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RUSSIAN PARTY CONFERENCE : SPEECH BY GENERAL MAKASHOV

SUMMARY

1. A BITTER ATTACK ON THE EFFECTS OF PERESTROIKA AT HOME AND ABROAD BY ONE OF THE YOUNGER SERVING GENERALS. CAUTION NEEDED BEFORE DRAWING CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS.

DETAIL

2. WE REFERRED BRIEFLY TO THE SPEECH BY GENERAL MAKASHOV IN OUR REPORT OF THE FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS AT THE RUSSIAN PARTY CONFERENCE (OUR TELNO 1137). THE SPEECH IS CAUSING A MINOR STIR. THE MILITARY NEWSPAPER 'RED STAR' COMMENTED ON 21 JUNE THAT IT HAD PROVOKED A WIDE VARIETY OF REACTIONS AND, IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS REQUESTS FROM READERS, IT PUBLISHED THE FULL TEXT OF HIS REMARKS.

3. THE SPEECH IS IN SOME WAYS A RATHER REMARKABLE OUTBURST. THE LANGUAGE IS COLOURFUL AND POPULIST. MAKASHOV CONCENTRATES HIS ANGER ON THE LIBERAL PRESS. HE NOWHERE MENTIONS GORBACHEV OR PERESTROIKA BY NAME. BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT THESE ARE HIS TARGETS. OTHER SPEAKERS AT THE CONFERENCE HAVE MADE BOLDER ATTACKS ON GORBACHEV. THE INTEREST OF MAKASHEV'S REMARKS IS THAT THEY COME FROM A SENIOR SERVING MILITARY OFFICER. THIS POINT WAS PICKED UP IN AN ARTICLE ON THE FRONT PAGE OF IZVESTIA OF 20 JUNE. THE JOURNALIST, NADEIN, SUGGESTS THAT IF MAKASHOV WISHES TO MAKE THESE SORT OF CRITICISMS, HE SHOULD RESIGN HIS COMMISSION. IF HE DOES NOT, NADEIN SUGGESTS THAT HIS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF (IE GORBACHEV) SHOULD DEMAND IT.

4. MAKASHOV IS A THREE STAR GENERAL IN HIS EARLY FIFTIES. HE COMMANDS THE VOLGA-URALS MILITARY DISTRICT. PREVIOUSLY HE SERVED UNDER GENERAL RODIONOV IN THE CAUCUSES - BUT LEFT BEFORE THE KILLINGS IN TBILISI IN APRIL 1989.

5. AT THE THIRD USSR CONGRESS OF DEPUTIES IN MARCH HE SAID THAT TO CONTINUE ONE SIDED DISARMAMENT WOULD BE STUPIDITY OR A CRIME. HE DEMANDED MORE ATTENTION FOR THE ARMED FORCES FROM THE PRESIDENT AND

SOCIETY. HIS LANGUAGE WAS AGAIN COLOURFUL AND CAUSED SOME SHOCK AND AMUSEMENT AMONG HIS AUDIENCE.

6. THE FOLLOWING EXCERPTS WILL GIVE THE FLAVOUR OF HIS LATEST AND MORE CONTROVERSIAL SPEECH :

- RUSSIA IS LIVING THROUGH TROUBLED TIMES. KING LEAR GAVE AWAY HIS KINGDOM TO HIS DISSOLUTE DAUGHTER. WE COULD END UP WITH SUCH A TRAGEDY.
- THE CPSU IS THE ONLY PARTY WHICH CARES MORE ABOUT OTHER PARTIES THAN ABOUT ITSELF.
- THOSE WHO WANT TO DESTROY THE STATE BEGIN BY DEFILING THE ARMY AND THE KGB. ARBATOV, KOROTICH, SOBCHAK AND OTHERS SHOULD GET UP AND STATE CLEARLY THAT WE DO NOT NEED AN ARMY. THEN PEOPLE WILL KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE WHEN WE SUFFER DEFEAT IN A CONFLICT. HISTORY TEACHES THAT CONFLICTS OR WARS ARE ALWAYS POSSIBLE. OTHERWISE, WHY IS NATO STRENGTHENING ITSELF WHEN THE WARSAW PACT NO LONGER EXISTS. A UNITED GERMANY WILL PROBABLY BECOME A MEMBER OF NATO. JAPAN IS BECOMING A POWERFUL FORCE IN THE FAR EAST.
- ONLY FEEBLE-MINDED ACADEMICS CLAIM THAT NOBODY INTENDS TO ATTACK US.
- COMMUNISTS IN THE ARMY ARE ANGERED BY THE POLITBURO AND THE GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO ACT ON BEHALF OF THOSE (IE IN THE ARMY) WHO DEFEND THEM.
- WHILE UNILATERALLY CUTTING THE ARMED FORCES ON THE ADVICE OF ILL-INFORMED SPECIALISTS THERE IS NO NEED TO SPIT ON THEM AS WELL.
- PATRIOTISM TAKES CENTURIES TO DEVELOP. BUT THE GUTTER PRESS AND TELEVISION HAS BEEN DESTROYING IT FOR 2 YEARS. ONLY THE BLIND OR ILL-INTENTIONED CAN FAIL TO SEE THIS.
- THE ARMY IS THE LEAST PROTECTED AND MOST SACRIFICED SECTOR OF SOCIETY. THEY HAVE HAD TO DEAL WITH CHERNOBYL. THEY HAVE DIED IN THE HINDU KUSH AND KARABAKH. THE ARMY IS RUN BY POLITICIANS. ONLY ONCE IN HISTORY DID MARSHAL ZHUKOV SAVE KHRUSHCHEV FROM BERIA AND HE WAS THANKED BY BEING SENT OFF IN DISGRACE. WE HAVE STILL NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET HIM REHABILITATED.
- AS A RESULT OF THE SO-CALLED 'VICTORIES' OF OUR DIPLOMACY, THE SOVIET ARMY IS NOW HAVING TO WITHDRAW WITHOUT A STRUGGLE FROM THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH OUR FATHERS FOUGHT TO FREE FROM FACISM.

COMMENT

7. IT IS NO SECRET THAT SOME GENERALS ARE FEELING BITTER ABOUT EASTERN EUROPE, DEFENCE CUTS AND THE DECLINE IN THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE MILITARY. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF ATTACKS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MILITARY ON THE LIBERAL PRESS IN RECENT MONTHS. BUT

MAKASHOV'S COMMENTS ON EASTERN EUROPE ARE THE MOST OUTSPOKEN WE HAVE SEEN FROM A SENIOR MILITARY OFFICER. IT IS ALSO THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE SEEN ONE OF THE YOUNGER SERVING GENERALS INDULGE IN BLUNT CRITICISM OF THE EFFECTS OF PERESTROIKA.

8. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER MAKASHOV IS REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS FELLOW SERVING GENERALS, AND IF SO - WHETHER THIS PIECE OF SABRE RATTLING FORESHADOWS THE MILITARY TAKING A MORE ACTIVE POLITICAL ROLE. IN MILITARY TERMS, MAKASHOV IS A MAN WITH A FUTURE. IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT HE WOULD NOT HAVE SPOKEN OUT IF HE HAD NOT JUDGED THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF SENIOR OFFICERS AND POSSIBLY HIS SUPERIORS SUPPORTED HIS AIRING OF THE ARMY'S GRIEVANCES IN THIS WAY.

9. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE RATHER KNOCKABOUT TONE OF HIS REMARKS ON THIS OCCASION AND IN MARCH AT THE USSR DEPUTIES CONGRESS SUGGEST HE IS SOMETHING OF AN INDIVIDUALIST. HE WAS ASSURED OF A FAVOURABLE RESPONSE FROM THIS AUDIENCE DOMINATED BY PARTY HARDLINERS AND MAY JUST HAVE THOUGHT THE OPPORTUNITY TOO GOOD TO MISS. ON THE CENTRAL TV EVENING NEWS OF 21 JUNE, A NUMBER OF MIDDLE-RANKING OFFICERS SEEMED ANXIOUS TO DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM MAKASHOV. ONE SAID HE HAD BROUGHT FURTHER SHAME ON THE ARMED FORCES.

10. WE ARE NOT INCLINED, THEREFORE, TO ATTACH TOO MUCH SIGNIFICANCE TO THIS ONE EVENT. BUT WE WOULD NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT A MOOD MAY NOW BE DEVELOPING AMONG THE GENERALS IN FAVOUR OF RAISING THEIR POLITICAL PROFILE, AND SPEAKING OUT MORE FREQUENTLY ABOUT THEIR GRIEVANCES. THEY MAY ALSO HOPE THAT, DURING THE CURRENT CRISIS WITHIN THE PARTY, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO FORM A CLOSER POLITICAL ALLIANCE WITH PARTY HARD-LINERS IN THE HOPE OF BRINGING MORE INFLUENCE TO BEAR ON GORBACHEV.

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