

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9697
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 29172

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET LEADERSHIP: NOVEMBER 27 CHANGES
MARK MAJOR PLUS FOR BREZHNEV

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE NET EFFECT OF THE LEADERSHIP CHANGES
MADE BY THE NOVEMBER 27 CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM IS
TO INCREASE BREZHNEV'S ALREADY CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL
STRENGTH IN THE TOP LEADERSHIP BODIES. A TRUSTWORTHY
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BREZHNEV LIEUTENANT, CHERNENKO, HAS BECOME A FULL POLIT-
BURO MEMBER. A CLOSE COLLEAGUE, TIKHONOV, HAS BECOME
A CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER AND PROBABLY WILL SOON
BECOME THE SOLE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS. MAZUROV, A RELATIVELY YOUTHFUL FULL
POLITBURO MEMBER WITH CAREER TIES CLOSER TO KOSYGIN
THAN TO BREZHNEV, HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THAT POSITION

AND UNDOUBTEDLY WILL SHORTLY BE REMOVED AS FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. IF, AS SEEMS LIKELY ON THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE, NEW CENTRAL CONFIDENTIAL

COMMITTEE SECRETARY GORBACHEV TAKES OVER KULAKOV'S OLD SECRETARIAT JOB AS OVERSEER OF AGRICULTURE, ANY RESIDUAL INFLUENCE THAT KULAKOV MAY HAVE POSTHUMOUSLY HAD IN THE CC AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT WILL BE REDUCED, OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF EACH OF THESE CHANGES, AS WELL AS OF GEORGIAN FIRST SECRETARY SHEVARDNADZE'S PROMOTION, IS GIVEN BELOW. END SUMMARY

1. CHERNENKO'S RISE. WE ARE INCLINED TO SEE CHERNENKO'S ELEVATION TO FULL POLITBURO MEMBERSHIP AS A RECOGNITION OF THE INFLUENCE WITHIN THE TOP LEADERSHIP GROUP THAT HE HAS ENJOYED FOR SOME TIME. WE CAN RECALL, FOR EXAMPLE, SEVERAL EPISODES ON TV IN WHICH CHERNENKO WAS FIRST SHOWN NEXT TO BREZHNEV AND THEN SHOWN MOVING AWAY TO HIS PROPER PROTOCOL POSITION. SEVERAL ASPECTS OF CHERNENKO'S RAPID RISE TO THE TOP MERIT ATTENTION:

-- WHILE KULAKOV USED TO BE THE LEADER BELOW 70 BEST POSITIONED TO RISE FURTHER, CHERNENKO HAS NOW MOVED INTO THAT SAME POSITION BY VIRTUE OF HIS MEMBERSHIP CONFIDENTIAL

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IN THE FULL POLITBURO AS WELL AS IN THE SECRETARIAT; THE ONLY OTHERS IN BOTH KEY BODIES ARE BREZHNEV, KIRILENKO, AND SUSLOV;

-- CHERNENKO'S PUBLIC ACTIVITIES SINCE THE 25TH CONGRESS HAVE INCLUDED FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AS EVIDENCED BY HIS HEADING CPSU DELEGATIONS TO DENMARK AND GREECE AND HIS PARTICIPATION IN WARSAW PACT AFFAIRS (MOST RECENTLY AS A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET DELEGATION TO THE JUST-CONCLUDED POLITICAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING); HIS POSSIBLE ROLE AS A CONFIDENTIAL ADVISOR TO LEONID IL'ICH ON FOREIGN POLICY, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE LATTER'S UNCERTAIN HEALTH, COULD BE INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT (IN THIS CONNECTION, WE RECALL THAT HIS SPEECH TO THE GREEK CP MEETING LAST MAY, AS SUMMARIZED IN PRAVDA OF MAY 17, PRESENTED A SIMPLISTIC VIEW OF THE GLORIES OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM AND THE EVILS OF "IMPERIALISM");

-- IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SOME OF THE SENIOR PARTY OFFICIALS IN THE PROVINCES WHO DREAM ABOUT MOVING TO BIGGER THINGS IN MOSCOW MAY PRIVATELY RESENT CHER-

NENKO'S QUICK RIDE TO THE TOP ON BREZHNEV'S COATTAILS,
AND THAT SUCH RESENTMENT COULD GROW.
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2. TIKHONOV'S PROMOTION. TIKHONOV'S BEING NAMED A
CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER REMOVES AN ANOMOLY WHICH
HAS EXISTED EVER SINCE HE WAS APPOINTED FIRST DEPUTY
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IN L976. ACCORD-
ING TO THE PERSONNEL PRACTICES OF THE BREZHNEV YEARS,
THE LATTER JOB SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT TIKHONOV A HIGH

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PARTY POSITION AS WELL. WE DO NOT KNOW WHY IT HAS
TAKEN OVER TWO YEARS FOR THIS TO HAPPEN, BUT, COUPLED
WITH MAZUROV'S "RETIREMENT," TIKHONOV'S PROMOTION
CLEARLY MARKS A PLUS FOR BREZHNEV AND HIS SUPPORTERS
AS WELL AS A MINUS FOR KOSYGIN. AT AGE 73, HOWEVER,

TIKHONOV CAN HARDLY BE CONSIDERED HEIR-APPARENT TO KOSYGIN. WITH MAZUROV GONE, THE QUESTION OF A SUCCESSOR TO KOSYGIN SEEMS CONSPICUOUSLY OPEN.

3. MAZUROV'S REMOVAL. AT THE LEAST, THE OFFICIAL
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EXPLANATION FOR MAZUROV'S LEAVING OFFICE--FOR HEALTH REASONS AND "IN CONNECTION WITH HIS OWN REQUEST"--INDICATES THAT HE IS NOT LEAVING IN OFFICIAL DISGRACE. WE HAVE NO RECENT EVIDENCE CONCERNING HEALTH, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE RUMORS LAST YEAR, IN CONNECTION WITH HIS LENGTHY ABSENCE FROM THE PUBLIC EYE, THAT HE WAS IN POOR HEALTH. HOWEVER, THE STRONG CRITICISM LEVELED BY BREZHNEV IN HIS SPEECH TO THE NOVEMBER 27 CC PLENUM AT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING THE ECONOMY SUGGESTS THAT MAZUROV'S PERFORMANCE MAY HAVE BEEN SEEN AS GROSSLY INADEQUATE.

4. WE HAVE ONE BIT OF EVIDENCE THAT KOSYGIN HIMSELF WAS STRONGLY CRITICIZED IN CONNECTION WITH CONSIDERATION OF THE 1978 AND 1979 PLANS AND BUDGETS. FOLLOWING THE SOMEWHAT ACRIMONIOUS MEETING BETWEEN KOSYGIN AND CODEL RIBICOFF/BELLMON NOVEMBER 16, A WELL-PLACED SOVIET OFFICIAL ATTEMPTED TO SOOTHE THINGS OVER BY TELLING ONE OF THE SENATORS THAT EARLIER THAT DAY KOSYGIN WAS IN A SOUR MOOD BECAUSE HE HAD ATTENDED A MEETING (PRESUMABLY OF THE POLITBURO, WHICH MEETS ON THURSDAYS) ON THE PLAN AND BUDGET AT WHICH HE WAS REPEATEDLY ATTACKED. IT MAY BE THAT BREZHNEV AND HIS SUPPORTERS, UNHAPPY WITH KOSYGIN'S APPROACH TO ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT, CHOSE TO REMEDY THE SITUATION BY REMOVING MAZUROV AND SIMULTANEOUSLY PROMOTING TIKHONOV. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN A CONVENIENT WAY TO UNDERCUT KOSYGIN AND STRENGTHEN BREZHNEV'S INFLUENCE, WITHOUT THE IMAGE OF SERIOUS POLITICAL DISARRAY THAT COULD RESULT FROM A DIRECT MOVE AGAINST KOSYGIN.

5. SHEVARDNADZE'S RISE. GIVEN AZERBAIDZHANI PARTY BOSS ALIYEV'S STATUS AS A CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER, SHEVARDNADZE'S UNEXPECTED PROMOTION TO CANDIDATE
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POLITBURO MEMBERSHIP RUNS AGAINST THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM THAT ONLY ONE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP POSITION IS AVAILABLE TO THE TRANSCAUCASIAN REPUBLICS OF AZERBAIDZHAN, ARMENIA AND GEORGIA. WE SUSPECT THAT THIS MOVE

RELATES MORE TO THE MURKY POLITICAL SITUATION IN GEORGIA THAN TO THE NATIONAL LEADERWHIP EQUATION, AND PROBABLY WAS CALCULATED TO STRENGTHEN SHEVARD-NADZE'S HAND IN COPING WITH LOCAL PROBLEMS. ONE THING SEEMS CLEAR: THIS NEW HONOR FOR THE GEORGIAN PEOPLE WILL BE BAD NEWS FOR THE ABKHAZI NATIONALISTS WHO APPARENTLY ARE STILL STRUGGLING TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM THE "GEORGIAN YOKE."

6. GORBACHEV'S MOVE TO MOSCOW. SINCE STAVROPOL PARTY FIRST SECRETARY GORBACHEV'S BACKGROUND IS PRIMARILY IN THE AGRICULTURAL FIELD, AND HIS CURRENT CLAIM TO FAME SEEMS TO BE FOR THE STELLAR AGRICULTURAL PERFORMANCE OF HIS REGION, IT SEEMS LIKELY HE WILL FILL KULAKOV'S POSITION IN THE SECRETARIAT AS OVERSEER OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IN CONNECTION WITH HIS APPOINTMENT AS CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY:

-- AT THE TENDER AGE OF 47, HE BECOMES THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP;

-- IF HE DOES TAKE OVER THE AGRICULTURAL PORTFOLIO IN THE SECRETARIAT, HIS MOVE TO MOSCOW ADDS SOME CREDENCE TO THE THEORY THAT KULAKOV WAS IN POLITICAL DISFAVOR JUST PRIOR HIS DEATH LAST JULY; THAT KULAKOV'S LONG-TIME COLLEAGUE AND SUCCESSOR AS HEAD OF THE CC AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT KARLOV WAS NOT MOVED UP TO THE SECRETARIAT COULD MEAN THAT KARLOV WAS VIEWED AS

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UNACCEPTABLE FOR THAT JOB BECAUSE OF HIS LONG
ASSOCIATION WITH KULAKOV. TOON

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