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FOR PM'S PARTY

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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT: GORBACHEV'S DOMESTIC POSITION.

1. THERE IS A GROWING FEELING IN MOSCOW THAT PERESTROIKA IS CLOSE TO THE CRUNCH. THE PROBLEMS - ECONOMIC CHAOS, NATIONALIST UNREST, DISCONTENT IN PARTY AND ARMY, POPULAR APATHY OR WORSE - WERE PREDICTABLE, AND PREDICTED. THE UNSURPRISING CONSEQUENCE HAS BEEN A NOTICEABLE DECLINE IN GORBACHEV'S STANDING. NOT ONLY ELTSIN BELIEVES THAT HE MUST NOW DEMONSTRATE, AND IN SHORT ORDER, THAT HE HAS THE PRACTICAL POLICIES TO MATCH THE PROBLEMS, THAT HE CAN GET THEM ADOPTED, AND THAT THEY WILL START DELIVERING THE GOODS. OTHERWISE, PEOPLE INCREASINGLY FEEL HIS EXPERIMENT WILL FAIL, TO BE REPLACED EITHER BY SOME MORE OR LESS UNPLEASANT AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEM, OR BY A SLIDE INTO ANARCHY.

2. GORBACHEV HAS BOUNCED BACK FROM HIS BRIEF AND UNEASY HOLIDAY TO FACE THE CHALLENGE WITH HIS COURAGE, IMAGINATION, AND CUNNING APPARENTLY UNDIMMED. HE HAS GIVEN THE POLITBURO ANOTHER BIG SHAKE-UP. FROM THE REMARKS OF HIS ADVISERS, IT IS ALREADY POSSIBLE TO DEDUCE THE POLITICAL TIMETABLE HE HAS IN MIND. IT IS AN AMBITIOUS BID TO REESTABLISH HIS AUTHORITY, RESHAPE THE PARTY TO HIS IMAGE, AND SHOW THAT HE HAS THE STRATEGY AND THE PRACTICAL POLICIES TO MASTER THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. THIS LOOKS AS FOLLOWS.

A) PARTY PLENUM, 19 - 20 SEPTEMBER
ADVANCES DATE OF NEXT PARTY CONGRESS, TACKLES THE NATIONALITIES PROBLEM, PURGES THE POLITBURO, AND PROMISES FURTHER RADICAL TURNOVER IN PARTY APPARATUS.

B) SUPREME SOVIET SESSION, 25 SEPTEMBER - END OF NOVEMBER.
CREATES ESSENTIAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR ECONOMIC REFORM AND APPROVES NEXT YEAR'S RADICAL PLAN AND BUDGET.

C) THE CONGRESS OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES - DECEMBER.
AS THE COUNTRY'S MOST BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTION, TIDIES UP THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE NEW ECONOMIC LAWS AND ENDORSES THE ECONOMIC AUSTERITY PACKAGE PREFIGURED BY GORBACHEV ON TV ON 8 SEPTEMBER.

D) LOCAL AND REPUBLIC ELECTIONS - DECEMBER-
WEEDS OUT PARTY OLD GUARD BY FORCING THEM TO FACE POPULAR ELECTION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES.

E) THE 28TH PARTY CONGRESS - OCTOBER 1990.
CONSOLIDATES GORBACHEV'S POSITION IN A STREAMLINED MODERNISED PARTY, AND GIVES HIM A MANDATE FOR THE NEXT STAGE OF PERESTROIKA.

THE ECONOMY

3. VIRTUALLY THE WHOLE OF THIS AUTUMN SESSION OF THE SUPREME SOVIET WILL HAVE TO BE GIVEN OVER TO THE ECONOMY. IT IS GORBACHEV'S NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. HE KNOWS THAT CONSUMER PATIENCE IS EXHAUSTED AND THAT PEOPLE BLAME PERESTROIKA AND HIM FOR THEIR PROBLEMS. THE OTHER MAJOR PACKAGE OF LEGISLATION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, LEGAL REFORM AND OTHER ELEMENTS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL FOR A STATE OPERATING UNDER THE RULE OF LAW WILL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR.

4. THE KEystone OF THE ECONOMIC PROGRAMME IS THE PROPOSED LAW ON PROPERTY RELATIONS. IT WILL TACKLE THE CORROSIVE MYTH THAT UNDER SOCIALISM ALL PROPERTY BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE. IT WILL ATTEMPT TO DEFINE, ONCE FOR ALL, THE RIGHT OF INDIVIDUALS, COOPERATIVES, FACTORY WORKERS, MANAGERS, AND OTHERS TO DEVELOP PRODUCTIVE ENTERPRISES IN THE CERTAINTY THAT THEY WILL NOT BE DEPRIVED OF THEIR CAPITAL AT THE WHIM OF THE AUTHORITIES, AS HAS SO OFTEN HAPPENED EVEN IN THE RECENT PAST. THE LACK OF SUCH CERTAINTY HAS SO FAR DETERRED VERY MANY PEOPLE FROM TAKING UP EVEN THE LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES WHICH THE ECONOMIC REFORM HAS OFFERED SO FAR. THE ISSUE WILL PROVE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL, SINCE IT RAISES BASIC ISSUES OF THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM AND THE ROLE OF STATE OWNERSHIP, SOME OF WHICH ARE ENSHRINED IN THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION. THE REACTIONARIES WILL BITTERLY OPPOSE RADICAL CHANGE ON IDEOLOGICAL GROUNDS. THE FATE OF THIS LAW WILL BE CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF GENUINE ECONOMIC REFORM.

5. OTHER LAWS - ON TAXATION, CREDIT, LAND USE, FACTORY AUTONOMY - ARE ALMOST ALL EQUALLY IMPORTANT FOR PROVIDING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND THE MACRO-ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS WITHOUT WHICH THE MORE FLEXIBLE AND PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY GORBACHEV HOPES FOR CANNOT FUNCTION.

6. THESE ARE MEASURES FOR THE MEDIUM TERM. THE SUPREME SOVIET WILL ALSO CONSIDER THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR THE 1990 BUDGET AND PLAN. THESE FORESEE A 50% CUT IN THE MASSIVE BUDGET DEFICIT, AND SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT CUTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEFENCE INDUSTRIES. GROWTH IS TO BE CONCENTRATED IN THE CONSUMER GOODS INDUSTRIES, INSTEAD OF THE CAPITAL GOODS INDUSTRIES AS HITHERTO. BONDS ARE TO BE ISSUED TO SOAK UP THE EXCESS MONEY SUPPLY. SOME ADDITIONAL FUNDS WILL GO TO THE SOCIAL SERVICES AND EXTRA PURCHASES ARE TO BE MADE FOR THE CONSUMER MARKET. CRITICS ARE ALREADY ARGUING THAT SUCH MAJOR STRUCTURAL CHANGES CANNOT BE RAMMED THROUGH SO QUICKLY, THAT UNEMPLOYMENT WILL RESULT, AND THAT THE PALLIATIVES WILL BE INADEQUATE. GORBACHEV COULD FIND IT HARD TO PERSUADE THE ORDINARY PEOPLE THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO WAIT STILL LONGER BEFORE THEY EXPERIENCE THE FULL BENEFITS OF PERESTROIKA. HE HAS NOT PROVED ADEPT AT SUCH PERSUASION HITHERTO.

POLITICAL REFORM

7. FOLLOWING THE WHIRLWIND CHANGES OF THE LAST SIX MONTHS, THE NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE IS LARGELY IN PLACE - CONGRESS OF PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES, SUPREME SOVIET, GORBACHEV AS PRESIDENT. GORBACHEV'S MAIN TARGET IS NOW THE PARTY. HE SAYS FREQUENTLY THAT PERESTROIKA CANNOT SUCCEED IF THE PARTY DOES NOT CHANGE ITS WAYS. FROM THE POLITBURO DOWNWARDS HE WANTS NEW FACES COMMITTED TO HIS VERSION OF PERESTROIKA AND PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISKS IT ENTAILS. HIS TACTIC IS TO FORCE THE PARTY APPARATCHIKS TO ACCOUNT, THROUGH GENUINE PARTY AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, TO THEIR OWN GRASS ROOTS AND TO THE POPULATION AT LARGE. THEY ALREADY HAD A TASTE OF WHAT THIS MEANT IN THE ELECTIONS LAST MARCH. THE FORTHCOMING LOCAL ELECTIONS WILL BE AN EVEN MORE SEVERE TEST. LOCAL PARTY OFFICIALS FEAR THAT, EVEN IF THEY CHANGE THEIR POLICIES AND ATTITUDES, THEY WILL STILL BE REJECTED BY THE ELECTORATE NEXT SPRING. MANY OF THEM BELIEVE THAT THE LOSS OF MORALE, AUTHORITY, AND COHESION FROM WHICH THE PARTY HAS SUFFERED ARE THE DIRECT RESULT OF A DELIBERATE CAMPAIGN BY GORBACHEV TO BREAK THEIR GRIP AND TRANSFER THEIR POWER TO ELECTED AND PUBLIC BODIES. OBJECTIVELY THEY ARE RIGHT, EVEN IF GORBACHEV STILL REGARDS HIMSELF AS A GOOD PARTY MAN. IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT OPPOSITION TO GORBACHEV WITHIN THE PARTY CONTINUES TO GROW.

THE MISSING LINK

8. IF ALL THIS WORKS GORBACHEV SHOULD BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE BY THE MIDDLE OF NEXT YEAR TO PARTY AND PEOPLE THAT PERESTROIKA IS AT LAST MAKING REAL HEADWAY AND THAT HE IS FIRMLY IN CONTROL. HE WILL THEN BE STRONGLY PLACED TO SET HIS STAMP ON THE PARTY CONGRESS, AND SO CONSOLIDATE HIS POLICIES AND POSITION FOR THE YEARS TO COME.

9. IT MAY WELL NOT WORK, BUT FOUNDER ON THE INTRACTABILITY OF THE ECONOMY, THE OPPOSITION OF THE REACTIONARIES, AND THE SULLENNESS OF THE PEOPLE. BUT THE GREATER DANGER TO GORBACHEV'S PLANS PERHAPS COMES FROM THE TURMOIL IN THE EMPIRE. THE AZERBAIJANI BLOCKADE OF ARMENIA IS A THREAT TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE STATE, WHICH A SELF-RESPECTING GOVERNMENT CAN HARDLY IGNORE. SO EVEN MORE - THOUGH ON A SLOWER FUSE - IS THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE FROM THE BALTIC STATES. THE UKRAINE IS BEGINNING TO MOVE, AND IT IS TOO SOON TO SAY WHETHER YESTERDAY'S REMOVAL OF SHCHERBITSKY, THE OLD STYLE UKRAINIAN BOSS, WILL STOP THE ROT. THE POLICIES PARADED AT THIS WEEK'S PLENUM ARE NOT UNREASONABLE. BUT THEY DO NOT CONVINCE. MANY BELIEVE GORBACHEV HAS DONE TOO LITTLE TOO LATE. THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE EMPIRE INTO CHAOS CAN PERHAPS NOW BE PREVENTED ONLY BY THE USE OF ARMED FORCES. BUT EVEN THE PESSIMISTIC FIND THIS HARD TO CONTEMPLATE.

10. NOT SURPRISINGLY, FEARS OF VIOLENT UPHEAVAL CONTINUE TO FEED ON ALL THESE UNCERTAINTIES. IN HIS TV ADDRESS GORBACHEV AGAIN FELT IT NECESSARY TO DENY THE RUMOURS OF COUPS AND CIVIL WAR. AS AN INSURANCE, HE HAS TAKEN STEPS TO BIND THE ARMY AND THE KGB TO HIM MORE SECURELY. WE ARE PROBABLY A LONG WAY FROM CATASTROPHE. BUT ALL IN ALL, THE DEGREE OF UNCERTAINTY, SCEPTICISM, AND ANXIETY IN THIS COUNTRY IS GREATER THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE GORBACHEV CAME TO POWER. MANY PEOPLE NO LONGER FEEL THEY KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING OR WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS. GORBACHEV WILL HAVE TO CARRY THROUGH HIS NEW POLITICAL TIMETABLE WITH EVEN MORE THAN HIS USUAL PANACHE AND SKILL IF HE IS TO RESTORE THEIR CONFIDENCE AND MORALE.

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Pravda (14 Sept. 1988) by Yu. Barulina, who works in the ZIL car factory and is a Hero of Socialist Labour. Again, the same complaints: in her capacity as vice-chairman of the Soviet Women's Committee, and in her own experience, she sees evidence of unhealthy conditions, "close to 3½ million women work in circumstances contrary to the laws on labour protection, amid dust and bad air, with excessive noise and vibration". Women in storerooms carry excessively heavy weights. Machinery is designed with no attention to the women who have to operate it. "I know that I am speaking of what we all long have known. But we were silent for so long, pretending that these problems did not exist." As for women in villages, they "work from dawn to dusk, without days off or holidays, often deprived of the most elementary amenities or qualified medical help". In towns, too, the legal rights even of pregnant women are ignored.

A remarkable article in *Ogonyok* (No. 33, 1988), by Andrei Popov, a doctor, tackles the issue of abortion: he cites an estimate that in the USSR there are 8 million abortions annually, 25 percent of the world's estimated total, "6-10 times higher than in developed capitalist countries". But the real figures are higher still, since the 8 million mentioned excludes abortions outside of the hospital system; the real total could be 50 percent or even 100 percent higher. "Taking into account the unhospitalized abortion, every year not every tenth but every fifth woman of childbearing age has an abortion." Furthermore, the methods are crude, in many instances without anaesthetic. Popov reminds us that in 1936 a law forbade abortions and in effect contraceptives became unobtainable. Abortions were legalized in 1956, but contraceptives remain scarce and inefficient. So "abortions are the basic method of family planning in our country, and in this respect our country is unique even on a world scale."

Finally, here is a sad letter, featured on page one of *Pravda*, 14 August 1988:

My name is Loskutova Galina Sviridovna, born 1947, secondary technical education, machine-minder working on pump-equipment at the Troitsk power station. Three-shift work, with a mobile free day. Fifteen years of such work has ruined my digestive organs, I suffer from insomnia. The children have grown up without me, as their mother is either at work or asleep after the night shift. I have no apartment, I live with my parents, I have no husband. I cannot now leave the power station—my health does not allow heavy work, and for light work there

shops for my 12-year-old daughter, and I myself wear men's shoes I bought for 12 roubles. Food? I am saved by my garden-allotment and by the fact that my father derives advantages from being a war-veteran. Clothes? I sew my own, make-do-and-mend old garments, knit. Manicure and hairdressers are beyond reach. Leisure? Laundry, cleaning, cooking, washing-up, repairs to the apartment. I have never been to a rest home. We have a leisure centre at work, but it is inconvenient for women who are shift-workers and have families.

So it would be wrong to call me a woman, though I am not a man either. Lads who started work after me have long ago been promoted, have become senior machine-minders, even if they were drunkards or had other such qualities. No one takes notice of women, no one promotes them.

I fear for my daughter. Is she too to suffer rudeness in shops, foul language in the street, coarseness in the hospital, and as for the abortion clinic. . . . It is hard to be a beast of burden at the factory and at home. So do something, so that at least our daughters will be women and mothers, and not machine-minders and tractor drivers.

Then—health. Evidence as to the unsatisfactory conditions was available before *glasnost*, and was effectively used by such Western observers as Murray Feshbach and Christopher Davis. As in the case of much else that had gone wrong, what was lacking was a clear statement of the situation as a whole. Death rates had risen, expectancy of life fallen. Why? The appointment of a new and energetic minister, E. Chazov, signaled a new approach. He and others wrote a whole series of articles in 1986-88 drawing attention to the neglect and poor conditions of the health service. This was frankly referred to at the 27th Party Congress (in March 1986). Again, the most expedient way of showing the full effects of *glasnost* is to cite Chazov's speech to the Party Conference, reported in *Pravda* (30 June 1988): "We were proud of our system of health care. Yet we were silent about the fact that in infant mortality we were fiftieth in the world, below Mauretania and Barbados. We were proud that we had more doctors and hospitals than in any other country, but were silent about the fact that in life expectancy we occupy the 32nd place in the world. . . . In Uzbekistan millions of roubles were diverted and stolen, while 46% of hospitals were in buildings without the most elementary sanitary-hygienic conditions." In Kazakhstan the then Party leadership spoke of "happiness and vast creativity", but there were over 60,000 stricken with tuberculosis, a "disease which we have too hastily declared to be liquidated in our country". No, Chazov insisted, the facts have not

tions were adopted, but then came the reply: "Yes, you are right, but today there are other more urgent state interests, and so it is necessary to wait. We waited. And inherited today a most grave [*tyazheli-shuyu*] situation in health care, which will need more than one quinquennium to correct." He demanded a large, much-needed increase in funding. So serious has been the underfunding that, according to his calculations, the share of gross national product devoted to health puts the USSR "in the middle of the seventies" out of 126 countries of the world. He urged a sharp increase in imports of medical drugs. There is a grave shortage still of essential equipment, such as operating tables. Furthermore, because of poor hygiene in the meat and dairy industries and lack of pure water, "1,700,000 people every year in our country suffer from acute intestinal disease". One can hardly be franker and more open than that!

A series of decrees and decisions are intended to improve the educational system. In this connection the press has printed many criticisms of old-fashioned teaching methods, the discouragement of initiative and originality among both teachers and pupils, as well as the poor pay of the teaching profession. One delegate to the 19th Party Conference, a woman named O. Zakharova, from Yakutsk, mentioned, as an important obstacle to *perestroika*, "the absence of independent thought. For decades we were taught in school, in the Komsomol, at work, to live by the principle of blind obedience to the administrative and superior organs, to 'know your place', and 'not to wash dirty linen in public'."

Again, the speech of the minister, Yagodin, to this conference summarizes past errors and omissions with the openness that characterised most of the speeches: "In our country half the schools have no central heating, running water or drains. A quarter of all schoolchildren use the school in two shifts, some in three. . . . In respect to the number of students [in higher education], per 10,000 inhabitants we have in the past ten years slid down from 9th place to the 23rd. Why?" Shortage of money is one reason. Also a prolonged "undervaluation of intellectual labour . . . , formalism, chasing after percentages, authoritarian methods of teaching and upbringing". In common with other countries, the USSR faces the problem of training the nonacademic stream to become skilled workers, good craftsmen: "We must not send [to such training schools] pedagogical no-goods, deprived children. In a socialist country, is this the way to recruit the new members of the working class? This is wrong, immoral, we must stop this! [applause]." Yagodin explained that they were compelled to abandon the history examination "because

on this ideological subject". Next year the subject will be restored. On the national-language question, he agreed with the Ukrainian delegate Oleinik (cited above) that the national language should be equal in status to Russian, that textbooks on all subjects should be available in both languages, that each nation's history, culture, and language must be properly taught and studied. "There is no more important problem today than this."

Supporting Chazov, he stated that 53 percent of pupils are not fully fit, and there should be more opportunities for physical culture. He then ended by asking that education be "liberated", that teachers be allowed to experiment. Each school should have a council, elected by secret ballot, with some representatives of senior pupils and local enterprises, with power to dismiss or prevent dismissal of the headmaster and teachers, and to regulate the school's budget.

A final remark is appropriate. The Soviet media and the Party itself have raised or uncovered many problems, social and political. But the USSR is most certainly not alone in having such problems. Funding the health service is a hot issue in Great Britain, and here too there are complaints of shortage of textbooks, which cannot be taken home as they are needed at school. Or to take another subject altogether: we, too, have parents who push for special advantages for their children; we, too, have a variety of partly hidden business "perks". Nor do we all have proper democratic procedures in political parties. In fact, on the very day I am writing these lines, *The Times* (22 July 1988) reports from Atlanta, Georgia, that "the man from Russian television just managed to keep a straight face as he explained to the Moscow evening news that stage-managed unity prevented the voicing of any dissent at this American [Democratic] party rally". (!)

Glasnost' has given us, and, more important, the Soviet people, a much clearer view of what is wrong with their society, what needs to be put right by the Gorbachev "revolution" (it is he who frequently uses this word). A recognition of the negative aspects of reality is certainly no guarantee that they will be put right. It is, however, a precondition for making the attempt.

After this chapter was completed, I noticed in *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 17, 1988, an article by V. Pavlyuchenko which gave details of party functionaries' salaries. Thus the first secretary of the Belorussian republic is paid 700 roubles a month, the second secretary 500, a *raikom* (district) secretary 340, a party "instructor" 270 (urban) or 200 (rural). The average income of a *kolkhoz* chairman in Belorussia he gives as 600. (It seems that my university pension is roughly double the salary of the first secretary, at the official rate of