

261532Z
SENT AT REQUEST OF SOVIET DEPARTMENT
COMMENT:

RESTRICTED
FM MOSCOW
TO DESKBY 261430Z FCO
TELNO 1174
OF 261330Z JUNE 90

USSR : POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF THE CPSU CONGRESS

SUMMARY

1. REPORTS THAT GORBACHEV IS TRYING TO GET THE CPSU CONGRESS POSTPONED TO AVOID AN ATTEMPT TO UNSEAT HIM AS PARTY LEADER.

DETAIL

2. IN THE PAST 24 HOURS, WE HAVE BEEN HEARING REPORTS THAT GORBACHEV IS ATTEMPTING AT THE LAST MINUTE TO POSTPONE THE 28TH CPSU CONGRESS, DUE TO START ON 2 JULY. THE REASON IS SAID TO BE HIS FEAR THAT A SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT MAY BE MADE TO REPLACE HIM AS LEADER OF THE PARTY. AT LEAST ONE OF THESE REPORTS COMES FROM A USUALLY RELIABLE AND WELL-PLACED SOVIET CONTACT, WHO SAID HE HAD RECEIVED CONFIRMATION FROM CONTACTS IN A NUMBER OF SOVIET CITIES. HE SAID THAT THE DECISION TO TRY TO POSTPONE THE CONGRESS HAD BEEN TAKEN IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ELECTION OF POLOZKOV AS LEADER OF THE NEW RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY.

3. FURTHER COLLATERAL COMES FROM AN ESTONIAN NEWS SERVICE RELEASE DATED 25 JUNE WHICH QUOTES A NAMED ESTONIAN COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICIAL AS SAYING THAT VADIM MEDVEDEV, THE CPSU POLITBURO MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR IDEOLOGY, HAD TELEPHONED THE ESTONIAN COMMUNIST PARTY ON 25 JUNE TO SAY THAT THE CONGRESS MIGHT BE POSTPONED UNTIL SEPTEMBER. THE REASON WAS SAID TO BE THE 'HARVEST' (SIC). ACCORDING TO THIS OFFICIAL, MEDVEDEV HAD SAID THAT IT WAS THE RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES THAT WERE INSISTING ON A POSTPONEMENT.

4. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD FROM ONE CONTACT THAT LIGACHEV HAS TOLD SOVIET JOURNALISTS THAT HE INTENDS TO CHALLENGE GORBACHEV FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP.

COMMENT

5. MOSCOW IS AN EXCITABLE CITY AND IS BECOMING MORE SO. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE ELECTION OF POLOZKOV HAS SPARKED OFF A NEW SERIES OF RUMOURS ABOUT GORBACHEV'S FUTURE. WERE IT NOT FOR THE SEEMINGLY GOOD EVIDENCE THAT AN ATTEMPT IS BEING MADE TO POSTPONE THE CONGRESS, WE WOULD BE INCLINED TO LEAVE IT AT THAT. BUT IF THIS EVIDENCE IS RIGHT, AND IF IT IS GORBACHEV THAT IS BEHIND THE ATTEMPTED POSTPONEMENT THEN IT SUGGESTS THAT HE IS GENUINELY FEARFUL ABOUT THE TURN OF EVENTS AT THE CONGRESS MIGHT TAKE.

6. THE DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO POSTPONE WILL LIE WITH THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE. IT IS RUMOURED THEY WILL MEET ON FRIDAY 28 JUNE. THIS, IN ITSELF, WOULD NOT BE A CONFIRMATION OF A CRISIS: IT IS NORMAL FOR A PLENUM TO BE HELD ON THE EVE OF A CPSU CONGRESS. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS AN AGEING AND CONSERVATIVE BODY: MANY OF ITS MEMBERS HAVE NOW RETIRED FROM ACTIVE POLITICAL LIFE. ON THE FACE OF

IT, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WOULD BACK A PROPOSAL FOR POSTPONEMENT FROM GORBACHEV AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE HARD-LINE MAJORITY IN THE PARTY APPARATUS.

7. GORBACHEV SAID PUBLICLY ON 23 JUNE THAT HE WISHED TO CONTINUE AS PARTY LEADER. POLOZKOV, IN A PRESS CONFERENCE SUPPORTED HIM IN THIS. FROM POLOZKOV'S POINT OF VIEW THERE MUST BE STRONG ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF KEEPING GORBACHEV WITHIN THE PARTY WHERE HE WOULD BE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE. NEVERTHELESS, IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF GORBACHEV AND POSSIBLY OTHERS STOOD AGAINST HIM. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, THERE WAS MUCH OPEN HOSTILITY TOWARD GORBACHEV AT THE RUSSIAN CONGRESS AND THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PARTY APPARATUS IS NOW SAID TO WANT TO BE RID OF HIM. BUT EVEN IF THERE WERE TO BE A WELL-CO-ORDINATED ATTEMPT TO UNSEAT HIM, WE WOULD ASSESS THAT HE WOULD HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF SURVIVING THIS - ALBEIT WITH HIS CREDIBILITY FURTHER DENTED. A LARGE NUMBER OF THE RUSSIAN CONGRESS VOTED AGAINST POLOZKOV: THERE MUST BE LARGE NUMBERS OF CONGRESS DELEGATES FROM THE SMALLER REPUBLICS WHO WOULD PREFER TO HAVE GORBACHEV RATHER THAN A HARD-LINER RUNNING THE PARTY.

BRAITHWAITE

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ADVANCE	4	
HD/SOVIET D		1
MR TAIT		1
MISS EWAN SOVIET DEPT		1
ASS STAFF CAB OFFICE		1
MAIN	111	
LIMITED		6
SOVIET D		6
KIEV UNIT		1
CSCE UNIT		2
EED		7
JAU/EEB		5
INFO D		11
NEWS D		9
PUSD		26
PLANNERS		3
RAD		1
DEFENCE D		4
SEC POL D		7
UND		6
LEGAL ADVISERS		6
PS		7
PS/MR WALDEGRAVE		1
PS/PUS		1
MR P J WESTON		1
MR TAIT		1
ADDITIONAL	1	
ASS STAFF CAB OFFICE		1
(CHARLTON)		