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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 566 OF 24TH APR 85

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, BONN, PARIS, UKDEL NATO,
MODUK, ROUTINE EAST EUROPEAN POSTS, HELSINKI

INFO SAVING PEKING, TOKYO, UKMIS NEW YROK, ATHENS, BRUSSELS,
COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN, THE HAGUE, LUXEMBOURG, ROME, UKREP BRUSSELS

MY TELNO 564

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM OF 23 APRIL: LEADERSHIP CHANGES

1. THE THREE PROMOTIONS TO FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE POLITBURO REPORTED IN MY TELNO 553 HAVE INCREASED ITS SIZE FROM 10 TO 13 AND REDUCED THE AVERAGE AGE FROM 67 TO 65. IT IS THE BIGGEST CHANGE MADE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE POLITBURO ON ONE OCCASION SINCE 1973. BOTH THE NUMBER AND THE NATURE OF THE CHANGES INDICATE THAT GORBACHEV HAS A FIRM GRIP ON THE LEADERSHIP.
2. THE TRANSFER OF CHEBRIKOV (61) FROM CANDIDATE TO FULL MEMBER MEANS THAT THE KGB IS AGAIN REPRESENTED IN THE POLITBURO AFTER A GAP SINCE 1982 WHEN ADROPOV WAS APPOINTED A CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY. THE ELECTION OF MARSHAL SOKOLOV (73) AS A CANDIDATE MEMBER MEANS THAT THE ARMED FORCES ARE AGAIN REPRESENTED IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP ALTHOUGH AT A LOWER LEVEL THAN THE KGB. HOWEVER SOKOLOV COULD BE FURTHER PROMOTED AT NEXT YEAR'S CONGRESS IN ORDER TO RESTORE THE BALANCE.
3. LIGACHEV (64) AND RYZHKOV (55) HAVE BEEN PROMOTED DIRECTLY TO FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE POLITBURO, BYPASSING THE CANDIDATE STAGE. THIS IS UNUSUAL BUT NOT UNPRECEDENTED. THE NUMBER OF SENIOR PARTY SECRETARIES IS THEREBY DOUBLED FROM 2-4. LIGACHEV

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IS LIKELY TO RETAIN HIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PARTY ORGANISATION AND CADRES. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE COULD ALSO ACQUIRE THE IMPORTANT IDEOLOGICAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO BUT THIS WOULD BE AN UNUSUAL AND ONEROUS COMBINATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES. RYZHKOV'S RISE IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN REMARKABLY RAPID. WHEN HE BECAME A CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY IN NOVEMBER 1982 HE HAD NEVER PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS A PARTY OFFICIAL. HE CURRENTLY HAS GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION AND WITH HIS ENHANCED STATUS WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DECISIONS ABOUT ECONOMIC REFORM. LIGACHEV AND RYZHKOV HAVE LEAP-FROGGED DOLGIKH WHO REMAINS A CANDIDATE MEMBER AND SECRETARY. THE THREE NEW POLITBURO MEMBERS CHEBRIKOV, LIGACHEV AND RYZHKOV WERE ALL BROUGHT INTO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP UNDER ANDROPOV.

4. NIKONOV (56) HAS EVIDENTLY BEEN APPOINTED AS CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE. HE IS AN UNEXPECTED CHOICE BUT IN VIEW OF GORBACHEV'S FORMER RESPONSIBILITIES IS PRESUMABLY WELL KNOWN TO THE NEW GENERAL SECRETARY.

5. THE DESIGNATION OF TIKHONOV TO DELIVER THE REPORT ON THE FIVE YEAR AND LONG TERM PLAN AT NEXT YEAR'S CONGRESS INDICATES ON THE FACE OF IT THAT HE IS EXPECTING TO CONTINUE TO HEAD THE GOVERNMENT UNTIL AFTER THE CONGRESS AND THEREFORE WELL INTO HIS 81ST YEAR. HOWEVER THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS RESIGNATION BEFORE THE CONGRESS CANNOT BE RULED OUT. KOSYGIN WAS DESIGNATED TO SPEAK AT THE 26TH PARTY CONGRESS BUT RESIGNED AND SUBSEQUENTLY DIED BEFORE IT WAS HELD.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES.

SUTHERLAND

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