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28TH CPSU CONGRESS

SUMMARY

1. CONGRESS OPENS ON SCHEDULE. MAIN ISSUE IS FUTURE OF THE PARTY. DECISIONS ON OTHER POLICY ISSUES TEND TO BE TAKEN ELSEWHERE THESE DAYS. WIDELY DIFFERING VIEWS IN THE PARTY ON HOW TO SURVIVE UNDER PERESTROIKA. GORBACHEV'S TASK - TO KEEP THE MAIN NUCLEUS OF THE PARTY TOGETHER AND SECURE A COMMITMENT FROM THE CONGRESS TO CONTINUED REFORM.

DETAIL

2. THE CPSU CONGRESS OPENED THIS MORNING, 2 JULY, AS PLANNED. THE PRE-CONGRESS CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM ON 29 JUNE APPEARS TO HAVE GONE QUICKLY AND SMOOTHLY. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY RECORD OF THE DISCUSSION. BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE ISSUE OF POSTPONEMENT WAS NOT EVEN RAISED. MEDVEDEV HAD BEEN QUITE CLEAR ON 28 JUNE THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE REGIONAL PARTY ORGANISATIONS WERE AGAINST POSTPONEMENT. GORBACHEV MANAGED TO SECURE THE PLENUM'S ENDORSEMENT OF THE REFORMIST DRAFT OF THE NEW PARTY PROGRAMME AND RULES. THESE WILL NOW BE PRESENTED TO THE CONGRESS. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE 29 JUNE PLENUM WAS PRECEDED BY A 90 MINUTE BILATERAL BETWEEN GORBACHEV AND YELTSIN - BUT WE HAVE NO DETAILS.

CONGRESS PROGRAMME

3. THE CONGRESS SHOULD BEGIN WITH A WIDERANGING SPEECH BY GORBACHEV COVERING BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICY. PROBABLY TOWARDS THE END OF THE PROCEEDINGS - THE CONGRESS WILL APPROVE THE PARTY'S NEW PROGRAMME AND RULES AND ELECT A NEW LEADER AND OTHER LEADING PARTY BODIES. JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN BRIEFED THAT IT IS AIMED TO COMPLETE THE CONGRESS IN 10 DAYS. GORBACHEV HAS SAID HE INTENDS TO STAND AGAIN FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. WE DO NOT YET KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT HE WILL BE OPPOSED. LIGACHEV IS THE ONLY ONE WE HAVE HEARD SPEAK OF STANDING AGAINST HIM.

THE FUTURE OF THE PARTY

4. IN THE PAST, PARTY CONGRESSES HAVE BEEN THE ARBITERS OF ALL MAJOR

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POLICY ISSUES. THESE DAYS THE PARTY'S WRIT DOES NOT RUN AS WIDE. THE CONGRESS WILL DISCUSS THE ECONOMY, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND NATIONALITIES ISSUES : THE TONE OF THE DISCUSSION WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY THE COUNTRY'S POLICY MAKERS. BUT REAL DECISIONS ON THESE ISSUES ARE NOW TAKEN ELSEWHERE - BY THE PRESIDENCY, THE GOVERNMENT OR THE SUPREME SOVIET.

5. THIS CONGRESS THEREFORE IS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE PARTY - NOT THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY. ONLY IN THIS SENSE IT IS LIKELY TO BE A WATERSHED. THE PARTY HAS TO DECIDE HOW TO DEAL WITH PERESTROIKA AND THE APPROACHING MULTI PARTY WORLD. IT IS NOW IN CRISIS AND THREATENED WITH SPLITS BECAUSE IT CANNOT REACH AGREEMENT ON THIS ISSUE. TWO STARKLY OPPOSED POLICIES ARE BEING PROPOSED. THE FIRST, WHICH DOMINATED THE RECENT RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS, ADVOCATES A RETURN TO A TRUE LENINIST PARTY - MORE DISCIPLINE, MORE IDEOLOGY AND MORE COMMITMENT. THE SECOND APPROACH IS REPRESENTED BY THE DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM. THEY WANT TO TURN THE PARTY INTO A GENUINE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY WHICH WOULD DROP ITS COMMITMENT TO 'SOVIET STYLE' SOCIALISM, AND MIGHT EVEN FORM AN ALLIANCE WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. BULGARIA WOULD BE THEIR MODEL.

GORBACHEV'S TASK.

6. GORBACHEV'S MAIN TASK AT THIS CONGRESS WILL BE TO FIND SOME COMPROMISE BETWEEN THESE 2 APPROACHES AND BRING THE PARTY THROUGH THE NEXT 2 WEEKS WITHOUT A SERIOUS SPLIT. HE ALSO NEEDS TO SECURE HIS OWN RE-ELECTION AS LEADER OF THE PARTY AND SECURE CONGRESS AGREEMENT TO A POLITICAL PROGRAMME WHICH WILL LEAVE HIS HANDS FREE TO CONTINUE REFORM. THESE WILL BE DAUNTING TASKS. AT THE LAST MAJOR PARTY OCCASION - THE PARTY CONFERENCE 2 YEARS AGO - GORBACHEV DOMINATED PROCEEDINGS AND CONTINUALLY TOOK HIS AUDIENCE BY SURPRISE WITH DRAMATIC NEW REFORM INITIATIVES. TWO YEARS LATER, HE NO LONGER HAS SUCH AUTHORITY. THE 28TH CONGRESS WILL TAKE PLACE UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE RUSSIAN PARTY CONGRESS. THIS WAS DOMINATED BY THE OLD GUARD PARTY APPARATUS WHO SEIZED THE OCCASION TO TURN ON GORBACHEV AND THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP AND BLAME THEM FOR ALL THE PARTY'S PROBLEMS.

7. THIS CPSU CONGRESS TOO WILL BE DOMINATED BY THE APPARATUS. RUSSIAN CONGRESS DELEGATES WILL BE JOINED BY MANY FROM THE UKRAINE, CENTRAL ASIA AND BYELORUSSIA WHO ALSO RESENT THE IMPACT PERESTROIKA HAS HAD ON THEIR CAREERS AND SOCIAL STANDING. GORBACHEV HAS BEEN WIDELY AND PROBABLY CORRECTLY ACCUSED OF NOT PAYING ENOUGH ATTENTION TO THE RUSSIAN CONGRESS AND OF MISJUDGING ITS MOOD. IT IS UNLIKELY HE WILL MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE ON THIS OCCASION. BUT HE IS GOING TO FACE A LOT OF HOSTILITY. THE ATTACK OF COLD FEET LAST WEEK WHEN HE

TRIED TO GET THE CONGRESS POSTPONED, SUGGESTS HE IS APPREHENSIVE AT THE PROSPECT.

8. THERE ARE MANY WHO THINK THAT GORBACHEV SHOULD NOT BE ATTEMPTING THE TASK OF KEEPING THE PARTY TOGETHER AND SHOULD INSTEAD BE PREPARING TO LEAVE IT TO ITS FATE. THESE PEOPLE ARGUE THAT A SERIOUS SPLIT IN THE PARTY BETWEEN REFORMISTS AND DIE-HARDS WOULD BE BENEFICIAL: IT WOULD FORCE GORBACHEV AT LAST TO RAISE HIS REFORMIST COLOURS AND ABANDON THE POLICY OF CONCENSUS WHICH THEY BELIEVE IS HOLDING UP REFORM. GORBACHEV, HOWEVER, HAS MADE CLEAR THAT FOR THE TIME BEING, HE NEEDS THE PARTY AS A FORCE FOR STABILITY WHILE THE NEWLY ELECTED STATE STRUCTURES FIND THEIR FEET. THERE IS MUCH TO BE SAID FOR THIS. BY EXTENSION, GORBACHEV PROBABLY ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE PARTY STILL RETAINS SUFFICIENT INFLUENCE TO BECOME A SERIOUS OBSTACLE TO REFORM IF HE CANNOT KEEP IT WITH HIM.

WILL THE PARTY SPLIT?

9. THE DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM (DP) ONLY CLAIMS THE ALLEGIANCE OF SOME 100 (OR 2%) OF CONGRESS DELEGATES. THERE IS UNLIKELY, THEREFORE, TO BE A MAJOR ORGANISATIONAL SPLIT AT THE CONGRESS ITSELF. BUT THE DP ALSO CLAIM THAT SOME 2 AND A HALF MILLION CPSU MEMBERS ARE PREPARED TO LEAVE THE PARTY IF IT FALLS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HARD-LINERS AT THIS CONGRESS AND JOIN THEM IN A NEW POLITICAL ORGANISATION. NUMBERS OF PARTY GROUPS IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD HAVE ALREADY STATED THAT THEY ARE NOT PREPARED TO JOIN A RUSSIAN PARTY LED BY POLOZKOV. MANY OTHER PARTY MEMBERS MAY SIMPLY DRIFT OUT OF POLITICS - PARTICULARLY IF CONFIDENCE GROWS THAT LEAVING THE PARTY WILL NOT HARM THEIR CAREERS. THE MOST LIKELY PROSPECT THEREFORE IF GORBACHEV CANNOT GET A GENUINE COMMITMENT TO REFORM FROM THIS CONGRESS IS FOR EXTENSIVE FRAYING AT THE EDGES RATHER THAN A CLEAN SPLIT.

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