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f.a.

MY TELNO 200 : KONSTANTIN USTINOVICH CHERNENKO.

1. CHERNENKO IS 72 YEARS OLD, STOCKY, SLIGHTLY HUNCHBACKED, WITH A SHOCK OF WHITE HAIR AND A RUDDY COMPLEXION. HE WAS SERIOUSLY ILL LAST YEAR WHEN HE WAS ABSENT FOR TWO MONTHS IN THE SPRING MISSING ENTER ALIA THE MAY DAY PARADE SEMICLN THERE WERE REPORTS THEN THAT HE WAS TERMINALLY ILL. BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE MADE A GOOD RECOVERY AND IS CONSTITUTIONALLY PROBABLY MORE ROBUST THAN WERE ANDROPOV OR BREZHNEV IN THEIR LATER YEARS.

2. HE IS ESSENTIALLY A MAN OF THE PARTY APPARATUS. FEW WESTERN POLITICIANS HAVE MET HIM AND HIS PERSONALITY AND ATTRIBUTES MUST BE SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY TO THE SOVIET PUBLIC AS WELL. HE IS A VERY POOR PUBLIC SPEAKER WITH A RAPID NERVOUS STUMBLING DELIVERY WHICH MAKES HIM AT TIMES BARELY COMPREHENSIBLE. HE IS ON THE FACE OF IT UNLIKELY TO BE AN IMPRESSIVE INTERLOCUTOR FOR WESTERN STATESMEN.

3. BORN IN 1911 OF A PEASANT FAMILY IN A VILLAGE IN KRASNOYARSK REGION HIS EDUCATION WAS PROBABLY LIMITED UNTIL HE GRADUATED IN HIS EARLY 40S FROM A PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE IN KISHINEV ( MOLDAVIA). HE BEGAN HIS PARTY CAREER EARLY AT THE AGE OF 18 AS HEAD OF THE PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT OF A DISTRICT KOMSOMOL



AS HEAD OF THE PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT OF A DISTRICT KOMSOMOL ORGANISATION. HE DID NOT SEE ACTIVE SERVICE IN THE WAR ( THOUGH OF AN AGE TO DO SO ) BUT WORKED AS A REGIONAL PARTY SECRETARY, THEN ATTENDED THE HIGHER PARTY SCHOOL. IN 1950 HE BEGAN A LONG AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH BREZHNEV WHEN HE WORKED IN MOLDAVIA AS HEAD OF THE PARTY PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT WHEN BREZHNEV WAS PARTY LEADER THERE. SUBSEQUENTLY HE WORKED AS HEAD OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDIUM WHEN BREZHNEV WAS PRESIDENT (1960-1964) AND HEAD OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE GENERAL DEPARTMENT (1965-1982) WHEN BREZHNEV WAS GENERAL SECRETARY. IN THOSE YEARS HE ACTED IN EFFECT AS SENIOR AIDE TO BREZHNEV AND IT WAS

ENTIRELY DUE TO THE LATTER'S INFLUENCE THAT HE WAS PROMOTED CANDIDATE (1977) AND THEN FULL MEMBER OF THE POLITBURO (1978).

4. WHEN BREZHNEV DIED IN NOVEMBER 1982 CHERNENKO WAS ANDROPOV'S MAIN RIVAL FOR THE SUCCESSION. WHEN CHERNENKO WAS REJECTED IT WAS GENERALLY EXPECTED THAT HIS POLITICAL CAREER WOULD NOT LONG SURVIVE THE DEATH OF HIS PATRON. HOWEVER ALTHOUGH CHERNENKO'S INFLUENCE DECLINED AND HE BECAME LESS ACTIVE HE EVIDENTLY RETAINED SUPPORT WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP AND WITH HIS RETURN TO BETTER HEALTH THERE WERE ALSO SMALL SIGNS THAT HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES WERE ALSO IMPROVING.

5. CHERNENKO IS A FAR LESS IMPRESSIVE FIGURE THAN ANY OF HIS PREDECESSORS AS SOVIET PARTY LEADER. HIS CAREER HAS BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO ORGANISATION, ADMINISTRATION AND PROPAGANDA. HE HAS VIRTUALLY NO DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND VERY LITTLE EXPERIENCE OF ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT HE HAS BEEN CHOSEN ON GROUNDS OF SENIORITY RATHER THAN BECAUSE OF ANY QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP. THERE MAY BE OF COURSE MORE TO HIM THAN HAS SO FAR MET THE EYE.

6. LITTLE IS KNOWN OF CHERNENKO'S ATTITUDES AND VIEWS ON POLITICAL ISSUES. HE HAS PUBLISHED MANY ARTICLES AND SPEECHES BUT THEY ARE UNREVEALING AND SHOW NO SIGNS OF ORIGINALITY. HE IS CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE BREZHNEV ERA AND POLICIES OF ' ' DETENTE ' ' AND THE PEACE PROGRAMME. REFERENCES IN HIS SPEECHES TO EAST - WEST RELATIONS HAVE TENDED TO BE RELATIVELY RESTRAINED AND CONCILIATORY IN TONE. HE ATTENDED WITH BREZHNEV THE SIGNING OF THE FINAL ACT IN HELSINKI IN 1975 AND HAS WRITTEN A NUMBER OF ROUTINE ARTICLES ABOUT THE CSCE.

7. IN DOMESTIC POLICY HIS MAIN PREOCCUPATION HAS BEEN THE



7. IN DOMESTIC POLICY HIS MAIN PREOCCUPATION HAS BEEN THE FUNCTIONING OF THE STATE, PARTY AND PROPAGANDA MACHINE AND THE CLOSE MONITORING OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES, E G THROUGH CAREFUL STUDY OF LETTERS TO THE AUTHORITIES ( FOR WHICH PURPOSE HE SET UP A NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE DEPARTMENT ). SPEAKING ON ECONOMIC MATTERS HE HAS OFTEN STRESSED THE NEED TO SATISFY CONSUMER NEEDS BUT THIS MAY BE MORE A REFLECTION OF HIS CONCERN ABOUT PUBLIC MOODS THAN A GUIDE TO HIS VIEWS ON ECONOMIC PRIORITIES. NOTHING IN HIS BACKGROUND OR WRITINGS SUGGESTS A STRONG INTEREST IN ECONOMIC REFORM ALTHOUGH HE HAS ECHOED THE ANDROPOV LINE ON THE NEED TO RESTRUCTURE THE ECONOMIC MECHANISM AND ENDORSED THE CURRENT ECONOMIC EXPERIMENT.

8. HE IS UNLIKELY TO ABANDON THE ANROPOVIAN LINE ON ORDER AND DISCIPLINE WHICH PRODUCED SOME IMPROVEMENT IN ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE. BUT CHERNENKO IS CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE COMFORTABLE BREZHNEV POLICY OF " STABILITY OF CADRES " AND IN ELECTING HIM GENERAL SECRETARY MANY SENIOR OFFICIALS WILL BE HOPING THAT THE RATE OF REMOVAL OF THE ELDERLY AND INEFFICIENT WILL NOW RESUME A MORE DECOROUS PACE.

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