

Gorbachëv: New Man in the Kremlin

Archie Brown

In the 60 years between the spring of 1922 when Stalin became general secretary of the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party and the spring of 1982, the Soviet Union had just three general secretaries—Stalin himself, Nikita Khrushchev, and Leonid Brezhnev. In the past three years, four men have held that office—Brezhnev in the last months of his 18-year reign, Yuriy Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and now Mikhail Gorbachëv. If Gorbachëv lives as long as any one of his five predecessors, he can expect to be still at the helm of the Soviet Communist Party and state at the beginning of the next millenium. For that and other reasons, the choice of Gorbachëv is of exceptional significance for the Soviet Union and—given the country's role in international affairs—for the rest of the world. There is every possibility that Gorbachëv will in time become the most powerful Soviet leader since Khrushchev, though his political style is likely to be very different and his policies more carefully thought through.

Before going on to discuss Gorbachëv's path to the top, the speed of his advance, and his attributes, outlook, and priorities, it may be useful to begin by noting those respects in which Gorbachëv's election as general secretary corresponds with Soviet tradition and the respects in which it is a novel succession.

Similarities to Previous Successions

In several ways, the choice of Gorbachëv fits the pattern of elevations to the Soviet leadership. Starting with Lenin, there have been only seven undisputed top leaders in Soviet history.¹ All six of Lenin's successors were at the time they attained the top leadership position already full members of the Politburo and secretaries of the Central Committee.² That applies to Stalin who was already *general secretary* at the time of Lenin's death in

1924, though it was only *after* Lenin's death that he was able to consolidate the power of the general secretaryship to the extent that it became the top job. Chernenko's death on March 10, 1985, left only two Soviet politicians who were full members of the Politburo and secretaries of the Central Committee—Gorbachëv himself, who had held such joint membership since 1980, and Grigoriy Romanov, who had combined membership of the Politburo with that of the CC Secretariat only since 1983, even though he had been in the Politburo longer than Gorbachëv.

Second, career profile, as well as position at the time the vacancy in the general secretaryship occurs, is important, and it is of particular relevance that a serious candidate should have experience of party secretaryships at various levels of the hierarchy, including the regional and (as follows from the point made in the previous paragraph) the Central Committee level. The economic experience gained thereby should ideally include acquaintance with agriculture, and some foreign policy experience is an additional asset. Every general

¹ I am excluding Georgiy Malenkov, for though in 1953–54 he was accorded a higher protocol ranking than Khrushchev, it is not clear that even then he wielded greater political power than Khrushchev, and by 1955 Khrushchev had quite evidently established a superior authority to him.

² I noted this and other prerequisites of a potential general secretary while Brezhnev was still alive. See Archie Brown, "Leadership Succession and Policy Innovation," in Archie Brown and Michael Kaser, Eds., *Soviet Policy for the 1980s*, London, Macmillan, and Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 232–35.

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Mikhail Gorbachëv addressing a major party ideological conference on December 10, 1984.

—TASS from SOVFOTO.

secretary thus far has had his institutional base in the party apparatus and has spent a greater proportion of his career in party work than in any other branch of political activity. Even Andropov is no exception to this rule, though his Ministry of Foreign Affairs and KGB experience made him the nearest thing to one. Gorbachëv had a model rise through the party hierarchy, and like Khrushchev and Brezhnev before him, he had significant knowledge of agriculture—indeed, greater expertise in this realm than any of his predecessors.

Gorbachëv's foreign policy experience before coming to the general secretaryship is not as great as was Brezhnev's, who as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from May 1960 until July 1964 had extensive contacts with foreign statesmen. Nor is his knowledge of the international scene likely initially to be as great as was Andropov's, who from 1951 until 1982 served successively in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as head of one of the foreign departments of the Central Committee (Liaison with Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist Countries), and as chairman of the KGB. Nor, for that matter, has Gorbachëv had the opportunity to take part in talks with an American president as

Chernenko had when he participated in the Brezhnev-Carter summit meeting in Vienna in 1979.³ Yet Gorbachëv, too, has had the opportunity to gain some foreign policy experience in addition to that which all Politburo members acquire simply by virtue of regularly attending Politburo meetings at which foreign relations and international issues figure prominently on the agenda.⁴ He undertook an eight-day visit as head of a Soviet delegation to Canada in May 1983 in addition to his earlier lower profile visits to various Western countries and to East European ones. When Chernenko became general secretary, Gorbachëv succeeded him as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet of the Union of the USSR Supreme Soviet. In that capacity, he made a week-long visit to Britain (cut short by

³Not that Chernenko appears to have contributed much. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977–81*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983, p. 343; and (for more explicit comment on this) Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, New York, Bantam Books, 1982, p. 246.

⁴For further elaboration of this point, see Archie Brown, "The Foreign Policy-Making Process," in Curtis Keeble, Ed., *The Soviet State: The Domestic Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy*, Aldershot, Hampshire, Gower for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1985, pp. 191–216, especially pp. 200–203.

a day because of the death of Marshal Dmitriy Ustinov) in December 1984, which confirmed his grasp of international issues and possession of diplomatic skills.

Third, this latest succession conforms to the general pattern in terms of the nationality of the party leader. Non-Russians in the top leadership team are at a disadvantage in the general secretaryship stakes. There are still, after all, more Russians in the Soviet Union than all other nationalities put together, and they are disproportionately well represented in the all-Union Central Committee apparatus. Gorbachëv, like all of his predecessors except one, is a Russian; Stalin remains the only exception to that rule.

Fourth, and perhaps more surprising, at age 54, Gorbachëv is in the age band at which a majority of general secretaries have acceded to the top job. The sight of three aged and infirm Soviet leaders in a row has somewhat obscured the fact that only two of the Soviet Union's seven leaders and six general secretaries have been older than their 50's when they became leaders of the country, and only one (Chernenko) was over 70 when he was elected general secretary. Insofar as it is possible to generalize about what is "normal" in accession to the general secretaryship when dealing with only six cases, it can be said that the 50's is the normal age band in which a Soviet leader accedes to the top post.

Difference from Previous Successions

There are, however, three even more important respects in which Gorbachëv differs from all previous incumbents of the general secretaryship. The first is in terms of *relative* age, that is, the general secretary's age in relation to his colleagues. No one before Gorbachëv has become top leader as the youngest member of both the Politburo and Central Committee Secretariat. This is of greater potential relevance to the power Gorbachëv may yet wield than is absolute age (though Stalin was the only one to become general secretary at a younger age than Gorbachëv).

Stalin, at the time of Lenin's death was only 44, but he was one of the two oldest members of the Politburo. (The other was Trotsky—also 44.) The average age of the Politburo in 1924 was only 42. Khrushchev was 58 when Stalin died in March 1953 and 59 when he was formally given the title first secretary of the Central Committee in September of that year. As such, he was a year above the average age of the Politburo. Brezhnev, at 57, was just a little below the average age of the Politburo (59) immediately following the removal of Khrushchev in 1964. Andropov, who was 68 when he succeeded Brezhnev in November 1982, was also fractionally below

the Politburo average age, which was 69 at that point.⁵ By the time Andropov died on February 9, 1984, the average age of the 12 full members of the Politburo had declined to 67, and so Chernenko, at 72, was significantly above it.

Immediately after Chernenko's death, the Politburo (by this time down to 10 voting members as a result of the death also of Marshal Ustinov in December 1984) still had an average age of 67. Of these men, five were over 70, three were in their 60's, and only two were in their 50's. Not only was Gorbachëv the youngest member of the Politburo by a full five years, he was 13 years below the average age of the voting membership. Even more remarkable, he was the youngest member of the entire top leadership team—the 21 people who in the immediate post-Chernenko period made up the full and candidate membership of the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee. This is quite unprecedented and could have important implications for the future.

Though there has been a strong element of genuine collectivity of the Soviet leadership in the post-Stalin, and especially post-Khrushchev, era, every general secretary except Chernenko, who came to the leadership too late and too infirm to make much of an impact on it, has increased his powers during his time in the top post. This is especially true of those who had a lengthy period of office, though in the case of the first three of them—Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev—each man wielded less power than the previous general secretary.⁶ Though promotions to the Secretariat and to the Politburo require the approval of a majority of members of

⁵The average age of the Politburo just after Brezhnev's death was 69 if Andrey Kirilenko is counted as a member, which he formally was until released from office at the Central Committee plenary session held on Nov. 22, 1982 (see *Pravda* [Moscow], Nov. 23, 1982, p. 1). However, Kirilenko had fallen out of favor with Brezhnev and Chernenko and had in practice been dropped from the Politburo while Brezhnev was still alive. If Kirilenko is excluded from consideration, the average age of the Politburo immediately following Brezhnev's demise on Nov. 10 was exactly the same as Andropov's, 68.

⁶This point has been the subject of some misinterpretation. Writing three years before Brezhnev's death, I noted that "each General Secretary has wielded less individual power over policy than his predecessor, but within his period of office his power vis-à-vis his colleagues has grown" (Archie Brown, "The Power of the General Secretary of the CPSU," in T. H. Rigby, Archie Brown, and Peter Reddaway, Eds., *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR*, London, Macmillan, and New York, St. Martin's Press, 1980, p. 136). Rather to my dismay, this has been treated by a number of subsequent writers as if it were, or purported to be, a general law of Soviet politics. To take a recent example, Thane Gustafson, reviewing a book by George Breslauer, refers to this generalization as "Brown's law" (see *Slavic Review* [Urbana, IL], Winter 1984, p. 684). In fact, this was a generalization (which I would still uphold) limited to the only three general secretaries who had held office up to that time: Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev. So far as the first point is concerned, there was no suggestion that such a trend toward declining leadership power would continue. Indeed, it seems clear that Andropov was within a year wielding a degree of power that Brezhnev did not possess for at least the first six years of his general secretaryship. The second part of the statement might, however, be extended into something approaching a law of Soviet politics. It does seem to be a *zakonomernost'* of the Soviet political system that a general secretary, granted a sufficient span of life, will over a period of time increase his power vis-à-vis his colleagues in the Politburo and Secretariat.

the Politburo itself, which gives senior members of the Politburo an opportunity to make trade-offs among potential candidates, there is no doubt that the general secretary is in a better position than anyone else to get his nominees promoted to the top leadership team. As the very title general secretary (or, in Khrushchev's time, first secretary) suggests, his supremacy within the Secretariat is more clearly institutionalized than is his position in the Politburo. A general secretary has sometimes found it easier in the early stages of his leadership to make changes in the composition of the Secretariat than in that of the voting membership of the Politburo. Gorbachëv, however, as will be noted in greater detail in the final section, has succeeded in making a dramatic impact on the composition of the Politburo little more than six weeks after becoming party leader. Even when the process of change within the Politburo is a more gradual one, a point tends to be reached at which the general secretary has a sufficient group of protégés and supporters there to make simpler the task of removing those whose presence he has earlier had to tolerate without enthusiasm. For example, there was no love lost between Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksandr Shelepin. But although Brezhnev was able to have Shelepin removed from the Central Committee Secretariat in 1967, it was not until 1975 (by which time, following other changes in the Politburo composition, the General Secretary's power had greatly increased) that Brezhnev felt strong enough to push for Shelepin's expulsion from the Politburo as well. All the signs are that Gorbachëv will continue to move very much faster than Brezhnev did.

If he lives a normal life-span, Gorbachëv may readily become the first Soviet leader to preside over an entire top leadership team that has been appointed under his chairmanship of the Politburo and Secretariat and, accordingly, during a time when he was exercising a greater influence than anyone else on the choice of candidates. At first, the pool from which he can draw people—members of the Central Committee—will be only to a very limited degree of his own choosing, but Gorbachëv is fortunate in that respect also. Whereas Andropov and Chernenko had to operate with Brezhnev's Central Committee, that elected at the 26th Party Congress in 1981 (a factor that was more of an impediment for Andropov than for Chernenko, in view of Andropov's desire for change and of Chernenko's closeness to Brezhnev), Gorbachëv has come to power within a year of the next five-yearly party congress and in time to exercise still more influence than he could before on the composition of the Central Committee which will be formally elected at that 27th congress.⁷

Thus, over the long term, Gorbachëv has quite remarkable opportunities to promote like-minded people

to senior leadership positions. In the shorter term, he will, as previous general secretaries have had to do, preserve alliances with a number of the weightiest members of the Politburo and take care not to tread on too many toes at once. But even in the short and medium term, the age structure of the Politburo and Secretariat is such that a number of changes are inevitable.

A second respect in which Gorbachëv is different from all of his predecessors as general secretary is that he alone has made his professional political career (in the Komsomol and party apparatus) entirely in the post-Stalin period. I shall look at his career in greater detail below, but the main point in the present context is that he is of a different *political generation* with different generational experience from that of all of his predecessors. Unlike them, he was not involved in any way in Stalin's purges and so is unburdened either by the guilt of having denounced others or by memories of fear of being denounced. He joined the party in 1952 while he was a student at Moscow University, and it is of some consequence that his time there (1950–55) included a period of more than two years after Stalin's death. This was a time of much freer discussion in student circles than had existed for many years. Though there was not yet the explosion of criticism that was to follow the 20th CPSU Congress in 1956, the post-Stalin "thaw" was already underway in 1954 and 1955, the "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign⁸ was being laid to rest, and the atmosphere at Moscow University had become perceptibly more relaxed.⁹ It is certainly worthy of note that Gorbachëv's early, and perhaps formative, years in Komsomol and party work were in the Khrushchev era. It was during his first year of full-time professional employment in the Komsomol that the 20th Party Congress took place, and the very first congress that Gorbachëv himself attended was the 22nd (in 1961), at which the attack on Stalin was taken further than it had been five years earlier and delivered by Khrushchev in open rather

⁷At the plenary session of the Central Committee held on Apr. 23, 1985, it was announced that the next party congress would begin on Feb. 25, 1986 (*Pravda*, Apr. 25, 1985, p. 1). Earlier there had been suggestions in the Soviet Union that the date of the 27th congress might be brought forward to late 1985. Thus, for example, in a speech delivered on Feb. 7, 1985, the First Secretary of the Georgian party organization, Eduard Shevardnadze, spoke of 1985 being "the year of the 27th Party Congress" (British Broadcasting Corporation, *Summary of World Broadcasts: USSR* [London—hereafter SWB], SU/7877/i, Feb. 16, 1985).

⁸The "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign aimed to sow distrust of everything foreign and had strongly anti-Semitic undertones. For a discussion of it, see Adam B. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era*, London, Allen Lane, 1973, pp. 678–85.

⁹On this, see the testimony of a Czech contemporary of Gorbachëv's in the Moscow University Law Faculty: Zdeněk Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, London, Hurst, 1980, p. 27. A much less convincing account of these years is provided by a Soviet emigrant who graduated from the Moscow University Law Faculty in 1950 but "fairly frequently" visited the university subsequently. He contrasts what he calls the "fairly liberal" early postwar atmosphere with the political and academic climate of 1950, but quite omits to mention the more fundamental atmospheric change produced by the death of Stalin. See Lev Yudovich, "Gorbachëv 2: First Rungs on the Ladder," in *Soviet Analyst* (Richmond, Surrey), Dec. 19, 1984, pp. 2–3.



Key Soviet leaders atop the Lenin Mausoleum in Red Square at May Day 1985 observances: from left to right, Marshal Viktor Kulikov, commander of Warsaw Pact forces; Marshal Sergey Akhromeyev, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces; Defense Minister Marshal Sergey Sokolov; party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachëv, Premier Nikolay Tikhonov; Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko; Politburo members Viktor Grishin, Grigoriy Romanov, Mikhail Solomentsev, Yegor Ligachëv, and Geydar Aliyev.

—Wide World.

than closed session.¹⁰ It is known, however, that Gorbachëv did not regret the fall of Khrushchev, for he was critical of Khrushchev's ill-considered agricultural reorganizations and of his maintenance in reality of the old method of arbitrary interventions from the center even when he was ostensibly decentralizing.¹¹

Different members of the same generation may hold very different views, and so there can be no question of automatically assuming in every individual case a certain political outlook on the basis of a particular generational experience. What can fairly be argued is that a Soviet

citizen who began his full-time political career in 1955 had a better chance of retaining or acquiring a relatively open mind than one who first set foot on the bottom rung of the ladder 20 years earlier.

A third feature that distinguishes Gorbachëv from previous general secretaries is his superior level of formal education. Of particular importance is his five years of study in the Law Faculty of the Soviet Union's leading university. As I noted when writing about Gorbachëv three years ago, he is remembered by some of his contemporaries as an able as well as an open-minded student.¹² Being in Moscow University brought him into contact with other students of ability, many of whom had had a more privileged pre-university education than geography and circumstances had afforded him (see the section below on his rise from kolkhoz to the Kremlin).

¹⁰For information on Gorbachëv's attendance at party congresses, see, for example, *Pravda* Mar. 12, 1985, p. 1.

¹¹This point is made in an important article published by Zdeněk Mlynář in the daily newspaper of the Italian Communist Party to which I have had access at a late stage in the writing of this article. See Zdeněk Mlynář, "My Fellow Student Mikhail Gorbachëv," *L'Unità* (Rome), Apr. 9, 1985, p. 9. Here Mlynář reveals for the first time in public not only that he and Gorbachëv were fellow students throughout Gorbachëv's five years in Moscow University, but also that they took the same courses, lived in the same student residence, and were good friends. Gorbachëv's views on Khrushchev were expressed in his last meeting with Mlynář which took place in Stavropol' in 1967. At that time, Mlynář was a rising personality in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and in 1968 he was to become a Central Committee secretary and Politburo member. In the aftermath of the "Prague Spring," he was, however, expelled from the party, and since 1977 has lived in emigration. His portrayal of Gorbachëv is at once objective, well-informed, and favorable. Since Mlynář's own hopes for Czech communism were dashed by the Soviet intervention of 1968, he can hardly be accused of a *priori* bias in favor of a Soviet leader. His sympathetic account of Gorbachëv should stand as an important piece of evidence from one who better than anyone else now living in the West knew the younger Gorbachëv.

¹²In Brown and Kaser, *op. cit.*, p. 240. Such an assessment has now been confirmed by Mlynář (*loc. cit.*). Yudovich, who produces a determinedly negative view of Gorbachëv as a student on the basis of his own return visits to his alma mater, states, in contrast, that other students regarded Gorbachëv as "dull and badly educated" (*loc. cit.*, p. 3). The assertion that he was "dull" flies in the face of the recollections of Mlynář and others who, unlike Yudovich, were Law Faculty undergraduates at the same time as Gorbachëv, and of the testimony of practically every Western politician, businessman, and official who has met him in more recent years. So far as the assertion that he was "badly educated" is concerned, it would be surprising if he were academically as well prepared as those students who had had the privilege of an uninterrupted education in city schools. What is evident, and more to the point, is that he had a considerable capacity for learning, which he was to put to good use.

There is a vast difference between five years of full-time university education in Moscow and the education picked up, often on a part-time basis, in provincial institutes by many of the older generation of leading party officials. Gorbachëv himself later added a second degree by part-time study when he received the qualification of "agronomist-economist" from the Stavropol' Agricultural Institute in 1967.¹³ Although academic degrees awarded to established party officials often owe more to their political standing than to their scholarly endeavors, Gorbachëv's life-long connection with agriculture and political interest in it, together with his intellectual curiosity, almost surely mean that in this case the degree was earned. At any rate, Canadian agricultural specialists who met with Gorbachëv in May 1983 were impressed by his detailed technical knowledge of the subject.

Gromyko's Nominating Speech

Fascinating light on Gorbachëv's qualities, as seen by Andrey Gromyko, and insight on Gromyko's view of the attributes to be looked for in a general secretary were provided by the Foreign Minister's surprisingly informal and genuinely enthusiastic speech of recommendation of Gorbachëv to the Central Committee on March 11, 1985.¹⁴ It is of interest to compare it with the nomination speeches of Gorbachëv's two immediate predecessors, Andropov and Chernenko, and to consider why Gromyko's speech was accorded a much more restricted circulation than the previous two nomination addresses.

In certain respects, the nomination speech that is the odd one out among the last three is Chernenko's nomination of Andropov at the Central Committee plenary session held on November 12, 1982.¹⁵ Whereas Nikolay Tikhonov's recommendation of Chernenko to the Central Committee on February 13, 1984,¹⁶ and Gromyko's proposal of Gorbachëv 13 months later were clearly the speeches of strong and influential supporters of the prospective general secretary, Chernenko's speech proposing Andropov was that of a senior and defeated rival. Chernenko devoted by far the greater part of his speech to praise of Brezhnev and his leadership style before informing those present that the Politburo had instructed him to propose Yuriy Andropov as general secretary. He proceeded to recommend him in terms that

¹³*Pravda*, Mar. 12, 1985, p. 1.

¹⁴See *Materialy vneocherednogo plenuma tsentral'nogo komiteta KPSS 11 marta 1985 goda* (Materials of the Extraordinary Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee of March 11, 1985), Moscow, Politizdat, 1985, pp. 6-8.

¹⁵*Pravda*, Nov. 13, 1982, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, Feb. 14, 1984, p. 2.



There has been unusual turnover in the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the last two-and-a-half years, with the deaths of three general secretaries: at top, the November 1982 funeral of Leonid Brezhnev; at center, the February 1984 funeral of Yuriy Andropov; and at bottom, the March 1985 funeral of Konstantin Chernenko, with his successor Mikhail Gorbachëv (second from right) and Andrey Gromyko (right).

—Wide World.

exaggerated Andropov's closeness to Brezhnev, emphasizing the similarities between the two men and the prospect of continuity. There was an element both of wishful thinking and of an attempt to constrain Andropov in Chernenko's stress on how well Andropov had grasped "the Brezhnevist style of leadership, a Brezhnevist concern for the interests of the people, and a Brezhnevist relationship to cadres," and in his emphasis on Andropov's "respect for the opinion of other comrades" and his "predilection for collective work."¹⁷ In describing Andropov as "the closest comrade-in-arms of Leonid Il'ich [Brezhnev],"¹⁸ Chernenko was according him a proximity to Brezhnev that many in his audience must have known applied more precisely to Chernenko himself. In fact, of course, Andropov lost little time in distancing himself from Brezhnev, quickly adopting his own distinctive style of rule with different priorities and a more demanding personnel policy that involved quite rapid rejuvenation of, and turnover in, the ranks of party and governmental cadres.¹⁹

When Andropov died some 15 months later, Tikhonov, in a measured address to the Central Committee, devoted approximately a third of his time to warm praise of Andropov and the second half of his speech to praise of Chernenko. As a close Brezhnev associate from the 1930's, Tikhonov, not surprisingly, brought the name of his former patron back into the public view, praising Chernenko as "a true comrade-in-arms of such leaders of the Leninist type as were Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev and Yuriy Vladimirovich Andropov."²⁰ Tikhonov characterized Chernenko's attitude toward cadres as both "highly exacting and at the same time benevolent" (by implication a blend of Andropov and Brezhnev), and among Chernenko's special qualifications to which Tikhonov drew attention was the "prominent part" he had played in "the elaboration of theoretical problems of the perfecting of a developed socialist society" and in ideological work more generally.²¹

The speeches of Chernenko at the Central Committee plenum that elected Andropov and of Tikhonov at the plenum that endorsed Chernenko were made available in tens of millions of copies through their publication in *Pravda*, in other daily newspapers, and in party journals. One reason why Gromyko's speech of recommendation of Gorbachëv to the March 1985 Central Committee plenum was, in contrast, not published in *Pravda* may well be that, for the first time in Soviet history, the Central Committee elected a new general secretary on the very day (March 11) that the leadership made public the death of the previous general secretary (though Chernenko had, in fact, died at 7:20 p.m. on the previous day).²² Thus, whereas on the death of Brezhnev and Andropov, *Pravda* was able to devote entire issues to the departed leader before giving full coverage to the election of a new one, the unprecedented speed with which Gorbachëv was elected may have meant that a difficult balancing act had to be preserved in the same issue of the newspaper between due respect to the dead leader and a welcome to his successor. As it was, Gorbachëv's picture appeared on page one and Chernenko's only on page two. To have included Gromyko's speech as well might have tilted the balance too far away from the appropriate obsequies.

That there may have been some disagreement on how wide a distribution to give to Gromyko's speech was, however, suggested by the fact that, unlike the two previous nomination speeches, it did not appear in the issue of the party journal, *Partiynaya zhizn'*, which carried an account of the March plenum, though it was published in full in the Central Committee's journal *Kommunist*, which went to press six days later.²³ It was, however, not published in another Central Committee journal, *Politicheskoye samoobrazovaniye*,²⁴ which went to press two days later than *Kommunist*. There are, perhaps, four reasons for such inconsistency. In the first place, it seems fairly clear that Gromyko was not speak-

¹⁷Ibid., Nov. 13, 1982, p. 2.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹I have elaborated on these points in articles on the last two successions. See Archie Brown, "Andropov: Discipline and Reform?" in *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), January-February 1983, pp. 18-31; and Brown, "The Soviet Succession: From Andropov to Chernenko," in *The World Today* (London), April 1984, pp. 134-41. In the latter article I noted that during Andropov's 15 months as general secretary there was a turnover of over a fifth of the Moscow-based members of the Council of Ministers, more than a fifth of the regional party secretaries, and over a third of the heads of department of the party's Central Committee. Immediately after Andropov's death, the full and candidate members of the Politburo and secretaries of the Central Committee consisted of 23 people. Just over a sixth of them had been brought into that inner circle during Andropov's brief tenure, and as many as a quarter of the full members of the Politburo received their promotions to voting membership during the same period.

²⁰*Pravda*, Feb. 14, 1984, p. 2.

²¹Ibid.

²²*Pravda*, Mar. 12, 1985, p. 2.

²³The relevant issues are *Partiynaya zhizn'* (Moscow), No. 6, March 1985, which went to press on March 14, and *Kommunist* (Moscow), No. 5, March 1985, which went to press on March 20. Though *Partiynaya zhizn'* has a greater circulation (1,030,000) than *Kommunist* (952,000), the difference is hardly substantial enough to be decisive. The fact that Gorbachëv's supporters had had a further week in which to establish their and his enhanced authority may well be of greater consequence, and one should not totally disregard the possibly divergent wishes of the two editors. The chief editor of *Kommunist*, Richard Kosolapov, is a full member of the Central Committee and was a contemporary of Gorbachëv's at Moscow University. For biographies of Kosolapov and of the chief editor of *Partiynaya zhizn'*, Mikhail Khaldeyev, see *Yezhegodnik Bol'shoy Sovetskoy Entsiklopedii 1981* (1981 Yearbook of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia), Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya," 1981, pp. 584 and 607.

²⁴*Politicheskoye samoobrazovaniye*, like the two journals mentioned in note 23, published the nomination speeches by Chernenko and Tikhonov at the previous two successions. The journal is aimed at party propagandists and other ideological workers and has a circulation of 2,388,000.



A frail Konstantin Chernenko casts his ballot on February 24, 1985, in elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR's Russian republic.

—TASS from Sovfoto.

ing from a written text.²⁵ The style of the speech is very direct (almost a thinking aloud), and the words and phrases are those of everyday discourse. It may be that the almost total absence of official language rendered the speech inappropriate for such wide distribution as its predecessors. Second, the speech is very frank and provides several hitherto undisclosed details about Gorbachëv's duties under Chernenko's general secreta-

²⁵Gromyko almost certainly had no time in which to prepare a complete written text. From mid-morning until mid-afternoon of March 11 (including a luncheon at which he made a speech on Soviet-French relations) he was engaged in discussions with the French Minister for External Affairs, Roland Dumas. Thus, between the Politburo meeting that chose Gorbachëv and which must have been held either in the late evening of March 10 or, more probably, early in the morning of March 11, and the Central Committee plenary session in the late afternoon of the 11th, Gromyko was fully occupied.

ryship. Third, the assessment of Gorbachëv is eulogistic and gives every impression of sincerity. To give full publicity in the mass-circulation newspapers to such praise of Gorbachëv from the normally low-key Gromyko (who is highly respected in the Soviet Union and whose responsibility for the conduct of Soviet foreign policy keeps him very much in the public eye) might have seemed too much like the launching of a personality cult of the new general secretary. Fourth (and related to the third point), since the authority and prestige of a general secretary can be an important political resource, and enhance his actual power, the possibility should not be excluded that different parts of the Central Committee apparatus have different views on how fast and how far Gorbachëv's authority should be strengthened and that this may reflect varying assessments of what they take to be his policy preferences and priorities. While the exclusion of Gromyko's speech from the newspapers is understandable for the reasons given above, the fact that only one out of three party journals—all of which published the speeches nominating Gorbachëv's two predecessors—included it is perhaps revealing of diversity of view within the higher party echelons.

Perhaps because it appeared originally only in booklet form, Gromyko's speech has attracted little or no Western attention up to the present, but it is certainly worth bringing out a number of its salient features. It is noteworthy that Gromyko referred to Chernenko only once—in the context of his absence through illness from the Politburo—choosing instead to devote the whole of his speech to outlining Gorbachëv's qualifications for the general secretaryship. Like Chernenko and Tikhonov, in their speeches nominating Gorbachëv's two predecessors, Gromyko observed that he was proposing Gorbachëv's election to the Central Committee on the instructions of the Politburo.²⁶ He suggested by implication that Gorbachëv may have been running the Secretariat of the Central Committee for some considerable time. As Gromyko put it: "He led the Secretariat (*On vël Sekretariat*), as is known." Gromyko followed that remark with the sentence: "He also took the chair at sessions of the Politburo in the absence of Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko."²⁷ This was the first definitive confirmation that Gorbachëv had indeed been chairing the Politburo when Chernenko was too ill to attend. But the fact that Gromyko did not relate Gorbachëv's leading of the Secretariat (as distinct from his chairmanship of the Politburo) specifically to Chernenko's absence through illness in the last months of his leadership sug-

²⁶*Materialy vneocherednogo plenuma tsentral'nogo komiteta* . . . , p. 6.

²⁷*Ibid.*

gests that Gorbachëv may have been in day-to-day charge of the Secretariat for much of Chernenko's general secretaryship.

In the first reference, so far as I am aware, by one Soviet leader to another's abilities as a chairman, Gromyko remarked apropos of Gorbachëv's chairmanship of the Politburo: "Without any exaggeration, he conducted himself brilliantly."²⁸ Gromyko made no reference to ideology or to the economy or to any other branch of domestic policy, but singled out for praise the degree of flexibility and lack of dogma in Gorbachëv's approach to problems. As he put it:

*You know, it often happens that problems—both internal and external—are very difficult to consider if you are guided by the law of "black and white." There may be intermediate colors, intermediate links, and intermediate decisions. And Mikhail Sergeyevich [Gorbachëv] is always able to come up with such decisions that correspond with the party line.*²⁹

Gromyko also drew attention to one of Gorbachëv's attributes that he said was "perhaps a little clearer to me, in the performance of my duties, than to certain other comrades"—namely, how well and quickly Gorbachëv grasped the essence of developments taking place in other countries and in the international arena. Characterizing in general terms Gorbachëv's foreign policy orientation, Gromyko said: "He always defends the point of view that the holy of holies for us all is to struggle for the cause of peace and to maintain our defense at the necessary level."³⁰

To put them with the maximum brevity, these and other attributes of Gorbachëv on which Gromyko enlarges can be summarized in 10 points that are revealing both of Gromyko's own desiderata (though not necessarily in this order) for the office of general secretary and of Gorbachëv's qualifications in his eyes for this post: (1) experience of party work at various levels, including the regional level and the Secretariat of the Central Committee; (2) skill in chairmanship (of the Politburo and Secretariat); (3) keen intelligence; (4) grasp of international issues; (5) strong convictions and directness; (6) political sensitivity (not seeing everything in "black and white" terms); (7) an analytical mind and ability to draw conclusions after dividing a problem into its component parts; (8) broad erudition; (9) organizational ability; and (10) capacity to establish a rapport, and common language, with others.³¹

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 7.

³⁰Ibid., p. 8.

³¹Ibid., pp. 6-8.

From Kolkhoz to Kremlin

Assessments of Gorbachëv's route to joint membership of the Politburo and Secretariat have previously appeared in academic writing,³² but it is now possible, while summarizing what was already known, to add some details.³³

Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachëv was born on March 2, 1931, in the village of Privol'noye in the Krasnogvardeyskiy district of Stavropol' region (*kray*) to the northwest of the city of Stavropol'. Both his parents and his grandparents were peasants. His father was killed in the war, and he was brought up mainly by his grandparents.³⁴ If Gorbachëv was too young to fight in World War II (he was only 10 years of age when Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union), he was by no means too young to suffer the war's consequences. Not only did he lose his father, but he was in a part of the country that was for several months under German occupation (August 1942–January 1943) and for even longer close to the front.³⁵ Moreover, since the Soviet forces that relieved the city of Stavropol' came from the south, it is possible that Gorbachëv's native district was under German occupation for somewhat longer. Finally, because of an acute shortage of adult male labor in the Russian countryside during these war years, children, including Gorbachëv, had to spend time working in the fields, and thus did not receive regular schooling.

His education in the early postwar years was also, in all probability, disrupted. There is some uncertainty about how much time Gorbachëv spent as a manual

³²See my contributions to Brown and Kaser, op. cit., esp. pp. 240–42 and 269–70; Jerry F. Hough, "Soviet Succession: Issues and Personalities," *Problems of Communism*, September–October 1982, esp. pp. 35–37; and Hough, "Andropov's First Year," *ibid.*, November–December 1983, esp. pp. 61–63.

³³I draw upon Soviet published sources, conversations with contemporaries of Gorbachëv's in Moscow University, and conversations and interviews with some of those who met Gorbachëv in Canada and Britain in 1983 and 1984—especially his British hosts. These conversations were on a non-attributable basis, but where the same points have appeared in the press, I cite such sources. Since not all press comment on Gorbachëv's visit to Britain was accurate, I try to cite only those published points that I have been able to verify independently.

³⁴The information about Gorbachëv's father and grandparents emerged in his conversations in Britain.

³⁵The impact of this on Gorbachëv must have been all the greater because of the extreme brutality of German soldiers at the Russian front where (as is too often forgotten) they behaved incomparably worse than on the Western front. On this brutality, and its ideological underpinnings, see an important forthcoming study by Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*, London, Macmillan, 1985. See also the two major volumes by John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975, and *The Road to Berlin*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983. Mlynář does not provide any confirmation for the suggestion that Gorbachëv may have lived for a time in an area under German occupation, but he writes of him having lived through the war "near the Caucasian front" and of the war as "a fundamental experience for him," which he had known as a source of suffering for the civilian population (Mlynář, loc. cit.). For the occupation of Stavropol' city, see *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* (The Great Soviet Encyclopedia), 3rd ed., Vol. 24, I, Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya," 1976, p. 393.

worker and how much time at school between 1946 and 1950. His official biographies in central newspapers and reference books state that he began work in 1946 at the age of 15 as an assistant to a combine harvester operator in a machine-tractor station.³⁶ Yet Jerry Hough has drawn attention to a biography in a Stavropol' local newspaper that suggests that Gorbachëv remained at school until 1950 and worked in the machine-tractor station only during school holidays.³⁷ Before one accepts the local, rather than the national, version of the biography as the whole story, however, it is worth noting that several of Gorbachëv's Moscow University contemporaries have remarked that one of the things that made him unusual was that he had already received, and sometimes wore, the insignia of the Order of Red Banner of Labor.³⁸ It seems highly unlikely that such an award would have been given to a schoolboy whose working experience was restricted to school holidays.³⁹

What needs to be remembered is the appalling devastation of industry and agriculture and disruption of education and much else caused by the war—still very evident in the early postwar years—and the fact that 10-year schooling was at that time the exception rather than the rule in the countryside. Though the precise timing and proportions remain a minor mystery, it seems most likely that Gorbachëv spent *part* of the period between 1946 and 1950 as a full-time worker and *part* of it at school. Indeed, the recently published evidence of Zdeněk Mlynář makes it clear that it was the fact that he was an *exemplary worker* (with insignia to prove it) which, together with his obvious intelligence, earned him a place at Moscow University. Mlynář is quite categorical that Gorbachëv did not belong to either of the two main groups of students in Moscow University—in terms of background—at that time. That is to say, he was neither an ex-soldier nor someone who had come straight to university from secondary school.⁴⁰

Gorbachëv was 19 when he began his studies at Moscow University in September 1950, and he re-

mained there until June 1955 (the normal span of a Soviet first degree course), when he received his law degree. Given the time and place of his pre-university education and the fact that he arrived as a new student in Moscow at the height of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign, it is hardly surprising that he did not have an opportunity to learn foreign languages, and so the myth should not be perpetuated that when he was in Britain he was "answering even difficult questions *with ease in excellent English*."⁴¹ He joined the Communist Party in 1952 and was active in the Komsomol. As *komsorg kursa* (the Komsomol leader of his particular student year in the Law Faculty), he served also on the faculty committee of the Komsomol. But Gorbachëv's Komsomol duties do not appear to have been on so high and exacting a level as to have prevented him from being a serious, and indeed outstanding, student.⁴²

It was, nevertheless, Gorbachëv's part-time work in the Komsomol while a student that paved the way for his full-time employment in the Komsomol after graduating. He returned to his native Stavropol' region and began a rapid rise in the Komsomol organization. In 1955–56, he was deputy head of the department of propaganda and agitation of the Stavropol' regional committee (*kraykom*) of the Komsomol, and from 1956 to 1958, he served as first secretary of the Stavropol' city committee of the Komsomol. In 1958, he moved back to the regional apparatus of the Komsomol, serving as second and then first secretary of the Stavropol' Komsomol *kraykom*.

In 1962, Gorbachëv moved from Komsomol to party work and began his still more remarkable rise through the party apparatus. The speed of his advance naturally owed something to luck, especially in the form of good connections, but it clearly owed still more to his abilities and performance which impressed those senior party officials who got to know him. From 1960 until 1964, Fëdor Kulakov was first secretary of the Stavropol' party organization, and he was to become an extremely important patron of Gorbachëv. In the early 1960's, when Gorbachëv was running the regional Komsomol organization, the two men worked together closely, and it must have been on Kulakov's invitation that Gorbachëv moved into the party *kraykom* apparatus. In 1962–63, Gorbachëv was party organizer of the Stavropol' regional party organization's territorial production administration of collective and state farms, and from 1963 until 1966 he was head of the party organs department of the party *kraykom*.

³⁶See, e.g., *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR: Desyatyy sozyv* (Deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet: 10th Convocation), Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Izvestiya Sovetov Deputatov Trudyashchikhsya SSSR," 1979, p. 119; *Yezhegodnik Bol'shoy Sovetskoy Entsiklopedii* 1981, p. 573; and *Pravda*, Oct. 22, 1980, p. 1. The brief official outline of Gorbachëv's career published since he became general secretary puts the point in the following terms: "Soon after the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, at the age of 15 he began his working activity. He worked as a machine operator (*mekhanizatorom*) at a machine-tractor station." See, e.g., *Partynaya zhizn'*, No. 6, March 1985, p. 6.

³⁷See Jerry F. Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 1980, p. 58; and Hough, "Soviet Succession: Issues and Personalities," p. 35. Hough's source is *Stavropol'skaya pravda*, Feb. 6, 1979.

³⁸I first drew attention to this in Brown and Kaser, op. cit., pp. 240 and 252–53.

³⁹The memories of several Soviet scholars on Gorbachëv's Order of Red Banner of Labor find further corroboration in the article by Mlynář, who describes this decoration as "an extraordinary honor" for a 19-year-old.

⁴⁰Mlynář, loc. cit.

⁴¹*International Herald Tribune* (Paris), Mar. 12, 1985, p. 1 (emphasis added).

⁴²Thus, so far as I am aware, Gorbachëv did not hold a rank as high as that of "Komsomol secretary of Moscow University in 1954–55," which Jerry Hough attributes to him ("Soviet Succession: Issues and Personalities," p. 34). Mlynář reports that Gorbachëv passed his university examinations with distinction (loc. cit.).

In 1964, Kulakov had moved to Moscow to head the agriculture department of the Central Committee, and in 1965 he became a secretary of the Central Committee. This was helpful for Gorbachëv in more ways than one. Not only did he have a friend at court, he had one who was well-connected. Kulakov was on good terms with Chernenko (who had been a secretary of the Penza regional party committee from 1945 to 1948 at a time when Kulakov headed the agricultural department of that same *obkom*)⁴³, and, through Chernenko, with Brezhnev. This was confirmed in 1971 when Kulakov became a voting member of the Politburo while retaining his Central Committee secretaryship. It was also useful for Gorbachëv that Kulakov was replaced in Stavropol' in 1964 by a high party official on his way down—Leonid Yefremov. Yefremov had become a candidate member of the Politburo under Khrushchev in 1962 and first deputy chairman of the Bureau for Party Work in the Russian Republic (a Khrushchevian creation that was to be abolished by his successors). The Stavropol' regional party secretaryship was for Yefremov a clear demotion, and though he held that post until 1970, it was evidently his being out of favor that caused him to lose the post at the age of only 58. With a party congress to be held the following year, the leadership clearly did not want Yefremov on the Central Committee for another five years.⁴⁴

Meanwhile Gorbachëv had made himself Yefremov's obvious successor. From 1966 to 1968, he was back in city politics as first secretary of the Stavropol' *gorkom*. But already in 1968 he was evidently being groomed for the *kraykom* succession, for it was then that he was appointed second secretary of the regional party committee. His acquisition of an agricultural degree a year earlier had strengthened his qualifications for taking over as party chief of this important agricultural region. (Both Kulakov and Yefremov had also acquired such educational qualifications in the agricultural sphere.) Gorbachëv's support at the center ensured that it was indeed he who succeeded Yefremov as first secretary of

the Stavropol' *kraykom* at the early age of 39. A year later, at the 24th Party Congress, he became a full member of the Central Committee.

Gorbachëv was very successful as a regional party secretary, and the Stavropol' *kray* under his leadership achieved a particularly good agricultural performance. He evidently approved of the "link system,"⁴⁵ which had gone out of fashion under Brezhnev, and supported both in theory and in practice the giving of greater autonomy to agricultural workers to farm a particular piece of land.⁴⁶

These were years in which Gorbachëv also broadened his horizons and implemented his wish to see things for himself by taking motoring holidays with his wife through France and Italy⁴⁷—not the vacations of a conventional party secretary. It appears that he also read widely, adding to his knowledge of Russian literature (which emerged in his discussions in Britain) a reading of some of the Western books translated into Russian during the Brezhnev years. Gorbachëv told one of the British politicians with whom he had conversation that the first modern English novel he read was C. P. Snow's *Corridors of Power*, a work that must at least have provided some insight into British-style bureaucratic politics for a Soviet *kraykom* secretary. It became apparent that he had also read *Parkinson's Law* (which was published in Russian by Progress Publishers in the mid-1970's and rapidly sold out). Instantly taking up a reference by the chairman of ICI to "Parkinson's Law," Gorbachëv responded: "If you're referring to C. Northcote Parkinson, I've got news for you. He lives in Moscow now."⁴⁸ Not the happiest of omens for overstuffed ministerial bureaucracies in the Soviet Union, but entirely consistent with the views of a man who, while still first secretary of the Stavropol' *kraykom* but shortly before he became a secretary of the Central Committee, had recorded his support for the controversial Shchekino experiment designed to reward enterprises that release surplus labor.⁴⁹

⁴³On Kulakov, see *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR: Devyatyy sozyv* (Deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet: 9th Convocation), Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Izvestiya Sovetov Deputatov Trudyashchikhsya SSSR," 1974, p. 243; and on Chernenko's earlier career, *Yezhegodnik Bol'shoy Sovetskoy Entsiklopedii* 1981, p. 608.

⁴⁴That Yefremov had blotted his copybook is indicated by the way he faded out of the reference books. He does not appear in the appropriate volume (Vol. 9) of the *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, published in 1972. For very different reasons Gorbachëv does not appear in this most recent edition of the major Soviet encyclopedia. Given that the volume in which Gorbachëv should have appeared (Vol. 7) was published as recently as 1972 (though sent for typesetting on Mar. 22, 1971), this merely underlines the rapidity of his rise from relative obscurity to the leadership of his party and country. For Yefremov's career, see *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR: Sedmoy sozyv* (Deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet: 7th Convocation), Moscow, Izdatel'stvo "Izvestiya Sovetov Deputatov Trudyashchikhsya SSSR," 1966, p. 157.

⁴⁵For a brief account of the "link" or "autonomous work-team" system (*beznyadnoye zveno*) see Alec Nove's chapter on agriculture in Brown and Kaser, op. cit., esp. pp. 179–80.

⁴⁶See M. Gorbachëv, "The Rural Labor Collective: Paths of Social Development," *Kommunist*, No. 2, January 1976, pp. 29–38. The support in print for the "link" system became all the more explicit once Gorbachëv had become the secretary of the Central Committee responsible for agriculture. On this, see the contributions of Nove and of Brown in Brown and Kaser, op. cit., pp. 179–80, 244–45, 269–70, and 272. See also Sidney I. Ploss, "Soviet Succession: Signs of Struggle," *Problems of Communism*, September–October 1982, p. 50. It was only under Andropov, however, as will be noted later in this article, that Gorbachëv was able to expound in some detail his personal support for the autonomous work-team in agriculture.

⁴⁷Laurence Marks, "Gorbachovs Let the Kremlin Mask Slip," in *The Observer* (London), Dec. 23, 1984, p. 4.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹See M. Gorbachëv, "Leading Experience—An Important Reserve," *Kommunist*, No. 14, September 1978, p. 82.

When Fëdor Kulakov died suddenly, at the age of 60, in 1978, it was his protégé, Gorbachëv, who was brought to Moscow to succeed him as Central Committee secretary responsible for agriculture. He was then only 47, an unusually early age for anyone to join Brezhnev's top leadership team. Though Kulakov was no longer around to give support, one can be certain that he had in the course of the 1970's drawn Gorbachëv's good record in his former *kray* to the attention of his colleagues. Two of them had, moreover, a special interest in the Stavropol' region and almost certainly also supported the advancement of Gorbachëv's career—Mikhail Suslov, who had been first secretary of the Stavropol' *kraykom* from 1939 until 1944 and for whom this was still a regional base, and Yuriy Andropov, who was a native of the Stavropol' region and was said to have taken holidays there while chairman of the KGB. If that is correct, Andropov would already have become acquainted with the *kraykom* First Secretary even before Gorbachëv moved to Moscow. In outlook, Gorbachëv was much closer to Andropov than to Suslov, but a combination of political skill and personal charm enabled him to have good relations with Soviet leaders of different views.⁵⁰

Once Gorbachëv began to attend Politburo meetings in his capacity as a secretary of the Central Committee, he had an opportunity to impress those Politburo members, such as Gromyko, who had a high regard for real ability and professional competence. Indeed, only on the basis of such wide support could he, between the ages of 47 to 49, have risen to full membership of the Politburo while retaining his seat in the Secretariat: in November 1978 he became a Central Committee secretary, in November 1979 a candidate member of the Politburo, and in October 1980 a voting member of that body.

When, on the death of Brezhnev, there were two senior members of the Politburo who aspired to the general secretaryship, Gorbachëv was one of several important members of the Politburo (who included also Gromyko and Ustinov) who put their weight behind Andropov rather than Chernenko.⁵¹ The twin elements of Andropov's approach—discipline together with struggle against corruption *and* the placing of economic reform on the political agenda in a way that it had not been

since the mid-1960's—were fully in line with Gorbachëv's own thinking. He not only supported innovation in the organization of agriculture but had also, while still a regional party secretary in Stavropol', attacked indiscipline, corruption, and drunkenness, themes that were to be given an enhanced salience when Gorbachëv himself became general secretary after the Chernenko interregnum.⁵²

Gorbachëv in the Wings

In the last year of Brezhnev's life, the importance the leadership attached to agriculture—the sphere of activity that Gorbachëv supervised—was underlined by the adoption of the comprehensive "Food Program" at the May 1982 plenary session of the Central Committee.⁵³ Gorbachëv no doubt was heavily involved in its preparation and was a strong advocate of some of its main elements, such as the further development of the agro-industrial complexes and the devoting of significantly greater resources to the development of the rural infrastructure, including better roads, transport and storage facilities, and social amenities.⁵⁴ What the program failed to do, however, was to offer greater autonomy to groups of farmers, and it may be partly because of this and other limitations of this major policy statement that Gorbachëv was content not to be one of the speakers at the May plenum⁵⁵ and, in a subsequent article, to speak of Brezhnev's "leading role" in initiating and formulating the program.⁵⁶

When Andropov succeeded Brezhnev as general secretary in November 1982, he lost no time in calling for practical measures to "extend the independence (*samostoyatel'nost'*) of associations (*ob'yedineniya*) and enterprises, [and] of state and collective farms."⁵⁷ Andropov's selection apparently also made it possible for Gorbachëv to introduce elements of agricultural reform that he had not been able to include in Brezhnev's "Food Program"—in particular, the extension in principle of the "link" system (but under a new name) to the country as a whole. In a speech to an agricultural conference at Belgorod in March 1983, Gorbachëv indi-

⁵⁰It has been noted that at Suslov's funeral, Gorbachëv was the only Politburo member to stop and speak with each member of Suslov's family and that when Andropov was lying in state, Gorbachëv was the only member of the Politburo shown on Soviet television sitting with Andropov's family. See Hough, "Soviet Succession: Issues and Personalities," p. 37; and Marc D. Zlotnik, "Chernenko Succeeds," *Problems of Communism*, March–April 1984, p. 20.

⁵¹For somewhat different accounts that agree, however, on these three names, see Zhores Medvedev, *Andropov*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983, p. 112; and Brown, "The Soviet Succession: From Andropov to Chernenko," pp. 136–37.

⁵²For an assessment of Andropov's priorities at the outset of his general secretaryship, see Brown, "Andropov: Discipline and Reform?" and for Gorbachëv's renewed emphasis on discipline, and combatting corruption and drunkenness and alcoholism, see his speech at the March 1985 plenum of the Central Committee (*Pravda*, Mar. 12, 1985, p. 3) and the reports of the Politburo meetings held on Mar. 21 and Apr. 4, 1985 (*ibid.*, Mar. 22, 1985, p. 1, and Apr. 5, 1985, p. 1).

⁵⁴M. Gorbachëv, "The Food Program and the Tasks in Bringing It to Fruition," *Kommunist*, No. 10, July 1982, p. 6.

⁵⁵*Partynaya zhizn'*, No. 11, June 1982, p. 3.

⁵⁶Gorbachëv, "The Food Program and the Tasks in Bringing It to Fruition," p. 6.

⁵⁷*Pravda*, Nov. 23, 1982, p. 1.

cated that the Politburo had recently given its approval to "the introduction of the collective contract (*kollektivnogo podryada*) in collective and state farm production."⁵⁸ He went on to make clear that this meant that autonomous work teams and brigades should be given the opportunity to make long-term contracts with their collective and state farms whereby they would have operational independence to organize their own work and distribute among themselves group income that, in turn, would be directly related to production results, though with a necessary minimum guaranteed by the parent farm to take account of years of bad weather. Such teams, said Gorbachëv, should be formed voluntarily and be allowed to elect their own leaders.⁵⁹

It would appear that this is one of a number of Soviet partial economic reforms that have not been fully implemented, and the theme of increasing both the independence and responsibility of groups of workers is one to which Gorbachëv has reverted more recently.⁶⁰ It seems fair to say that nothing short of the powers of the general secretaryship enables an innovatively inclined Soviet leader to effect radical changes in established organizational and behavioral patterns in agriculture or industry, and even with these powers at one's disposal, it is a far from straightforward task.

Under Andropov, Gorbachëv's responsibilities within the Secretariat of the Central Committee were extended from control of agriculture to general oversight of the economy as a whole, and he also became the secretarial overlord of the department of the Central Committee responsible for lower level party appointments.⁶¹ This meant that the two new secretaries of the Central Committee who had been brought in under Andropov—Nikolay Ryzhkov and Yegor Ligachëv (who headed, respectively, the Economic Department and the Department of Party Organizational Work)—and who could be presumed to be both sympathetic and responsive to Andropov's and Gorbachëv's priorities, came under Gorbachëv's jurisdiction. (Since Gorbachëv became party leader, Ryzhkov and Ligachëv have received further highly significant promotion—a point to which I shall return in the concluding section.)

The personnel changes at the top of the Soviet party hierarchy made by Andropov during his 15 months as general secretary, taken as a whole, helped to strengthen Gorbachëv's power base within the leadership. It is far from evident that Grigoriy Romanov, who

became a secretary of the Central Committee in June 1983 while remaining a full member of the Politburo, or even Geydar Aliyev, who was advanced to full membership of the Politburo in November 1982, would necessarily have leaned toward Gorbachëv rather than Chernenko when it became clear that Andropov was dying. But two others who were promoted to full membership of the Politburo under Andropov, Mikhail Solomentsev and Vitaliy Vorotnikov, were people whose careers had either stagnated or (in Vorotnikov's case) suffered a setback under Brezhnev;⁶² given the influence Chernenko was exercising in those years, they would be more than likely to favor Gorbachëv who had become the Politburo member closest to Andropov and who was, quite clearly, the man Andropov wished to succeed him.⁶³ It is also probable that Viktor Chebrikov, who had worked closely with Andropov at the KGB for 15 years and who was promoted to candidate membership of the Politburo in December 1983, would be favorably disposed toward Gorbachëv.

Taken together with the support of Ryzhkov and Ligachëv, this undoubtedly gave Gorbachëv a strong position within the top leadership team even while Andropov's health was declining. Yet, Chernenko remained the senior secretary in terms of length of time as joint member of the Politburo and Secretariat, and, during Andropov's absence through illness, he was able to regain some of the influence he was visibly losing in the earlier months of Andropov's general secretaryship. It was he who chaired Politburo meetings in Andropov's absence, and it was to him that those who were alarmed at the speed of Andropov's departure from Brezhnev's policy of "stability of cadres"⁶⁴ turned for respite when it became evident that Andropov would not recover and that the choice of successor was essentially between the elderly protégé of Brezhnev and the much younger and more vigorous protégé of Andropov. Within the top leadership team and, no doubt, within the Central Committee as a whole, there was a majority ready to settle for a quieter life.

⁶²Solomentsev had spent 12 years as a candidate member of the Politburo before being promoted to full membership at the December 1983 Central Committee plenum. Vorotnikov, after serving as first deputy chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers from 1975 until 1979, was dispatched to Cuba as Soviet ambassador (a definite demotion) and only brought back to the center in two stages by Andropov. First, after Andropov became one of the senior secretaries of the Central Committee in May 1982, he recalled Vorotnikov to clean up the Krasnodar *kray* after securing the removal of the corrupt Sergey Medunov. Then, in 1983, when Solomentsev succeeded Avids Peļše as chairman of the Party Control Committee, Vorotnikov was given Solomentsev's previous job of chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers.

⁶³That Andropov, even from his sickbed, still had his hands on the levers of power in late 1983 is indicated by the four changes made to the top leadership team at the December plenum and by his remarkably authoritative speech, written in the first person, and read to the plenary session in his absence (see *Pravda*, Dec. 27, 1983, pp. 1–2).

⁶⁴See note 19.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, Mar. 20, 1983, p. 2.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰That is a point to which I shall return when discussing Gorbachëv's policy orientations in the final section of this article.

⁶¹Some of the evidence for this is collected by Jerry Hough in his "Andropov's First Year," and by Marc Zlotnik in "Chernenko Succeeds."



Politburo member Geydar Aliyev addresses the April 22, 1985, party gathering marking the 115th anniversary of Lenin's birth; at the right in the second row is the new party general secretary, Mikhail Gorbachëv; to Aliyev's right is Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi.

—Wide World.

It seems likely that Gorbachëv and his supporters recognized that there was a majority for Chernenko and did not push his candidacy too hard. Instead, they used his strong power base as a bargaining position to ensure that his responsibilities would be still further extended and that he would become the number two man in the Chernenko Politburo and Chernenko's heir apparent. That is not to say that the succession to Chernenko was definitively settled at the same time as the succession to Andropov, for no Politburo can bind its successors. It could not have been known then how long Chernenko would live, which other members of the Politburo would die or fall into political disfavor in the meantime, and, hence, what would be the composition of the selectorate that would choose Chernenko's successor when the time came. There was at least enough uncertainty to give any waverers within the leadership who were not firmly committed either to Chernenko or to Gorbachëv, but who might themselves nurture aspirations to the top job, an incentive to support the older man.

That some of those close to Chernenko may not have been wholly reconciled to Gorbachëv's number two position was suggested by the rather peculiar treatment of his speech to the Central Committee plenum on February 13, 1984, which elected Chernenko to the general secretaryship. The official communiqué from the plenum,

published in *Pravda* and the other daily newspapers the following day, did not so much as mention the fact that Gorbachëv had addressed the Central Committee members. It was only when the proceedings of the plenum appeared in booklet form and in the pages of party journals such as *Kommunist*⁶⁵ and *Partiynaya zhizn'*⁶⁶ several days later that the text of Gorbachëv's address was published. His short speech was notable both for its emphasis on the fact that the party would continue on the course worked out by the 26th Party Congress and by the November 1982 and June and December 1983 plenums of the Central Committee (that is to say, emphasizing preponderantly the course set in the Andropov period) and for its expression of his conviction that members of the Central Committee would act "in the spirit of unity and cohesion" that had characterized the February 1984 plenum.

The strength of Gorbachëv's position was made still clearer in April 1984 when it was he who proposed Chernenko for the chairmanship of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. The main emphasis of Gorbachëv's speech was on how the experience of the past few years had shown the necessity of combining

⁶⁵*Kommunist*, No. 3, February 1984, p. 14.

⁶⁶*Partiynaya zhizn'*, No. 5, March 1984, p. 12.

the posts of general secretary and head of state in view of the party's leading role within Soviet society and the part played by the general secretary in the conduct of foreign policy.⁶⁷ When Andropov had become general secretary, there was just one precedent—that of Brezhnev—for the general secretary combining the party leadership with the chairmanship of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and it was for only the last five years of his 18 years as general secretary that Brezhnev was also the Presidium chairman. That there was still some doubt after Brezhnev's death as to whether this was not too much authority to place in the hands of one man was indicated by the fact that it was not at the first meeting of the Supreme Soviet after Andropov became general secretary (the one held in late November 1982) but only in June 1983 that he became head of state. The elevation of Chernenko to the chairmanship of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet within two months of his becoming general secretary, and the terms in which Gorbachëv proposed him, have surely made the combination of these posts a firmly established convention. It is to be expected that at the first meeting of the Supreme Soviet to be held during his general secretaryship, Gorbachëv will become chairman of the Presidium, just as it can be taken for granted that (like Andropov and Chernenko before him) he has been acting as chairman of the Defense Council from the outset of his party leadership.

Apart from his role in proposing Chernenko as head of state, Gorbachëv's number two position within the party was evident early on in Chernenko's general secretaryship from his additional responsibilities—negotiated, no doubt, at the time of the succession. Gorbachëv took over from Chernenko the chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet of the Union of the USSR Supreme Soviet,⁶⁸ becoming at the same time the overseer of international affairs within the Central Committee Secretariat. He also became secretarial overlord of ideology and culture.⁶⁹ Thus, he was accorded what

was, in effect, the old Suslov portfolio but without having to relinquish his responsibilities for the economy and party cadres—a stronger position than even Suslov ever had and which was made possible by the fact that he was one of only two senior secretaries⁷⁰ (the general secretary apart) throughout Chernenko's 13 months as party leader. The other was Romanov, who appeared to be supervising both the Administrative Organs Department of the Central Committee (which in turn oversees the military and the KGB) and the Defense Industry Department.⁷¹

One institutional interest with which Gorbachëv has had few links hitherto is the military. He was too young to serve in the armed forces during the war, and the time when he reached military age was one in which demobilization was taking precedence over recruitment. This could have been a disadvantage for him as compared with Romanov who served in the Soviet army from 1941 until 1945⁷² and whose official duties in the Secretariat preserved his links with the military. But the fact



The medals of Marshal Dmitriy Ustinov, Politburo member and minister of defense, on display at the Kremlin wall where his ashes were interred on December 24, 1984.

⁶⁷ *Pravda*, Apr. 12, 1984, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Gorbachëv has had varied experience of Supreme Soviet work. Before taking over the Foreign Affairs Commission chairmanship, he was from 1970 to 1974 a member of the Nature Conservation Commission, from 1974 to 1979 chairman of the Commission for Youth Affairs, and from 1979 to 1984 chairman of the Legislative Proposals Commission of the Soviet of the Union.

⁶⁹ The fullest confirmation of this came when Gorbachëv made a major speech on Dec. 10, 1984, to the All-Union Conference on "The Perfecting of Developed Socialism and the Ideological Work of the Party in the Light of the Decisions of the June (1983) Plenum of the Central Committee."

⁷⁰ Or *super-secretaries*—those who combine their secretaryship with full Politburo membership and so qualify to supervise several departments of the Central Committee and one or more of the other secretaries.

⁷¹ It was, for example, Romanov who chaired Marshal Dmitriy Ustinov's funeral commission and who made the principal funeral speech. See *Pravda*, Dec. 22, 1984, p. 1, and Dec. 25, 1984, p. 1.

⁷² See *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR: Desyatyy sozyv*, p. 379.

—TASS from SOVFOTO.



British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher with Soviet Politburo member Mikhail Gorbachëv during his visit to London in December 1984.

—Sagansky-Spooner/Gamma-Liaison.

that the military remains under firm party control has been clearer than ever in recent years, and there is no evidence that the army played any part in the elevation to the general secretaryship of either Chernenko or Gorbachëv.⁷³ One succession earlier, Ustinov had been a strong supporter of Andropov, but Ustinov was essentially a civilian (albeit one with quite exceptional military experience), and in the context of the succession, his party standing was more important than was his office as minister of defense. The fact that there is not the slightest reason to suppose that his successor, Marshal Sergey Sokolov, played any role in the election of Gorbachëv merely underlines this. It may have been helpful for Gorbachëv that the assertive Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov was replaced in early September 1984 as chief of the General Staff by Marshal Sergey Akhromeyev.⁷⁴ Ogarkov's demotion put him out of the running for the succession to Ustinov as minister of defense. Ustinov died on December 20, 1984, and had been seriously ill since October.⁷⁵ He was still in the public eye in September and must have played a part, and possibly the leading part, in the removal of Ogarkov as chief of staff. But this merely underlines the fact that the Soviet top

brass have been even more firmly subordinated to the civilian party leadership in the post-Brezhnev era than under Brezhnev (who had closer connections with senior officers, dating from the war, than had any of his successors).

When Gorbachëv made his December 1984 visit to Britain, his position as number two man within the Soviet leadership was so strong that it was unlikely that his British stay would be of decisive importance to his leadership prospects. Nevertheless, he accepted an element of risk inasmuch as by engaging in discussions with a wide variety of British politicians—including the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher—and by bringing himself within focus of the Western mass media, he was guaranteeing that if he made serious mistakes they would be widely publicized. In fact, however, he so much impressed all who met him both with his ability and personality that the visit could only have strengthened his already strong position in Moscow, not least in the eyes of the Soviet foreign policy establishment.⁷⁶ Commentary in the British mass media, while not always on the most serious level, was overwhelmingly favorable. Even Mrs. Thatcher delivered an accolade that she has accorded no other Soviet leader: "I like Mr. Gorbachëv. We can do business together."⁷⁷ And one of the British politicians with the broadest international experience, Dennis Healey, former defense minister and chancellor of the exchequer and now shadow foreign secretary, described Gorbachëv as "a man of exceptional charm" who was "frank and flexible with a composure full of inner strength."⁷⁸ Healey, whose discussions with Soviet leaders stretch back to Khrushchev, added: "For all who met him in Britain, he left one puzzling question: how can a man who appears so genuinely nice and human run the Soviet system?" The answer, he suggested, might lie in the "immense authority" that Gorbachëv had impressed on those who met him.⁷⁹

⁷⁶The Soviet press, radio, and television accorded extensive coverage to Gorbachëv's visit to Britain and reported a number of the positive comments of British politicians and businessmen and the British media on the way it was going. See *SWB*, Dec. 17–24, 1984.

⁷⁷*Financial Times* (London), Dec. 22, 1984, p. 26.

⁷⁸Dennis Healey, "Gorbachev Face to Face," *Newsweek* (New York), Mar. 25, 1985, p. 15. This tallies with the following recollection of Mlynář: "Gorbachëv the student was not only very intelligent and gifted, he was an open man, whose intelligence never carried over to arrogance; he wanted—and was able—to listen to the opinions of all he spoke to. Loyal and personally honest, he won an informal and spontaneous authority.... He was conscious of himself as a man who knows that everything he has, he possesses thanks to his own powers, his own talent, his own hard work, and that he has gained nothing via protection or social origin" (loc. cit.).

⁷⁹*Ibid.* Those British politicians who found it easy to establish a rapport with Gorbachëv did not, however, mistake charm for weakness. One who spent a lot of time with Gorbachëv in Britain in his capacity as chairman of the British branch of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Conservative Member of Parliament Peter Temple-Morris, observed later: "He is a serious and cultivated man with a great deal of style. Nevertheless, he is as tough as old boots—that's important to remember" (*Newsweek*, Mar. 25, 1985, p. 10).

⁷³At Chernenko's funeral, in a break with tradition, the top military men did not appear (presumably because they were not invited) with the party leaders on the Lenin mausoleum.

⁷⁴*Krasnaya Zvezda* (Moscow), Sept. 7, 1984, p. 1.

⁷⁵*Pravda*, Dec. 22, 1984, pp. 1–2.

Gorbachëv's strong position in Moscow was reflected also in the extent to which Chernenko, though accorded constant praise in the Soviet mass media and treated in the speeches of other Soviet politicians as the ultimate authority, was operating with Andropov's agenda. He, too, had to take up the themes of discipline and reform, and though they were pursued with less vigor and expounded with less urgency than by Andropov, they became more pronounced as Chernenko's health weakened and as Gorbachëv's influence grew. This was reflected in some of Chernenko's later speeches and articles,⁸⁰ as well as in the further disciplinary action taken against Chernenko's former colleague from Moldavian days, Nikolay Shchëlov, who had been dismissed from his post as minister of internal affairs under Andropov in December 1982 and expelled from the Central Committee in June 1983, and who as far into Chernenko's general secretaryship as November 1984 was additionally stripped of his rank of army general.⁸¹ Shchëlov died the following month and was rumored to have committed suicide.⁸²

There were numerous other signs during the last months of Chernenko's life of Gorbachëv's enhanced authority and of the fact that he had a clearly established lead over any potential party rival. For certain purposes, protocol demanded that Tikhonov, as chairman of the Council of Ministers, should take precedence over Gorbachëv. Thus, when the leaders gave speeches to their RSFSR Supreme Soviet constituents in ascending order of rank, the last three speeches were given by Gorbachëv, Tikhonov, and Chernenko (in absentia)⁸³, the same order in which they had made their USSR Supreme Soviet speeches a year earlier.⁸⁴ The leaders' acceptances of their Supreme Soviet nominations were printed in the same order of importance (with Gorbachëv in third place after Tikhonov, who, at the age of 79 and with a background of ministerial work, was not, of course, a remotely conceivable candidate for the succession to Chernenko) and, in terms of number of constituency nominations of leaders as published by *Pravda*, Gorbachëv was actually put on a par with Tikhonov, with only Chernenko receiving more nominations and all other Politburo members getting fewer.⁸⁵

When these various esoteric signs are taken in conjunction with Gromyko's statements, quoted earlier, that Gorbachëv had already been "leading" the Secretariat and chairing the Politburo during Chernenko's lifetime, it can be seen that Gorbachëv had the succession firmly within his grasp before Chernenko died. The very fact, furthermore, that the Soviet Union had had three leaders in a row who were for lengthy periods incapable of carrying out all of their public functions had made Gorbachëv's relative youth—considered a handicap dur-

ing the two previous successions—into a positive asset. Thus, while there may well be those within the top leadership team and the Central Committee who are apprehensive lest Gorbachëv's new broom should sweep them aside, or lest he should encourage too much policy innovation, there is little reason to doubt Gromyko's assertion that the Politburo members were unanimous in nominating Gorbachëv⁸⁶ since it is not the custom for Soviet politicians to oppose directly what is clearly the winning side.

Gorbachëv as General Secretary

What is the political climate in which Gorbachëv has come to power, and what can be said of his policy orientations, priorities, leadership style, and personnel changes, as well as future prospects?

The political climate in the Soviet Union today is more conducive to policy innovation than it has frequently been in the past. In Soviet terms, there are both "objective" and "subjective" reasons for this. Objectively, there has been the slowdown in economic growth rate, and this is being openly analyzed by Soviet scholars.⁸⁷ The ordinary Soviet citizen may be unfamiliar with the statistics, but is only too well aware of the problems that remain to be overcome. In the international arena, there is the dilemma posed by the significant increase in American military expenditure, by a general worsening of relations with the United States and with Western Europe dating from the late 1970's, and by relatively static relations with China and Japan, which by the time of Chernenko's death, had improved only marginally. Subjectively, there is the fact that Andropov had raised expectations of qualitative improvements in the economy and of a greater sense of purpose in Soviet society, and there was some popular frustration that under Chernenko the country seemed to be marking time again. There is widespread public support for a revival of

⁸⁰See, for example, Chernenko's speech to the conference of People's Controllers, *Pravda*, Oct. 6, 1984, pp. 1-2; his article, "To Meet the Demands of Developed Socialism," in *Kommunist*, No. 18, December 1984, pp. 3-21; and his RSFSR Supreme Soviet election speech, read for him in his absence (through illness) little more than two weeks before his death, in *Pravda*, Feb. 23, 1985, pp. 1-2.

⁸¹For the dates during which Chernenko and Shchëlov worked together in Moldavia, see *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta: Desyatyy sozyv*, pp. 475 and 494. For the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet decree depriving Shchëlov of his military rank for bringing discredit to it and for abuse of office, see *Vedomosti verkhovnogo soveta SSSR* (Moscow), No. 46, Nov. 14, 1984, p. 860.

⁸²*The Times* (London), Dec. 19, 1984, p. 12.

⁸³*Pravda*, Feb. 21, 1985, p. 2; Feb. 22, 1985, p. 2; and Feb. 23, 1985, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, Mar. 1, 1984, p. 2; Mar. 2, 1984, p. 2; and Mar. 3, 1984, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, Jan. 4, 1985, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁶*Materialy vnocherednogo plenuma tsentral'nogo komiteta KPSS* . . . , p. 8.

⁸⁷See, notably, M. I. Piskotin, *Sotsializm i gosudarstvennoye upravleniye* (Socialism and State Administration), Moscow, Nauka, 1984.

détente (which the more sophisticated Soviet party intellectuals recognize would have to be accompanied by more clearly defined "rules of the game") and a readiness to welcome more Soviet diplomatic initiatives as distinct from mere reactions to events.

On the specific issue of economic reform, it is of great importance to recognize that a shift of opinion has taken place within the Soviet party intelligentsia, so that while argument continues, far more people now accept that minor tinkering with the economic mechanism is not enough. There is, however, resistance from powerful sections of the party and state apparatus to reducing the powers of ministries and giving greater autonomy to industrial associations and enterprises and still greater resistance to incorporating market elements within the economic system. But from the very top of the party hierarchy, and not least from Gorbachëv himself, there has been encouragement to social scientists to be less slow and timid in tackling "the resolution of the key theoretical problems of our development."⁸⁸

The *short-term* changes that actually take place are unlikely to be as far-reaching as some of the proposals that have been published by Soviet scholars. But while Gorbachëv was already exercising influence on the broad lines of economic policy under Andropov and Chernenko, encouragement was given to the reform-oriented Institute of Economics and Organization of Industrial Production of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences, based in Novosibirsk. At the June 1983 plenary session, two economic institutes were singled out for criticism by Chernenko in his speech, and it is difficult to say how much of an influence Gorbachëv had over that, though it is very likely that he had some. Chernenko criticized, on the one hand, the relatively conservative Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow and the much more reformist Central Institute of Economics and Mathematics (TsEMI). The common thread in the criticism, however, would appear to be that neither institute was sufficiently closely in touch with real economic life or was offering enough practical guidance to policymakers—a charge that could not be leveled against the Novosibirsk Institute, which works in close cooperation with industry, as can be seen from the pages of its monthly journal, *EKO*. Academician Abel Aganbegyan of Novosibirsk appears to be in good standing with Gorbachëv,⁸⁹ and it is worth recalling that the frank critique by his Institute colleague Academician Tat'yana Zaslavskaya of the obstacles to

economic progress in the Soviet Union and of the deficiencies of Soviet social science in producing a "fully elaborated 'model' for the new economic mechanism"⁹⁰ was delivered to a closed seminar under the joint auspices of the economic departments of the party's Central Committee, the State Planning Committee (Gosplan), and the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.⁹¹

Interesting though Zaslavskaya's paper is, it should not distract attention (as it has tended to) from works officially published in the Soviet Union that are no less open-minded and innovative. On the issue of economic reform, these have in the last few years included the works of jurists and political scientists as well as economists.⁹² One significant example is a book published in September 1984 (which appears to have been quite overlooked by Western scholars) written by the chief editor of the journal, *Sovetskoye gosudarstvo i pravo*, Mikhail Piskotin. Entitled *Socialism and State Administration*,⁹³ this work records the secular decline in the Soviet economic growth rate from the 1950's to the early 1980's and observes that the decline has "deeper causes than simple mistakes in the work of particular organs of government, a low level of exactingness, or negligence in moral-educational work."⁹⁴ It is impossible to do justice to Piskotin's quite lengthy and closely argued book in a few lines, but it is worth noting his emphasis on the fact that the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers did not consider their July 14, 1983, joint resolution on the broadening of the rights of production associations and enterprises to be a "full and final solution of the problem of strengthening the independence of the primary economic unit."⁹⁵ Piskotin criticizes "market socialism" but, significantly, is not opposed to every use of the market mechanism. As he puts it: "Market socialism does not exist wherever there is a market and commodity-production relations, but only where this market becomes the sole or main regulator of the economy."⁹⁶ Accordingly, he is sympathetic to the Hungarian economic reform, though he stresses that this experience is "impossible to transfer mechanistically to the conditions of the Soviet Union."⁹⁷

⁹⁰"The Novosibirsk Report," *Survey* (London), Spring 1984, p. 100.

⁹¹Philip Hanson, "The Novosibirsk Report: Comment," *ibid.*, p. 83.

⁹²I have drawn attention to some of them in my article, "Political Science in the Soviet Union: A New Stage of Development?" in *Soviet Studies* (Glasgow), July 1984, pp. 317–44, esp. pp. 334–35.

⁹³*Sotsializm i gosudarstvennoye upravleniye*, op. cit.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 161. Gorbachëv's positive evaluation of the Hungarian economic reform may be inferred from an editorial published in *Pravda* less than three weeks after his succession which speaks of Hungary's "bold, innovative, and at the same time realistic, approach to the working-out of plans for socioeconomic development" (*Pravda*, Mar. 30, 1985, p. 1).

⁸⁸M. S. Gorbachëv, *Zhivoye tvorchestvo naroda* (The Living Creation of the People), Moscow, Politizdat, 1984. This was a speech delivered on Dec. 10, 1984, to the All-Union Conference on "The Perfecting of Developed Socialism and the Ideological Work of the Party...."

⁸⁹See his articles in *Pravda*, July 14, 1984, p. 2; and *Trud* (Moscow), Aug. 28, 1984, p. 2.

Even more radical calls for economic and, indeed, political reform have come from a sector head in the Institute of State and Law, Boris Kurashvili,⁹⁸ who has laid great stress on the need for "democratization of the state administration," and has noted that many of those working in the state apparatus consider the present ministerial system—a product, essentially, of the 1930's—to be the only system possible. Kurashvili profoundly disagrees with such a view but recognizes that reform will meet with the opposition of "conservative and inactive elements in the state apparatus."⁹⁹

Whether Gorbachëv will follow the advice of the advocates of more far-reaching economic reform will depend not upon him alone, but upon the strength of the various interest groups involved (above all, in the apparatus), many of whom are opposed to reform. The opposition is to be found not only within the state administration, for at every level of the party apparatus there are departments that work closely with the ministerial network and whose functionaries tend to view issues through the same lenses. Already under Andropov and even under Chernenko, it was clear that within the top party leadership there were those acutely aware of current problems, and who had a more open mind about ways of tackling them than had many lower level officials. Certainly, Gorbachëv himself has given every indication of willingness to listen to constructive proposals for within-system change, and those jurists with ideas for reform should not have too much difficulty of access. It is worth noting in that connection that the director of the Institute of State and Law in Moscow, Academician Vladimir Kudryavtsev (under whose guidance a more sociological approach to the study of law has been encouraged in the Institute over the past decade) was one of the speakers at the RSFSR Supreme Soviet election meeting addressed by Gorbachëv on February 20, 1985.¹⁰⁰

Though Gorbachëv's speeches generally repay close study, the one that is more revealing of all those he has made to date in respect of the insight it affords on his

policy orientation and priorities is his speech to the conference on ideological work in December 1984. Though what was published from it in the mass media made interesting reading,¹⁰¹ it was less than half of what Gorbachëv actually said. In directing attention to some of the salient points from the speech, I draw in the following paragraphs exclusively from the parts that were not published in *Pravda*. These include some of the most innovative passages and those most revealing of Gorbachëv's style—and at the same time the least known because of their more limited circulation.¹⁰²

On the economy, Gorbachëv directly referred to the "slowdown of economic growth at the end of the 1970's and beginning of the 1980's" and said that this was to be explained "not only by the coincidence of a number of unfavorable factors but also by the fact that the necessity of changes in some aspects of production relationships was not discovered in good time."¹⁰³ This particular argument is very much in line with the views of economic reformers such as Piskotin and Zaslavskaya, as is his attention to the problem of the correspondence of production relations and productive forces.¹⁰⁴ Gorbachëv himself insists that "the correspondence of production relations to productive forces is not reproduced just by itself, but demands constant, purposeful work in the perfecting of the entire economic system of socialism."¹⁰⁵ While he observes that the dialectical relationship between production relations and productive forces cannot under socialism be an antagonistic one, he also notes that the unwarranted preservation of "obsolete elements in production relations may bring about a deterioration of the economic and social situation."¹⁰⁶

Among the practical economic issues touched upon by Gorbachëv in his December 1984 speech were those of commodity-monetary relations and the need for "serious scientific recommendations on the application in contemporary conditions of such economic levers as price, cost, profit, credit, and certain others";¹⁰⁷ the built-in conservatism of much of existing investment policy;¹⁰⁸ and the importance of improving distribution relations, since "this is a most sensitive sphere that exercises an active influence not only on production but also on the consciousness and the mood of people."¹⁰⁹

⁹⁸See B. P. Kurashvili, "State Administration of the National Economy: Prospects for Development," *Sovetskoye gosudarstvo i pravo* (Moscow), No. 6, 1982, pp. 38–48; Kurashvili, "Objective Laws of State Administration," *ibid.*, No. 10, 1983, pp. 36–44; and Kurashvili, "The Fates of Branch Management," *EKO* (Novosibirsk), No. 10, 1983, pp. 34–57.

⁹⁹Kurashvili, "Objective Laws...."

¹⁰⁰*Pravda*, Feb. 21, 1985, p. 2. One of the scholars whose advice Piskotin acknowledges in the introduction to his recent book is Zaslavskaya. Both he, in that book, and Zaslavskaya in her 1983 report single out for special praise the work of Kurashvili. This is a good example of the kind of opinion grouping or informal group that is of great importance in Soviet politics. These three scholars are, of course, just part of a much wider opinion grouping with broadly similar views on the direction the Soviet economy and Soviet society should be taking. Needless to say, there are informal groups of conservatives and dogmatists as well as of reformers. For a pioneering discussion of the group phenomenon in the USSR by a Soviet scholar, see A. V. Obolonskiy, "Formal and Informal Groups in the State Administrative Apparatus," *Sovetskoye gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 5, 1983, pp. 28–35. See also Brown, "Political Science in the Soviet Union," esp. pp. 332–33 and 335.

¹⁰¹See, e.g., *Pravda*, Dec. 11, 1984, p. 2.

¹⁰²Gorbachëv, *Zhivoye tvorchestvo naroda*. The print-run of this Politizdat booklet is 100,000 which is, of course, substantial, but not to be compared with *Pravda*, which has a circulation of over 10 million. The booklet very rapidly sold out.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

¹⁰⁴See Piskotin, *Sotsializm i gosudarstvennoye upravleniye*; and "The Novosibirsk Report."

¹⁰⁵Gorbachëv, *Zhivoye tvorchestvo naroda*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 31.

In his references to the social sciences, Gorbachëv's interest in theoretical issues comes out strongly, but so does his insistence that theory should lead to practical benefit. Thus, he observes:

*Not all research institutions work in close connection with practice. Some scholars at times are not able to part company with obsolete conceptions and stereotypes. Their theoretical investigations not infrequently are fitted into preconceived schemes, and they revolve in a circle of scholastic reasoning.*¹¹⁰

Later in the same speech he referred to the force of inertia and to the attempt "to squeeze new phenomena into the Procrustean bed of moribund conceptions."¹¹¹ The tone and content of Gorbachëv's remarks make clear that he is no friend of dogmatists and that reform-minded social scientists can expect encouragement under his leadership, provided they devote attention to "the problems of perfecting developed socialism." This, for Gorbachëv, is "the pressing demand of the times, the basic criterion for evaluating the activity of social scientists."¹¹²

It was of greater importance than has generally been recognized that under Andropov there was a shift from Brezhnev's somewhat complacent view of "developed socialism" to the standpoint that the Soviet Union was only "at the beginning" of the stage of developed socialism, a shift that emphasized existing shortcomings and how much scope there was for improving (or in Soviet terms, "perfecting") both the economic and the political system. In his December speech, Gorbachëv did not neglect the political system and made much use of the term, "self-management" (*samoupravleniye*),¹¹³ urging that the various levels and units within the political system be given more space (*prostor*) within which to operate. He attacked attempts to regulate all and everything from the center and stressed the importance of "every link of the political system" exercising its own functions.¹¹⁴ In a significant passage, he observed: "A qualified leadership not only does not limit but, on the contrary, opens up space for initiative of people, of work collectives, and of local organs."¹¹⁵

As general secretary, Gorbachëv has returned to the theme of devolving greater responsibility and financial autonomy to enterprises and to brigades of workers. In a speech to a meeting of economic managers and special-

ists in April of this year he spoke of the need to release managers from the fetters of superfluous instructions, arguing that economic management was now at a level where accountability to higher organs could be decisively decreased. This would free them from "the paper chase" and simultaneously contribute to "the reduction of the managerial apparatus."¹¹⁶ On brigades, Gorbachëv observed that a considerable number had gone over to "a progressive method of work," but there were still many that were going over to financial autonomy only slowly and in which labor productivity was rising only slightly.¹¹⁷

It is tempting to see Gorbachëv's emphasis on devolution of responsibilities and financial autonomy from the center to industrial associations and enterprises in part as a result of the fact that he has a clearer idea of what life is actually like for a provincial factory manager than some of those who have been in the Central Committee apparatus for far longer. Not only has he evidently paid attention to the findings of Academician Aganbegyan and his colleagues on such matters, he has very recent memories of the frustrations of regional life for a highly intelligent official or manager who feels that his abilities are constantly being reined in. (It is the less able officials and managers who feel more comfortable with less responsibility.) It is, indeed, yet another unusual feature of the Gorbachëv succession that the present general secretary should have worked in Moscow for a mere six-and-a-half years. This has its undoubted advantages. It is one reason why there is a breath of real life in Gorbachëv's speeches, a sense of how people are living and working far from the confines of the Central Committee building. Like Andropov, Gorbachëv stresses discipline—"Ultimately, everything stems from a high degree of exactingness toward people, toward leading cadres, toward all of us, comrades"¹¹⁸—however, he knows that this cannot be achieved by exhortation or by cadres policy alone, but has to be built into the economic mechanism.

An important theme for Gorbachëv has been that of the need for the party to give people more information. It is of interest in that connection that the length of the published *Politburo* communiqués has increased since Gorbachëv took over. But to change the habits of a lifetime within the party as a whole is not easy. In his December speech, Gorbachëv quoted a letter from a party member in Minsk who expresses his satisfaction and that of his colleagues with the publication of information

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹³See, e.g., *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹⁶"Initiative, Organization, Effectiveness—Speech of M. S. Gorbachëv," *Pravda*, Apr. 12, 1985, pp. 1–2.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

about Politburo meetings (a practice that Andropov began), but who goes on to point out that "often we members of the party are better informed about the activity of the Politburo of the Central Committee than about the work of the bureau of the primary party organization or of the district committee!"¹¹⁹ Gorbachëv's response was: "A true observation, and it must be given every attention."¹²⁰

Gorbachëv clearly has political as well as economic changes in mind. But to attempt to foist upon him notions of pluralistic democracy would be wrong and misleading. Pluralism is simply not on the political agenda in the Soviet Union. Economic reform is, and even if the next installment of it should fall short of the demands of the situation and of Soviet economic reformers (though they, of course, are not all of one mind), the evidence available on Gorbachëv suggests that he at least will not be deterred by conservatism or, as his power base grows stronger, by vested interests from taking the reform further. If it be true that the Soviet Union is at present a military but not an economic superpower, Gorbachëv's domestic policy can be summarized by saying that he intends to give the highest priority to ensuring that the USSR becomes the second while, in common with other Soviet leaders, remaining determined that it should not cease to be the first. It can, indeed, be argued that for the Soviet Union to maintain its military superpower status, it must increase its economic efficiency and its capacity to generate and diffuse the most advanced technology.

In personnel policy, it is already clear that the Gorbachëv period is not going to be marked by the extremely slow pace of change of the Brezhnev years, still less by the immobility at the top that characterized Chernenko's 13 months as general secretary. Gorbachëv's first six weeks as party leader saw the replacement of many officials at the republican, regional, and city level, and at the first normal Central Committee plenum over which he presided—that held on April 23, 1985—no fewer than five promotions within the top leadership team took place.¹²¹ What is more remarkable is that these included three promotions to full membership of the Politburo and all of them people who can be identified as Gorbachëv allies. No previous general secretary has ever been able to consolidate his position within the leadership so quickly.

The two most important promotions were those of Yegor Ligachëv (aged 64) and Nikolay Ryzhkov (55). Both became full Politburo members without passing

through the candidate stage (the first people to perform that feat of upward political mobility since Gromyko did it in 1973) while retaining their secretaryships of the Central Committee. The only other person in that category is Romanov, and it was, of course, because the ranks of senior secretary had become so depleted that Gorbachëv had the opportunity to promote further his colleagues who had been brought into the leadership by Andropov. The fact, however, that it was they rather than the 60-year-old Vladimir Dolgikh—to whose secretaryship of the Central Committee candidate membership of the Politburo was added at Brezhnev's last Central Committee plenum in May 1982, suggesting he was destined for senior secretaryship—who received promotion indicates how swiftly and effectively the Andropov-Gorbachëv group has overtaken the Brezhnev legates. In terms of their policy orientation, Ryzhkov and Ligachëv are also closely aligned with Gorbachëv. Ryzhkov seems to be at least as sympathetic toward innovation in economic policy and organization as the General Secretary himself, and Ligachëv has been pursuing with some vigor the policy that Andropov began and Gorbachëv favors of crackdown on corruption and ineptitude within the party apparatus and replacement of officials who do not meet the more exacting standards now being applied.

The elevation of Viktor Chebrikov (62), the KGB chairman, from candidate to full membership of the Politburo, should also strengthen Gorbachëv's position within the top leadership. Chebrikov worked closely with Andropov for 15 years,¹²² and it was during Andropov's general secretaryship that he received both of his previous major promotions—to the chairmanship of the KGB and to Politburo candidate membership.¹²³ There is every reason to suppose that Chebrikov transferred his loyalty from Andropov to Gorbachëv, the man Andropov was grooming for the succession. Chebrikov's full Politburo membership was presumably also well received at KGB headquarters, since it restores to that body the political status it enjoyed between April 1973 and May 1982 when Andropov, as KGB chief, was also a full member of the Politburo.

The promotion of Marshal Sokolov, Ustinov's successor as minister of defense, to candidate membership of the Politburo, gives the military an institutional voice once again in the highest counsels of the party. Sokolov would appear to be the only one of the five people promoted to be without links to Gorbachëv, though given his age (73) that is of no long-term significance. The fifth person to receive advancement at the April plenum

¹¹⁹Gorbachëv, *Zhivoye tvorchestvo naroda*, p. 31.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹*Pravda*, Apr. 24, 1985, p. 1.

¹²²See *Yezhegodnik Bol'shoy Sovetskoy Entsiklopedii* 1981, p. 608.

¹²³See *Pravda*, Dec. 18, 1982, p. 2; and Dec. 27, 1983, p. 1.



Individuals promoted at the April 23, 1985, plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: above, from left to right, three new full members of the CC CPSU Politburo—party secretaries Nikolay Ryzhkov and Yegor Ligachëv, and KGB Chairman Viktor Chebrikov—and a new candidate Politburo member, USSR Minister of Defense Marshal Sergey Sokolov; at right, new CC secretary for agriculture, Viktor Nikonov.

—TASS from SOVFOTO.

was Viktor Nikonov (56) who has become a secretary of the Central Committee. As minister of agriculture for the Russian republic, he was obviously well known to Gorbachëv and had been working under his jurisdiction. He has now been elevated by Gorbachëv to a position more important than that of the minister of agriculture for the USSR as a whole, since it seems clear that he will be the agricultural overlord within the Secretariat.¹²⁴

All in all, these April plenum changes strengthen and at the same time somewhat rejuvenate the top leadership team, though Gorbachëv himself remains the youngest member. They confirm that Gorbachëv is already wielding great authority within the party and should make it easier for him to put forward and to implement those policies that he believes will meet the needs of the Soviet Union.

In the realm of foreign policy, Gorbachëv has already

demonstrated in his meetings with Western politicians visiting Moscow that detailed grasp of the issues which had impressed his British hosts last December. The speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill, Jr., is but the latest to assess Gorbachëv as formidably accomplished. "About his ability, his talents, his frankness, his openness, I was tremendously impressed," he said.¹²⁵ O'Neill added that he did not perceive any major change in Soviet policy.

Policy change, however, is unlikely to be announced unilaterally¹²⁶ and is more likely to emerge in the course

¹²⁴For Nikonov's biography, see *Yezhegodnik Bol'shoy Sovetskoy Entsiklopedii* 1981, p. 592.

¹²⁵*International Herald Tribune*, Apr. 11, 1985, p. 1.

¹²⁶However, Gorbachëv did announce a Soviet unilateral moratorium due to last until November 1985 (when the position would be reviewed) on the further deployment of Soviet

of serious negotiations, should these take place. It is not surprising that so far what the outside world has seen is mainly a change of style. But Gorbachëv seems determined to improve the Soviet Union's external relations on several fronts. He has accepted invitations to visit France and the Federal Republic of Germany, and he has accepted in principle an invitation to meet with President Ronald Reagan, though the details of time and place have still at the time of writing to be decided.¹²⁷ He is likely to make a determined effort to improve relations with China, and the current leaderships in Moscow and Beijing would appear to have better prospects of moving closer together than at any time over the past two decades. Already the two countries had renewed their recognition of each other as "socialist states," and the editor of *Pravda*, in an interview given in Belgrade, has noted that more recently there has been in Chinese statements an improvement "in tone and in terminology, such as 'Comrade Gorbachëv,' which did not exist before."¹²⁸ Given Gorbachëv's acknowledged ability to argue the Soviet case flexibly and reasonably, and without resort either to dogma or to a script, the Soviet Union can well afford to be much more active diplomatically in the coming years than it has in the recent past.

Gorbachëv, who has made the journey from kolkhoz to Kremlin in record time, is about as likely to question the foundations of the system that enabled him to rise from humble origins to the highest office in the land as an American president who rose from log cabin to White House would be to question the wisdom of the Founding Fathers. He is a true believer in the Soviet system who is at the same time far from complacent about it and con-

scious of many of the ways in which it must be improved. He may yet have a greater opportunity than any individual since the death of Stalin to make an impact on it.

Gromyko said in his nomination speech that Gorbachëv was "a man of strong convictions" who "states his position frankly, whether or not it is to the liking of his interlocutor."¹²⁹ Mlynář has described Gorbachëv as one for whom convictions play a decisive role in politics: "He has never been a cynic, and he is, in character, a reformer who considers politics as a means to an end, with its objective being to meet the needs of people."¹³⁰

Gorbachëv is not, however, the kind of "conviction politician" who does not listen to what others have to say. Because of the extent to which power is shared at the top of the Soviet hierarchy, he *could* not be (especially before he became general secretary). But it is noteworthy that he listens also to specialist advisers and to his subordinates. British politicians who had extensive dealings with Gorbachëv last December observed that he had an easy relationship with the group he led. There was neither bullying from the one side nor obsequiousness from the other. Members of the group with something to say felt free to speak up, though there was never any doubt about Gorbachëv's ultimate authority.

Every Soviet leader so far has been different in political style and, to a degree, in political priorities. Already Gorbachëv has revealed some of his policy preferences, but these may become clearer as his power increases (as it surely will). His policy aims may also be modified by changing circumstances since he is a man who learns from his experiences and who is open to reason. The responsibilities and burdens placed on Gorbachëv's shoulders are immense. But this time round the Soviet selectorate has chosen the man who, of all those in their midst, seems best equipped to carry them.

medium-range missiles in Europe. This announcement came in the course of an interview of Gorbachëv by the editor of *Pravda* (see *Pravda*, Apr. 8, 1985, p. 1). In his meeting with Speaker O'Neill and other US congressmen in the Kremlin on April 10, Gorbachëv said that the United States had displayed "absolutely incomprehensible haste" in declaring its negative attitude to this "important and constructive gesture of good will." See *SWB*, SU/7923/i and SU/7923/A11-2, Apr. 12, 1985.

¹²⁷On this, see *International Herald Tribune*, Apr. 3, 1985, pp. 1-2; and *Pravda*, Apr. 8, 1985, p. 1.

¹²⁸*SWB*, SU/7920/B/1, Apr. 9, 1985.

¹²⁹*Materialy vneocherednogo plenuma tsentral'nogo komiteta KPSS . . .*, p. 6.

¹³⁰Mlynář, loc. cit.

Leadership Change in China's Provinces

William deB. Mills

If any lesson can reliably be drawn from the zigzag course of domestic politics in the People's Republic of China (PRC) since 1949 it is that no leader can leave office confident that his policies will be implemented faithfully in his absence. The apparent permanence of the recent shift in emphasis from politicization to professional expertise as the basic criterion of bureaucratic excellence, and the concomitant focus on economic development at the expense of political goals, is an illusion camouflaging a much less stable political reality. That reality includes a massive Chinese Communist Party (CCP) with some 40 million members, one-third of whom joined the party during the leftist upheavals of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and are therefore for reasons of both training and self-preservation likely to oppose the current stress on technical competence and economic pragmatism.¹ The potential for resentment on the part of these millions of party members is considerable, especially since these Cultural Revolution activists now see their careers threatened by the suddenly favored experts, many of whom they had personally driven out of office in the late 1960's.

¹See William deB. Mills, "Generational Change in China," *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), November-December 1983, pp. 16-35, esp. pp. 16-20, for a discussion of this assumption. "Generational Change in China" treats the central leadership changes that constituted the basis on which the events analyzed in the present article unfolded.

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That Deng Xiaoping foresees this as a threat to the perpetuation of his policies once he steps down—which can hardly be postponed much longer, given his advanced age—has been evident since the 12th Party Congress in September 1982, for it was there that he launched his program to transfer power from veteran revolutionary leaders of his own era to a new generation of younger, better educated officials. As a result, nearly half of the members of the previous Central Committee (CC) were dropped.²

But it was not until the spring of 1983 that the seriousness and scope of Deng's commitment to bring a new generation of leaders to power before the old leadership retired became apparent. Between early March and late April, in a centrally mandated streamlining and rejuvenation process which to the outsider seemed to occur with astounding speed and lack of rancor, some 950 of China's 1,350 top provincial leaders retired and were replaced by about 160 new officials. This left China's provinces under the control of much smaller leading bodies composed of officials, who, presumably, would be both more efficient and more responsive to central policies. In brief, Deng attempted to transfer regional power to men of his own choosing to solidify the changes that had been made in the spring 1982 streamlining of the State Council apparatus³ and in the fall 1982 selection of the 12th Central Committee.

Following a summary of the leadership changes that took place during the spring of 1983 at the provincial

²See Hong Yong Lee, "China's 12th Central Committee: Rehabilitated Cadres and Technocrats," *Asian Survey* (Berkeley, CA), June 1983, pp. 673-91, and Mills, loc. cit.

³State Council reorganization is discussed in John Burns's useful background study "Reforming China's Bureaucracy, 1979-82," *Asian Survey*, June 1983, pp. 692-722, esp. pp. 707-14. In brief, according to a May 4, 1982, New China News Agency (hereafter Xinhua) report, the State Council reduced its number of vice-premiers from 13 to 2 and its number of ministries from 52 to 41. See Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: China* (Washington, DC—hereafter *FBIS-CHI*), May 4, 1982, pp. K/1-5.