXTENT IN THE UKRAINE. HERE THE NEGATIVE VOTE AGAINST SUCH KEY FIGURES AS MASIK PROBABLY REFLECTS IN PART WIDESPREAD POPULAR RESENTMENT AGAINST THE SHCHERBITSKY MACHINE AND THEIR ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE THE ELECTIONS BY THE USE OF SINGLE CANDIDATE CONSTITUENCIES. BUT FEW WILL HAVE EXPECTED THE POEPL TO HAVE SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR DISSATISFACTION SO VIGOROUSLY AND EFFECTIVELY.

4. THOSE RESULTS WHICH WE HAVE SEEN FROM THE BALTIC STATES CONFIRM AGAIN THE INCREASING POLITICAL POWER OF THE POPULAR FRONTS. IN ESTONIA WHERE THE POPULAR FRONT ENDORSED THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, VYALYAS AND HIS COLLEAGUES SAILED THROUGH WITH PROBLEM. ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT VYALYAS GOT 90% OF THE VOTE. IN LITHUANIA ON THE OTHER

HAND TWO OF THE THREE LEADING POLITICAL FIGURES IN THE REPUBLIC WERE DEFEATED BY SAJIDIS-BACKED CANDIDATES, AND THE PARTY LEADER, BRAZSAUSKAS, PROBABLY ONLY GOT THROUGH BECAUSE HIS SAJUDIS OPPONENT WITHDREW.

5. THE ELTSIN VICTORY IS EVEN MORE MASSIVE THAN HIS SUPPORTERS COULD HAVE HOPED. APPROXIMATELY FIVE MILLION OUT OF THE 6.7 MILLION ELECTORATE TURNED OUT TO VOTE FOR HIM. THIS RESULT WAS ANNOUNCED BRIEFLY ON YESTERDAY EVENING'S TV AND THIS MORNINGS PRESS WITHOUT COMMENT, WHICH SUGGESTS THERE IS, AS YET NO AGREED LINE TO TAKE. THE UNPOPULARITY OF THE MOSCOW PARTY APPARATUS WAS FURTHER EMPHASISED WHEN SAIKIN, THE MAYOR OF MOSCOW AND THE ONLY SENIOR FIGURE FROM THE MOSCOW APPARATUS TO CONTEST AN ELECTION, FAILED TO GET THE NECESSARY NUMBER OF VOTES.

6. FOR GORBACHEV THESE RESULTS PROBABLY BRING MIXED FEELINGS. I SET OUT IN MY TELNO 521 SOME OF THE HEADACHES THE ELTSIN VICTORY WOULD CAUSE HIM. THE FAILURES OF THE PARTY MACHINE IN OTHER REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY INCREASE THE FORCE AND URGENCY OF QUESTIONS. GORBACHEV HAS ALL THE AMMUNITION HE NEEDS TO ARGUE THE CASE FOR CONTINUED RADICAL REFORM. BUT THE NEED TO RESTORE PARTY MORALE AND PUBLIC RESPECT FOR THE PARTY MAY NOW SEEM TO HIM EVEN MORE PRESSING. IT IS NOT IMMEDIATELY OBVIOUS HOW THIS CAN BE DONE. THIS MASSIVE VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN THE PARTY ESTABLISHMENT WILL HIGHLIGHT FOR ALL THE DANGERS OF MORE PLURALISM. ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT IT WILL RAISE THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER SOMETHING URGENT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO PLACATE THE CONSUMER.

7. MORE IMMEDIATELY, A WAY HAS TO BE FOUND OF HANDLING RE-RUN ELECTIONS IF THOSE CONSTITUENCIES WHERE NO CANDIDATE GOT THE NECESSARY NUMBER OF VOTES. NEW CANDIDATES WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND. THERE WILL OBVIOUSLY BE PRESSURE, EG IN LENINGRAD, TO PUT FORWARD RADICAL POLITICAL FIGURES WHO COULD FURTHER EMBARRASS THE PARTY MACHINE. RE-RUN ELECTIONS HAVE TO TAKE PLACE WITHIN TWO MONTHS.

BRAITHWAITE

YYYY

DISTRIBUTION

433

MAIN

433

FCO WHITEHALL

SOVIET DEPT [-]

PAGE 2
RESTRICTED

NNNN