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SOVIET INTERNAL: CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM, 25 APRIL

SUMMARY

1. ONE DAY PLENUM HONOURABLY RETIRES A LARGE AMOUNT OF DEAD WOOD FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THIS IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT ON THE BALANCE OF POWER WITHIN THE PARTY. BUT IT WILL LESSEN OPPOSITION TO REFORM IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

DETAIL

2. THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE MET FOR ONE DAY ON 25 APRIL. IT ACCEPTED A REQUEST FROM 110 FULL AND CANDIDATE MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE REVISION COMMISSISON TO BE RELIEVED OF THEIR DUTIES ON THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. ALL THOSE LEAVING THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD PREVIOUSLY RETIRED FROM THEIR OFFICIAL PARTY OR GOVERNMENT JOBS. IN A SHORT OPENING SPEECH GORBACHEV THANKED THOSE DEPARTING FOR THEIR SERVICES. A FURTHER 20 PEOPLE SPOKE, INCLUDING SOME OF THOSE RETIRING.

3. THE PLENUM ALSO PROMOTED 24 CANDIDATE MEMBERS TO FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THE PARTY RULES PREVENT GORBACHEV FROM BRINGING OUTSIDERS INTO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. PLENUMS CAN ONLY PROMOTE CANDIDATE TO FULL MEMBERS. OPPORTUNITIES TO COOPT HIS OWN MEN IN PLACE OF THOSE RETIRING WERE THEREFORE LIMITED. MANY OF THOSE PROMOTED ARE WORKERS ABOUT WHOM WE KNOW NOTHING: OF THE OTHERS, MOST SEEM TO FIT GENERALLY INTO THE GORBACHEV MOULD. THEY INCLUDE VELIKHOV, A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, PRIMAKOV, THE DIRECTOR OF THE IMEMO INSTITUTE, AND FALIN, THE HEAD OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS NOW REDUCED FROM 307 TO 257 FULL MEMBERS. OVER HALF THE CURRENT REGIONAL PARTY FIRST SECRETARIES AND FIRST SECRETARIES OF THE BALTIC AND CAUCASIAN REPUBLICS ARE STILL NOT MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

4. MOST OF THE 110 RETIRED MEMBERS ARE OLD FIGURES FROM THE BREZHNEV DAYS. THEY INCLUDE TWO FORMER POLITBURO MEMBERS, GROMYKO AND SOLOMENTSEV, WHO RETIRED LAST YEAR. THEY ALSO INCLUDE A FEW RECENTLY DISGRACED FIGURES SUCH AS THE FORMER PARTY BOSSES OF ARMENIA AND AZERBAIDJAN DISMISSED LAST YEAR. BUT NONE OF THE DEFEATED AT THE POLLS ARE INVOLVED. THIS IS NOT THEREFORE A POST-ELECTION PURGE -

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*All of whom
came
to
London*

BUT THE REMOVAL OF DEAD WOOD. NEVERTHELESS, THE OLD BREZHNEV HANDS AS LONG AS THEY REMAINED IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE COULD HELP SLOW THE PROCESS OF PERESTROIKA. LAST MONTH'S AGRICULTURAL PLENUM COULD WELL HAVE BEEN AN EXAMPLE OF THIS. THIS RATHER ELEGANT OPERATION SHALL MAKE IT EASIER IN FUTURE FOR GORBACHEV TO GET REFORMS THROUGH THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. IT ALSO ENABLES HIM TO DEMONSTRATE THAT HE IS KEEPING THE REFORM MOMENTUM GOING.

5. THE FULL TEXT OF THE PLENUM PROCEEDINGS INCLUDING GORBACHEV'S CLOSING REMARKS IS TO BE PUBLISHED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT THE MAIN THEME WAS THE PERFORMANCE OF PARTY OFFICIALS IN THE MARCH ELECTIONS. TWO NOTABLE VICTIMS, SOLOVIEV, THE LENINGRAD PARTY CHIEF, AND SAIKIN, THE MAYOR OF MOSCOW, BOTH SPOKE AT THE PLENUM. BUT RUMORS THAT THEY AND OTHERS WOULD SUFFER DEMOTION AT THIS PLENUM HAVE PROVED UNFOUNDED. INDEED ONE OF THE PLENUM'S PURPOSES SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TO REASSURE ELECITON VICTIMS THAT THERE WOULD BE NO PURGE FORM MOSCOW. MEDVEDEV STRESSED AGAIN AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER THE PLENUM THAT THE POSITION OF THESE OFFICIALS SHOULD BE DECIDED BY LOCAL AND NOT CENTRAL PARTY BODIES.

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