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The Soviet Anticorruption Campaign: Causes, Consequences, and Prospects



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An Intelligence Assessment

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by  Office
of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are
welcome and may be directed to the Chief,
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**The Soviet Anticorruption Campaign:
Causes, Consequences,
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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 15 July 1985
was used in this report.*

Over the past four years, a campaign to curb corruption at all levels of the political system has become a key feature of the Soviet regime's domestic policy and a central issue in leadership politics. Several factors impelled the leadership to embark on the anticorruption course:

- The crisis in Poland became an object lesson for Soviet officials, who recognized that pervasive corruption had contributed significantly to the erosion of the Polish Communist Party's position.
- Soviet leaders were willing to act on the realization that measures to instill discipline in society and in the elite could have both an economic and a propaganda payoff.
- As the KGB grew in power and prestige, it took a more active role than it had previously done in pushing firm measures against corruption.
- As politicking heightened in the months before Brezhnev's death, KGB chief Yuriy Andropov recognized that charging some of his opponents with corruption could be politically useful.

The anticorruption policy has already had a significant political impact:

- It has helped to boost popular and elite morale and improved the regime's image in the eyes of the population. The campaign unleashed an element of candor and realism about the failures of the system, a prerequisite to remedying the situation. Especially among those who have gained by the campaign—younger, more technocratic cadre members—and for those who identify with its overall goals, confidence about the regime's ability to rule effectively and cope with serious problems has increased.
- The KGB has expanded its mandate, increased its political weight, and emerged as the protector of the party and the system. Other police institutions (for example, the militia) have been made more effective and brought more tightly under the regime's control.
- The party itself has been rejuvenated to a degree, and anticorruption has been used as one vehicle to accomplish cadre changes. A new cadre policy has accompanied the campaign. Most of the personnel changes have occurred at the lower ranks, but since 1982 more than 60 officials have been elevated to positions that in the past warranted full membership on the Central Committee.

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Upon taking power Andropov attempted to implement the anticorruption policy, primarily through coercive measures—seeking to raise the cost of corrupt behavior by increasing the certainty and severity of punishment. His intention to curtail corruption at all levels was apparent in a series of party and government decrees, administrative measures, quiet removals of some corrupt officials, and selected public arrests of others.

Chernenko publicized the regime's continued "commitment" to combat corruption. In practice, he went after easy targets and avoided moves against those officials connected to him or his colleagues. Toward the latter half of his tenure, however, when his health and power were failing, some officials connected to leadership circles in Moscow became targets of the anticorruption campaign. This more vigorous activity probably reflected Gorbachev's political ascendance.

Gorbachev has revitalized the campaign against corruption. He has publicly denounced official abuses in unusually harsh language, calling on the party to rid itself of "moral degenerates," and he has removed a number of corrupt officials. Like his predecessors, Gorbachev undoubtedly realizes that corruption is so deeply rooted that it cannot be eliminated in society or officialdom without systemic changes that are neither desired nor politically possible. Rather than destroying the hydra of corruption altogether, Gorbachev probably sees the campaign as serving several less ambitious purposes:

- It supports his stated goals of cadre renewal and better accountability and performance by bureaucrats. By exposing, censuring, and prosecuting cases of especially blatant corruption, he probably hopes to reduce the worst excesses among officials, restore a semblance of propriety in the bureaucracy, and strengthen central control over regional officials.
- He may also use the campaign as a weapon against political opponents, as Andropov did. Because almost all Soviet officials engage in illegal abuse of power to some extent, almost everyone is vulnerable to charges of corruption.
- Finally, he probably sees the campaign as supporting his key objectives of stimulating economic productivity and improving the regime's image in the eyes of the population. He probably believes that he must move

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against corruption among the elite to gain broad public acceptance of the parallel campaign for worker discipline. The anticorruption course also reinforces the regime's propaganda effort to marshal popular support for its policies.

Gorbachev probably can count on the support of several key segments of the elite for expanding the anticorruption campaign. But he almost certainly will encounter resistance from segments of the elite who stand to lose most: the venal members of the entrenched bureaucracy who have survived earlier corruption campaigns; regional party officials who may see the anticorruption campaign as part of a larger policy of tightening central regulation of republic party organizations; and the economic bureaucracy (especially the ministries), which may fear that moves against corruption will go hand in hand with some kind of economic reform.

Gorbachev will have to manage the campaign carefully so as not to give his opponents an opportunity to rally against him. The corruption issue, nevertheless, has proved to be a useful weapon to use—or threaten to use—against political enemies. Gorbachev has given strong signals that he intends to pursue it.

The extent and particularly the character of cadre renewal will serve as an indicator of the seriousness and direction of the anticorruption course:

- Changes in the party statutes at the 27th Party Congress concerning personnel assignments could presage an expansion of the anticorruption campaign. A number of regional and republic party plenums in April 1985 called for adherence to a cadre policy that eradicates abuse of office, nepotism, and careerism, and such taboos could be written formally into the party's rules.
- An increase in the number of officials who are fired for cause, demoted to a much lower position rather than given lateral assignments, and publicly criticized for corrupt practices, would also indicate an intensification of the campaign. An unwritten rule of the *nomenklatura* system, by which the party determines appointments to key positions, has been that if an official fails in one job he has the right to another at the same level. In a few recent cases, this rule has not been followed.

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- A move to hold local party committees accountable for the shortcomings of officials under their purview—in practice as well as in rhetoric—would signal a greater effort to combat the tendency of party apparatchiks to protect their own.



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The Soviet Anticorruption Campaign: Causes, Consequences, and Prospects

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Growing Dimensions

Corruption, long a prominent feature of Soviet life, cannot be measured precisely, but considerable evidence indicates it has grown significantly since the mid-1970s:¹

- A survey of recent Soviet emigres to the United States shows that the use of political influence in the job market has steadily increased since the 1960s (see table).
- A Georgian official, who reviewed monthly reports of crimes in that republic from 1979 until 1983, reported that there was a growing volume of misappropriation of state money and property.
- Media reports and public comments of police officials have indicated that corruption became especially prevalent in the housing sector and that illegal trade flourished in agricultural products, consumer goods, and automobiles. 

General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev's policy helped to create an environment conducive to rampant illegalities and abuse of office. One of his key objectives was to restore administrative order and regularity, which Nikita Khrushchev's impulsive and chaotic policies had threatened. From the outset, Brezhnev put the highest premium on guaranteeing the stability of the system of elite rule through a personnel policy that stressed "stability of cadres." While Khrushchev's leadership granted the bureaucrats security of life—by abolishing the mass terror of the Stalin period—Brezhnev's leadership granted them security of office.



¹ An evaluation of the extent of corruption depends on how the term is defined. If defined in an absolute sense as the use of position or power to further private ends, almost the entire Soviet elite is corrupt. If defined in a relative sense as the use of position or power to further private ends in ways that violate accepted norms of behavior, then corruption in the USSR is less significant. The definition of corruption narrows as the subordination of the public interest to private interest becomes a widely tolerated feature of a political system. 


Response of Soviet Emigres to the Question: "Did You Use Pull To Get Your First Soviet Job?"

Year Began First Job	Total Questioned	Yes	No
1919-30	29	2 (6.9%)	27 (93.1%)
1931-35	60	7 (11.7%)	53 (88.3%)
1936-40	50	7 (14.0%)	43 (86.0%)
1941-45	47	5 (10.6%)	42 (89.4%)
1946-50	65	13 (20.0%)	52 (80.0%)
1951-55	66	17 (25.8%)	49 (74.2%)
1956-60	124	44 (35.5%)	80 (64.5%)
1961-65	116	38 (32.8%)	78 (67.2%)
1966-70	132	42 (31.8%)	90 (68.2%)
1971-75	140	61 (43.6%)	79 (56.4%)
1976-83	57	29 (50.9%)	28 (49.1%)



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The steady decline in the rate of Soviet economic growth from the late 1960s for more than a decade, with a sharp drop after 1978, probably also gave impetus to the growth in corrupt practices. Performance was particularly bleak during the 1979-81 period, when unusually cold and snowy winters snarled transportation and interrupted industrial production and poor-to-mediocre grain harvests held agricultural output down. Economic shortfalls, especially the failure of the official economy to produce sufficient quantities of food and consumer goods and services, fostered the development of black-market activity and other economic illegalities. Moreover, an earlier expansion of secondary education resulted in greater competition for admission to higher educational institutions, and the use of bribes to gain admission to higher schools became more common. 

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fact that corruption was so widespread meant that an aggressive campaign against it would require considerable political energy and determination, which Brezhnev lacked in the latter part of his tenure. To move actively against corruption within the elite would risk political confrontation with those whose support Brezhnev had in effect bought by a policy of indulgence and who viewed opportunities for corruption as an extension of the system of privileges. Brezhnev may also have feared that exposing and prosecuting corrupt officials would damage the reputation of the party even more than the corruption itself. Moreover, at the time when corruption seemed to be increasing—as the economy faltered in the late 1970s through 1981—Brezhnev’s political power was declining. A drive against corruption in such circumstances would entail even greater political risks for the party leader (although it afforded his rivals political opportunity).

Also arguing against decisive action during this period was the fact that some forms of corruption helped to satisfy demands that the official economy could not. Specifically, the black market and other illegal activity—according to numerous reports from the US Embassy in Moscow—help to keep the entire system running and serve as a safety valve that channels popular frustrations into apolitical activity. Destroying the black market would only increase pressure on the regime to deliver the goods that had previously been obtained through it.

Genesis of the Campaign

Several developments may have caused the Soviet leadership to shift its attitude and try to deal with the corruption issue head-on:

- During Brezhnev’s last months in office, heightened maneuvering between his supporters and those who supported Andropov invited the promotion of anti-corruption measures as a political ploy to impugn Brezhnev and those close to him in the leadership.
- Unrest in Poland, spurred to some extent by official corruption, produced a political crisis there.
- The regime concluded that curbing corruption could alleviate economic problems in a period of stringency and could have a propaganda payoff as well.

- The KGB, alarmed by the situation, evidently began to urge more vigorous measures against corruption.

The first salvo in the recent battle against corruption was fired by Geydar Aliyev, who was the Azerbaijan party leader before Brezhnev’s death. In a November 1981 interview in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, he gave firm warnings to party workers that abuses of power and privilege would no longer be tolerated. Aliyev, in effect, urged a new policy direction on corruption while providing an assessment of the negative consequences of corruption.

Brezhnev’s Debilities: Physical and Political. The chronology of the anticorruption campaign suggests an intimate connection with increased politicking among Politburo members as Brezhnev’s health deteriorated. The campaign gathered force as Brezhnev declined physically and Andropov began to assume a more prominent and powerful position in the leadership. In Brezhnev’s waning months, reporting from Embassy Moscow suggested that Andropov used the rumors and investigations involving Brezhnev’s family and cronies (including his daughter, son-in-law, and clients, such as MVD chief Nikolay Shchelokov and Krasnodar Kray party head Sergey Medunov) to undermine Brezhnev politically, to counter Chernenko, and to position himself to succeed Brezhnev.

Andropov also used the anticorruption campaign to attack Sharaf Rashidov, then Uzbek party chief and Brezhnev’s client, and he may have used the vulnerability of then regional leader Aliyev to charges of corruption for political purposes.

in the fall of 1982 it became known in Moscow that Rashidov had knowingly lied about harvest production figures; Andropov confronted Rashidov with the evidence.

stories that Rashidov’s death in October 1983 was a suicide, apparently triggered by the corruption charge. A variant of the story, from Western press sources, has Rashidov suffering a heart attack after being accused of falsifying cotton production figures.

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Aliyev's Salvo Against Corruption

- *Corruption and misuse of an official position cause complacency, poor morale, and a loss of initiative on the part of various elements of society.*
- *Corruption and a weakened work ethic contribute to chronic economic shortfalls.*
- *Bribes, protectionism, and nepotism in the education system undermine the proper training of cadres and poison the moral atmosphere for youth.*
- *The administrative organs (police, judicial system) have become corrupt and rent by nepotism.*
- *A private ownership psychology feeds corruption and speculation; the quest for private accumulation leads to hoarding and a flourishing black market.*

[redacted]

That the anticorruption campaign had heavy political overtones was also suggested by:

- Rumors that Andrey Kirilenko's removal from the Politburo had been triggered by a scandal involving his son.
- Brezhnev's memoirs, which, in recounting how his mother had resisted corrupting blandishments, seemed designed to forestall charges of corruption on his part.
- The unusual assertion by Ukrainian party secretary Vladimir Shcherbitskiy in January 1982 that the time for party purges had passed—a statement suggesting concern that the anticorruption campaign could lead to widespread removals in the party. [redacted]

The Crisis in Poland. The Soviet leadership was keenly aware that the revelation of pervasive official corruption in Poland—made public at the insistence of Solidarity in 1980—fanned the flames of rebellion within the Polish population at large. The arrest of the Prime Minister, 18 ministers, several first deputy ministers, and 56 deputy ministers on charges of bribery and theft must have greatly alarmed the Soviet regime. Soviet media suggested that corruption

Aliyev's Vulnerability to Corruption Charges

Geydar Aliyev, who first publicized the anticorruption campaign, may have been another high-level party figure who became vulnerable to charges of corruption. He may have taken the lead in the campaign as a way to deflect charges that he had himself become involved in corruption. Aliyev was dubbed "Brezhnev's new broom" in Azerbaijan soon after his appointment to the republic party post in 1969 for his sacking of more than 20 leading republic administrators. More recent evidence indicates that his local anticorruption campaign ran out of steam and his own hands may not have been clean. [redacted]

[redacted] in 1984 a senior Soviet official indicated that Aliyev got into serious trouble because of corruption in Azerbaijan during his tenure (1969-82). [redacted]

[redacted] Brezhnev engineered Aliyev's promotion to the Politburo and transfer to Moscow in 1982 to protect him—even though the shift was implemented after Andropov took office. Andropov may have used Aliyev's vulnerability as a kind of blackmail—a means of keeping him in line politically. In May 1983 there were Western press reports from Moscow that Aliyev's gift to Brezhnev of a dagger encrusted with diamonds (in 1982 or earlier) prompted Andropov to direct Politburo members to declare what gifts they had received and from whom. [redacted]

Aliyev had career ties to Andropov as well as Brezhnev and may have had a foot in each camp. He became head of the KGB in Azerbaijan while Andropov was KGB chief, and he may have partly owed that promotion to Andropov. [redacted] *pressure from Andropov may have caused Aliyev to switch his allegiance to Andropov and to follow the anticorruption course.* [redacted]

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of high officials in Poland had been chiefly responsible for creating the gulf between workers and the party and the ensuing disaffection and turmoil there.

While the strikes in Poland had no equivalent in the USSR, the Polish situation clearly focused the Soviet leadership's attention on internal conditions, particularly those that could give rise to similar unrest. The Polish crisis was discussed in various Soviet official forums as an object lesson, and the Soviet regime's concerns about public morale and ideological orthodoxy at home appeared to increase. Comments by various Soviets and Moscow-based foreign observers suggested that the regime had developed a new awareness of corruption as a corrosive force in Soviet society. The extent of its concern surfaced at the 26th CPSU Congress in February 1981. In a speech laced with pointed references to the Polish crisis, Brezhnev emphasized that work was the sole criteria for reward. He warned that loafing, bribe taking, speculation, and any encroachment on socialist property must be combated "by all organizational, financial, and juridical means."

Economic Payoff and Propaganda Gain. Another key element in the regime's decision to pursue an anticorruption policy was the growing concern to find some way to revitalize the sluggish economy without resorting to major structural reforms. Once Andropov became General Secretary, he used anticorruption as a shock treatment for all of society, and it was intended to create the atmosphere for greater discipline in other spheres as well, especially in the economy. Under Andropov, anticorruption measures were accompanied by a parallel campaign designed to improve discipline and order in the economy. Corrupt or incompetent officials and plant managers were fired; waste in the transportation, consumer goods, and agricultural sectors was curbed where bribery, speculation, and large-scale cheating had a deleterious effect on the overall economy and worsened shortages of consumer goods. Andropov dismissed over 1,500 enterprise directors for corruption or malfeasance.

The KGB's Larger Role.

the KGB had begun to push the leadership to move vigorously on corruption even before the party congress and that it took the lead in the anticorruption campaign:

- KGB officials in Moscow voiced concern in early 1980 that corruption in the form of illicit acquisition of consumer goods and food—items the economy could not supply adequately—was becoming a major problem. KGB officials were reportedly increasingly troubled by the prevalence of corruption at the higher levels of government.

- the KGB became more aware of the extent of official corruption in society during an investigation of a KGB major's death in 1980. The investigation showed that the officer had been robbed and murdered by a gang of corrupt militiamen (police under the direction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs).

- KGB officers were worried that the party had become more interested in preserving its privileges and prerogatives than in addressing national needs. the KGB was acting to raise its own standards to ensure its integrity.

- the party Central Committee circulated a lengthy top secret memorandum on the problem of widespread corruption, especially large-scale bribery and theft in the transportation and industrial sectors of the economy. The letter was reportedly well received in the KGB, and it is clear that the KGB itself used the letter and similar pronouncements to launch its anticorruption activities.

- In late 1981 a reliable contact of the US Embassy in Moscow said that a secret Central Committee letter circulating in the party had accused the KGB of corruption. Although the Embassy's contact may

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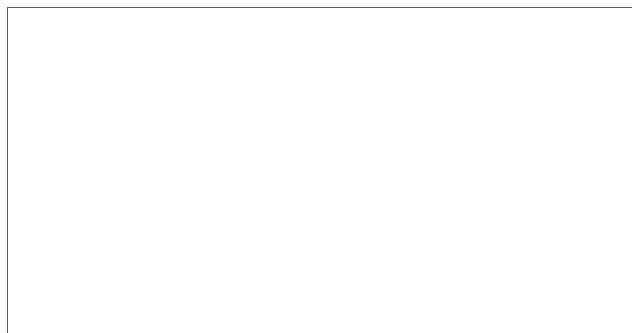
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have been wrong about who was accused in a Central Committee letter on corruption [redacted]

[redacted] this rumor may have been circulated in Moscow to undercut the KGB's role in the anticorruption campaign.

- A series of articles in a Moscow newspaper in late 1981 gave unusual publicity to a case in which the KGB uncovered a group of diamond smugglers.



- [redacted] the KGB was investigating large-scale corruption among Soviet Embassy officers and trade officials in Kabul. [redacted]

Some KGB cadre members probably also supported the anticorruption campaign because it promised to enlarge the KGB. Indeed, expansions since the late 1970s include:

- Creation by 1978 of a special subunit (Department Eight) in the First Chief Directorate's counterintelligence unit (Directorate K) to investigate misappropriation of funds and kickbacks by officials dealing with Westerners.
- Creation sometime in 1982, probably before Brezhnev's death, of a Fourth Directorate to oversee the corruption-ridden transportation sector.
- Establishment of a Sixth Directorate in 1982 (also probably before Brezhnev's death) responsible for economic counterintelligence, such as the investigation of kickbacks and similar crimes. [redacted]

[redacted] Yuriy Andropov was a prime mover in the campaign. He may have been

KGB Investigation Involves Brezhnev's Daughter

The KGB's most dramatic participation in the emerging anticorruption campaign occurred during 1981 and 1982, [redacted] when it replaced the militia in an investigation of a diamond theft that had unearthed evidence of the involvement of Brezhnev's daughter and her close associates, particularly the head of the Moscow State Circus, in various illegal activities. The KGB's investigation of the case reportedly accounted for Brezhnev's failure in January 1982 to sign the obituary of its second-in-command, Semyon Tsvigun, who had led the investigation. Despite the potential for embarrassing top leaders and the warnings by party secretary Mikhail Suslov that the investigation should be stopped, the KGB reportedly pursued the case and even made arrests on the day of Suslov's death. In continuing this investigation of corruption that touched Brezhnev's family—a highly visible and high-risk venture—the KGB probably intended to signal its determination to root out corruption even at high levels. There was also a political motive in this activity; the KGB was used by Andropov or his supporters to impugn Brezhnev and weaken his hold on power. [redacted]



motivated by a combination of political, ideological, and pragmatic considerations. [redacted] Andropov reportedly said at a closed meeting of officials that Communism was fighting for its life against corruption, and, as KGB chief, he reportedly collected incriminating information on officials guilty of serious offenses. But the following evidence suggests that he also saw the anticorruption campaign as a weapon to be used in political competition. [redacted]

Regime Legitimacy. At the same time, Soviet leaders (such as Andropov and Gorbachev) undoubtedly hoped that the publicity endorsing stronger measures against corruption would also improve the regime's

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image in the eyes of the masses. A considerable body of evidence indicates that by 1982 Soviet officials were becoming more concerned than before about popular alienation and cynicism, especially among young people. In a period when popular expectations of progress, particularly in living standards, went unfulfilled because of slowing economic growth, the anticorruption campaign may well have been seized upon as a public relations tactic. Some top leaders probably hoped the campaign would deflect criticism onto selected scapegoats—mainly corrupt managers and lower level officials—and persuade the population that the Soviet system was not to blame for consumer shortages; instead, corrupt individuals prevented the system from providing for popular wants and needs.

[redacted]

Andropov's Tough Tactics

Yuriy Andropov, the shrewd, tough former KGB boss, ruled as party General Secretary for a little over a year (November 1982 to February 1984). Among the Soviet people, however, memory has made him a leader who combined the call for tough discipline and higher performance standards for both managers and workers with the promise of eventual substantial change in the management of the economy. Although this may exaggerate the scope of his drive to upgrade the political and economic system, Andropov clearly intended to curtail corruption at all levels—as witnessed by a series of party and government decrees, administrative measures, quiet removals of some corrupt officials and arrests of others made with a theatrical swagger that drew colorful news coverage, and highly publicized police raids of bathhouses and movie theaters to find shirkers. The point was to enhance economic productivity and restore the integrity of the system by showing that no one was safe from the crackdown.

The Targets. Immediately after Andropov became party leader, *Pravda* began to publish brief accounts of Politburo deliberations; the first account dealt with purported letters to the leadership complaining about inaction on corruption. Subsequent media accounts further developed and emphasized this theme, and the regime moved against selected targets on a broad front. These included the MVD; the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic's party and government bureaucracies; organizations engaged in trade and food production and distribution; and other institutions, including the military, with access to foreign goods and currencies.

[redacted]

Purge in Uzbekistan

Details of a wholesale purge of corrupt officials in Uzbekistan were revealed in the Soviet press only in June 1984, but the massive shakeup in that republic began while Andropov was party leader. [redacted] nepotism, bribery, embezzlement, and padding of production figures had become rampant; Andropov probably focused on Uzbekistan because of the sheer scale and apparent openness of the corruption. The thoroughness of the purge probably also served to warn others that he was serious about the campaign.

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The scale of the purge in Uzbekistan became evident when Pravda and the republic party newspaper carried reports of a plenum in June 1984, attended by party secretary Yegor Ligachev, which revealed that Andropov had removed many Uzbek officials without subjecting them to public disgrace. More details were revealed in reports of the plenums of 13 republic oblast party committees. The Uzbek officials replaced included the second secretary (May 1983); ministers of finance, cotton industry, and justice; the republic KGB and MVD chiefs and the republic procurator; the chairman of the state committee for publishing, the first deputy chairman of the People's Control Committee, and the republic party administrative organs department head; a deputy minister of health and the first deputy and another deputy of the cotton industry; two district prosecutors and a district KGB chief; at least seven deputies of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet and more than 60 deputies to local soviets; the head of the Tashkent medical school; and the chairman of the republic union of journalists.

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Uzbek newspapers also revealed that 155 policemen in the city of Bukhara had been fired for corruption and another 157 fired in the Karakalpak area. In Ferghana Oblast, nearly 400 employees of the militia and other law enforcement agencies were fired in a three-year period, and over a thousand lower level employees in Tashkent were removed from their posts and charged with corrupt activities. Moreover, since January 1981 there has been a turnover of 40 percent among the Oblast party secretaries; in Kashkadar'ya Oblast nearly every ranking official in the party and government was removed, almost certainly as part of the anticorruption drive.

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The MVD bore the brunt of the attack. Among the first corruption-related personnel changes announced under Andropov was the ouster of Brezhnev's old crony Shchelokov and the appointment of career KGB official Vitaliy Fedorchuk to oversee a cleanup of the scandal-ridden militia. From January 1983 to January 1984, at least 22 articles in the Soviet press chronicled personnel and organizational changes in the MVD. In several instances, MVD officials were shown to be under criminal investigation or already sentenced for crimes of corruption. [redacted]

Fedorchuk alluded to the scope of the purge of MVD officials in August 1983 when he said the Ministry had been "restructured" and "personnel are being purged of slackers and of those who are ideologically and morally immature." In July 1983 the Politburo announced the creation of new MVD political bodies to "organize and guide party political, ideological, educational, and cultural work within the Ministry" and to "enhance the responsibility of personnel for the discharge of their duties." These new bodies appeared to be both a means of tightening party control over the militia and an attempt to rebuild morale after months of media exposure of corruption. [redacted]

Even the military failed to escape Andropov's campaign. The media publicized several abuses in the military that have been rarely acknowledged in print. For example, in January 1983 *Krasnaya Zvezda* (the main military newspaper) announced investigations into corruption in material and technical supply activities. In July it carried an extraordinary public denunciation of a general for soliciting a bribe. Additional articles dealt with cases of bribery and illegal use of manpower. [redacted]

Just before Andropov's death in February 1984, a new statute was issued on servicemen's material liability for damage caused to the state. The law was apparently aimed at soldiers' theft of materials for sale on the black market. A further warning could have been intended by the official announcement in November 1984 that Shchelokov, who had been working in the Ministry of Defense following his removal as MVD head, had been stripped of his military rank of general of the army for abuse of office. [redacted]

Other Soviet officials with access to foreign goods and foreign currencies became targets of the anticorruption drive. [redacted]

[redacted]

the KGB began investigating corruption among Soviet Embassy officers and trade officials in Afghanistan.

[redacted]

[redacted] Andropov's campaign netted a broad range of Soviet Foreign Ministry and trade officials:

- In February 1983 the First Deputy Prosecutor General of the USSR revealed that two senior foreign trade officials in the Ministry of the Aviation Industry had been fired for currency abuses.

- In March 1983 [redacted] Soviet foreign trade officials were being forced to cease their corrupt practices.

- A contact of the US Embassy in East Germany reported in May 1983 that former Soviet Ambassador Abrasimov had run afoul of Andropov because of corrupt practices at Soviet missions in East Germany. (Chernenko may have limited the damage to Abrasimov, who was appointed Ambassador to Japan before Chernenko's death.)

- In August 1983 [redacted] the removal of the first deputy head of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations (GKES) and the censuring of 20 or 30 more GKES officials for corruption.

- [redacted] the crackdown on corruption extended to the CEMA Secretariat. Soviets who had a role in CEMA finances came under investigation in the fall of 1983, and the head of the Secretariat was retired late in the year. [redacted]

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While Andropov was party leader, there were also periodic press attacks on corruption in the Ukraine, the Caucasus, the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (where two candidate members of the Central Committee and two members of the central auditing commission were expelled for corruption in September 1983), Armenia (where three republic ministers were fired in April 1983), and Krasnodar in the RSFSR (where senior MVD officials were sentenced to long prison terms). [redacted]

Action against more sensitive targets—possibly Andropov’s political opponents—was apparent in November, when the well-connected director of Moscow’s Yeliseyev food store was convicted on charges of corruption and sentenced to death. This was followed by a particularly critical Central Committee decree attacking the party organization in Moldavia, where Andropov’s rival, Chernenko, began his political rise under Brezhnev. The Moldavians were rebuked for foot-dragging and a bureaucratic approach to solving economic problems. [redacted]

Personnel changes approved at the December 1983 plenum suggested that Andropov had strengthened his capacity to implement the anticorruption campaign. For example, KGB chief Chebrikov was made a candidate member of the Politburo, and Party Control Committee head Mikhail Solomentsev was made a full member of the Politburo. Both the KGB and the Party Control Committee (which serves essentially as a party court) have played key roles in the campaign to curb corruption and bolster discipline. [redacted]

Andropov, in his December plenum speech—which was sent to the Central Committee in his absence (because of his failing health)—placed even stronger emphasis than before on the need to increase executive responsibility. Not surprisingly, he deemed his strategy of applying administrative measures to the economy a success, but he warned against losing “tempo” in the drive to achieve greater accountability. After the plenum, the campaign continued at full tilt until the time of his death. For example, two GKES officials were executed in January, and the Soviets highlighted Andropov’s personal involvement in the matter by publicizing that the accused officials’ appeal for clemency to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (headed by Andropov) had been denied. [redacted]

Use of the KGB. During Andropov’s tenure as party leader, the KGB expanded its role as the major instrument (and a beneficiary) of his anticorruption policy. For example, only days after Andropov took office, Minister of Internal Affairs Nikolay Shchelokov, a notoriously corrupt crony of Brezhnev, was replaced by a career KGB official, Vitaliy Fedorchuk, who had succeeded Andropov as KGB chief. Two more senior KGB officials were later moved into the MVD as deputy ministers. In May 1983 [redacted]

[redacted] Andropov had dispatched two KGB officials to Poland to promote a Soviet-style discipline campaign in that country. [redacted]

[redacted] the KGB was running the investigations. [redacted]

[redacted] a senior party official concerned with economic affairs had stated that the KGB had become much more active in economic affairs and was now monitoring compliance with official directives by ministries and enterprises. [redacted]

During Chernenko’s Tenure

After Andropov’s death in February 1983, some officials, fearful of the drive against corruption, greeted the accession of longtime party functionary Konstantin Chernenko with relief. [redacted]

[redacted] believed the anti-corruption drive would gradually fade away and that it was just a matter of time before everything would be back to the way things were under Brezhnev. [redacted]

[redacted] some younger officials, disgusted with the corruption of the old guard, also believed that Chernenko’s accession represented a turning back of the clock. [redacted]

In any event, the campaign that Andropov had set in motion, while losing momentum, continued to grind ahead. Some cases that were begun under Andropov and that some people thought would be allowed to die quietly, such as those involving Shchelokov and Brezhnev’s son-in-law, were continued. There appear to be several reasons for the continuation of the anticorruption campaign, albeit at a slower pace:

- In various proclamations, Chernenko had routinely touched on the goals of greater discipline and honesty, and his remarks on the need for attention

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to public opinion and for strengthening the party's ties to the masses suggest that he probably at least shared with Andropov the belief that corruption was a corrosive factor that had negative effects on youth and elite attitudes.

- Andropov's anticorruption campaign seemed to evoke a genuinely popular response among the citizenry, according to reporting from the US Embassy in Moscow [redacted] From Chernenko's perspective, therefore, a campaign against carefully selected targets probably was, on balance, more useful than risky politically.
- Those who had been advanced during Andropov's tenure (for example, secretaries Mikhail Gorbachev and Grigoriy Romanov) continued to exert influence on policies while Chernenko was in office. [redacted] [redacted] Gorbachev wielded considerable political influence while Chernenko was party chief, acting as de facto party leader during periods when Chernenko was incapacitated—which included much of the latter half of his tenure. There is good evidence that Gorbachev was strongly interested in pursuing the drive on corruption.
- Below the top leadership, the key players and proponents of the drive on corruption during Andropov's tenure—Fedorchuk, Chebrikov, and Procurator General Aleksandr Rekunkov—continued in office under Chernenko. [redacted]

During Chernenko's tenure, the campaign focused on lower level officials in the provinces. The chief thrust of Chernenko's policy was to highlight the anticorruption campaign in the media as a means of scoring gains in public relations and to go after some easy targets to give the impression that there would be no letup, while at the same time avoiding moves against high officials or those officials connected to the existing group of leaders. [redacted]

In the Provinces. In July 1984, lengthy media accounts of an investigation into corruption among managers in Rostov Oblast appeared. According to *Izvestiya*, criminal charges were brought against 76 Rostov officials in the trade system, and three top leaders of the RSFSR Trade Ministry were arrested.

The party first secretary in Rostov was also removed, although the media characterized this change as a retirement for reasons of health. [redacted]

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Chernenko also referred several times to the continuing massive purge of corrupt Uzbek officials that had begun under Andropov, using it as an example to encourage other party organizations to rid themselves of corruption. For example, in a December 1984 issue of *Kommunist*, Chernenko charged that, because leaders from Uzbekistan and other areas had ignored "negative phenomena," it was necessary for the central leadership to take "strong action." He also told a conference on people's control on 5 October 1984 that "central bodies" of the party and state had taken severe steps to curb corruption in Uzbekistan and other areas. *Pravda* had also declared that the lesson of the exposures of corruption in Uzbekistan should not be lost on other republics. [redacted]

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In addition to the removal of the premier of Uzbekistan (November 1984), the lower level changes in the republic included the removal of several regional party leaders. These changes included the firing of the head of the party committee in Tashkent, the capital, in January 1985; the expulsion of four members of the republic Central Committee in October 1984; and the replacement of the minister of justice in mid-January 1985, only five months after he had been appointed.

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Well-Connected Targets. Toward the latter half of Chernenko's tenure, when his health was failing, the targets of the anticorruption campaign appeared to be connected to Brezhnev associates in Moscow. More vigorous anticorruption activities may well have reflected the political ascendance of Gorbachev, who, perhaps more than any other leader, had an interest in continuing Andropov's policies. These included:

- The long-delayed execution of the corrupt but well-connected Yu. Sokolov, once head of an exclusive Moscow store, in August.

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- A national meeting of security organs, devoted to formulating new measures to combat "parasitism" and to a party Central Committee resolution directing the Komsomol to improve its monitoring of wayward youth.
- Chernenko's major speech in October, which strongly criticized "living beyond one's means," bribe taking, speculation, the theft of socialist property, and the abuse of office.
- *Pravda's* report that two deputy ministers of power and electrification were fired for abusing their official positions.
- Removal of the rank of general from former MVD chief Shchelokov in November for "abusing his post for profit and discrediting the military rank of Soviet general." (He later reportedly committed suicide.)
- Dismissal in late December 1984 of Brezhnev's son-in-law Yuriy Churbanov from his post as a first deputy minister of internal affairs. Reports that Churbanov had been involved in corruption had circulated for several years. [redacted]

Chernenko broadened the role of the party and government control committees and narrowed that of the KGB in the anticorruption campaign. For example, in October he addressed a meeting of the People's Control Committee (the government committee) and called for improved state control work in combating corruption. In late November an unusual special Central Committee conference announced an expansion of Party Control Committee activities. The Party Control Committee became more active in fighting corruption and frequently published disciplinary actions taken against corrupt party officials. Chernenko may have emphasized the role of the control committees because he had greater control over them than over the KGB and believed that by working through them he could counter KGB influence and could retain his supervision of the anticorruption campaign. (General Secretary Andropov also may have intended the Party Control Committee to become more active when he appointed Mikhail Solomentsev, an independent figure, to head it in 1983.) [redacted]

Gorbachev's Approach

Gorbachev, like Andropov before him, probably sees anticorruption primarily as a political tool. He has identified it as an issue that he can use to achieve a number of aims simultaneously—active pursuit of the drive will improve the image of the regime, will help in alleviating ills, and can be used to get rid of actual or potential rivals. Gorbachev knows that it is not possible to rid the system of corruption altogether. His goal, realistically, is to curb the most flagrant excesses in officialdom while using the campaign for his wider political objectives, such as gaining a more disciplined party machine that is responsive to his policy wishes, and to complement his domestic policy agenda. [redacted]

[redacted] Gorbachev's attitude toward corruption in terms similar to those used for Andropov when he first became party leader. For example, [redacted] Gorbachev has a reputation for incorruptibility, established when he was party first secretary in Stavropol' Kray. [redacted]

[redacted]

Gorbachev shared Andropov's concern over corruption at all levels in Soviet society and that he would do something about it. [redacted]

Gorbachev's comments to the party's ideology conference in December 1984 demonstrate an intolerance of corruption in Soviet officialdom and signaled his plan to renew the assertive measures associated with Andropov's tenure. Gorbachev was so outspoken on the corruption issue at the conference that some of his remarks were deleted in Soviet media coverage of the event; only a TASS account sent to the Far East carried his strongest language. [redacted]

Gorbachev's first weeks in office were marked by a renewed emphasis on the anticorruption theme in policy forums. In his first speech to the Central Committee as General Secretary, he called for "resolute measures" against corruption. A number of apparent corruption-related personnel actions were taken. For example, the 74-year-old Minister of Power

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Gorbachev on Corruption

In remarks to a party conference in December 1984, Gorbachev:

- Claimed "universal approval" for the anticorruption campaign and implied that it had resulted in a break in "unfavorable economic trends and an improvement in the moral and political atmosphere in the country." (There was some improvement in GNP growth rates under Andropov.)
- Called for strict accountability and observance of Soviet laws "by all officials and citizens" and asserted that "any deviations from the socialist principles of distribution . . . engender such serious phenomena as labor and social passivity, parasitism, moral nihilism, and covert forms of redistribution of income and goods."
- Declared that the "inescapable force of law must be placed in the path of those who are not susceptible to the arguments of reason or the voice of conscience and civic duty."
- Criticized political inertia and patronage and, in strikingly harsh language, declared that "the party would become more cohesive and authoritative if we continued to rid ourselves of those who do not value party principles and party honor and got rid of moral degenerates, using the CPSU rules, the laws, and public opinion to this end." [redacted]

and Electrification, Petr Neporozhniy, was dismissed after *Pravda* criticized the performance of his Ministry. During Andropov's tenure Neporozhniy had been implicated with the former trade union official Aleksey Shibayev in a scandal involving the diversion of state funds for the construction of a villa on the Black Sea. Another old party chief, Ivan Bespalov, was removed as head of the Kirov Oblast. In late March, *Pravda* reported that Ukrainian party leaders had ordered republic officials to increase discipline and eliminate corruption after disclosures of bribery, embezzlement, and inefficiency had been aired in the press. [redacted]

In addition, soon after Gorbachev's remarks on corruption to the Central Committee in mid-March, regional party meetings were called around the country to discuss the theme:

- In Ufa, according to *Pravda*, "officials who committed serious misdeeds had been protected." Now they were dismissed or reprimanded.
- In Volgograd, officials were accused, among other things, of being "more concerned with building homes for themselves" than with public housing.
- In Irkutsk, a *Pravda* report listed instances of embezzlement and poor work at Bratsk, an aluminum and woodpulp center based on a large hydroelectric station. *Pravda* said city party secretary A. Yelokhin, head of the city government V. Korshunov, and others had been dismissed "for gross abuse of their positions."
- A critical report in the daily *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* about a party meeting in Yaroslavl' noted that "the loss to the state from embezzlement in the past year grew by 42 percent over the previous year." [redacted]

Other articles have called for increased party discipline since Gorbachev became party leader. One reported a speech by the Minister of Justice of the Russian Republic, admonishing his staff to "strengthen the struggle against malingering, embezzlement, mismanagement, and abuse of official position." [redacted]

Gorbachev stressed the anticorruption theme in his April plenum remarks, and Aliyev, who spoke on Lenin's birthday, elaborated more fully on the Gorbachev regime's anticorruption policy. Aliyev even asserted that official corruption was a vulnerability that could be exploited in propaganda that foreign adversaries directed to the Soviet public. Both officials implicitly criticized Chernenko for his laxness on corruption. [redacted]

Anticorruption is also being used as at least a partial explanation for some of the high-level personnel changes that have already occurred under Gorbachev.

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According to a contact of the US Embassy in Moscow, who has proved right in the past, when Gorbachev decided to move Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko upstairs to the Presidency, the Foreign Ministry became a target of the security organs. According to the Embassy contact, the KGB apparently found it a major haven of corruption, and it was decided that someone skilled at dealing with corruption was needed. Thus, Eduard Shevardnadze, a former police official who nurtured an image as a firm, austere disciplinarian in Georgia, was selected to overturn the habits of corruption that Gromyko had brushed aside. While this account may overemphasize one of the possible explanations for the political changes under way in the Foreign Ministry and in other bureaucracies, it probably accurately reflects Gorbachev's determination to curb corruption. Indeed, according to another Soviet contact of the Embassy, the new watchword in the Central Committee is that party functionaries must live as modestly as the rest of the population. [redacted]

The anticorruption campaign complements Gorbachev's other important objectives—rejuvenating the party and governmental bureaucracy, improving economic performance, shoring up regime legitimacy, and further consolidating his power. He probably hopes that by exposing, censuring, and prosecuting cases of especially blatant corruption, he will be able to reduce the worst excesses among officials and restore a semblance of propriety in the bureaucracy. By emphasizing technical expertise and youth as criteria for advancement, Gorbachev may also be able to tighten central control over the apparatus and thereby inhibit lower level officials from using their official positions for personal gain. [redacted]

The party elections that precede the party congress, which is scheduled for early 1986, will give Gorbachev the opportunity to clear out the deadwood in the local ranks up through the republic level (much as Andropov did for the regional level in 1983 and 1984). Moreover, the chief editor of the party newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* told US officials in April 1985 that Gorbachev intends to pursue a "horizontal" approach to party cadres (moving officials from oblast to oblast as well as from the central party apparatus or the government ranks to the provinces) designed to

break up entrenched and often corrupt party networks. Such a course would also help Gorbachev put new people in Central Committee slots before the congress. [redacted]

Support Base. Gorbachev probably can count on the support of several key segments of the elite for a serious anticorruption policy course:

- Young party cadre members, frustrated by the scarcity of opportunities for promotion under Brezhnev's "stability of cadres" policy, doubtless hope that the anticorruption campaign will open up headroom.
- Less bureaucratically entrenched, more technocratic men who advanced under Andropov (illustrated in party secretary Nikolay Ryzhkov and Belorussian leader Nikolay Slyun'kov and including economists like Abel Aganbegyan), probably see Gorbachev's anticorruption policy as a prelude to economic reform, and his early remarks on this issue tend to support this view. These cadre members probably also perceive that they stand to gain politically as older, corrupt officials are weeded out.
- The KGB—which has gained clout through this campaign and sees it as a way of strengthening its position in the elite—continues to back the campaign.
- Other institutions involved in enforcing law and discipline—for example, the Procuracy and the Party Control Commission—have vested interests in the campaign, because its continuation would expand their bureaucratic role.
- Some of the more conservative party ideologists may well be concerned that the party has evolved into a self-serving, commercialized class that subordinates ideology to the pursuit of private gain. These cadre members may fear that the party's corruption and estrangement from the population has serious implications for the regime's long-range legitimacy. [redacted]

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Resistance. Despite his considerable political strength at the outset, Gorbachev will encounter resistance to a serious anticorruption drive from segments of the elite and population who stand to lose by it. These include:

- The most venal elements of the entrenched bureaucracy who have survived earlier corruption campaigns.
- Many regional party officials, who may see the campaign as part of a larger policy of tightening central regulation of republic party organizations.
- The economic bureaucracy (especially the ministries), which may fear that—as Andropov had apparently intended—moves against corruption will go hand in hand with some kind of economic reform.
- The older generation of officials, who for all these reasons resent change and for whom job security is paramount. Of Politburo members, Premier Nikolay Tikhonov, Moscow party chief Viktor Grishin, and perhaps Brezhnev crony and Kazakh party Central Committee First Secretary Dinmukhamed Kunayev, must be counted among those who are likely to resist an all-out attack on corruption because they stand to lose out as a result. []

General Secretary Gorbachev will certainly weigh additional anticorruption initiatives with respect to their net effect on these two constituencies. He needs to make continued progress against corruption if he is to maintain the allegiance of those groups—young party leaders and the technological elite—that will be most critical to his program of economic revitalization. Gorbachev must take care, however, to avoid alienating the entrenched elite to the point where his anticorruption campaign becomes a rallying point for resistance to his broader set of economic and political initiatives. At a minimum, these concerns call for a program that demonstrates his determination to move aggressively against corruption while challenging the entrenched elite on a selective rather than an aggregate level. []

Gauging the Campaign. The extent and particularly the manner of cadre renewal will be an indicator of the seriousness and direction of Gorbachev's anticorruption course. His strength in further moves against

corruption and inefficiency will depend on his ability to effect changes in the party statutes and to engineer a major turnover in the composition of the Central Committee at the next party congress in 1986. []

Changes in the party statutes concerning personnel assignments—to be approved at the upcoming party congress—could presage an expansion of the anticorruption campaign. In April 1985 a number of regional and republic party plenums called for adherence to a cadre policy that prohibits abuse of office, nepotism, and careerism. Such language suggests that freedom from corruption could become a criterion for holding office. Soviet press reports also indicate that the new statutes will stipulate that new party members should be admitted at open meetings and their sponsors should be held responsible for the members' subsequent performance. Such tightened recruitment could reduce the admission of corrupt individuals. []

An increase in the number of officials who are fired for cause and demoted, rather than given lateral assignments, or are publicly attacked for corrupt activity would indicate the campaign's intensification. An unwritten rule of the *nomenklatura* system, by which the party determines appointments to key positions, has been that if an official fails in one job he has the right to another at the same level. However, in a few recent cases this tradition has not been followed. In March, for example, two provincial first secretaries congratulated themselves in *Pravda* on having demoted to ordinary work a *nomenklatura* official who had "compromised" himself. []

A move to hold local party committees accountable—in practice as well as in rhetoric—for shortcomings of officials under their purview would signal a greater effort to combat the tendency of party apparatchiks to protect their own. This tendency was criticized in a group of letters published in *Pravda* in March, following the revelation that officials in Kursk had attempted to cover up the misdeeds of local party and police officials. The calls by Gorbachev and his Politburo colleagues for more "openness" are intended partly to break up such conspiracies of mutual protection. []

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Results. Whatever particular measures Gorbachev may take in the future, the anticorruption campaign has already had a significant political impact. Moreover, given the breadth of the drive, the fact that some of the targets have been high-level officials, and the publicity surrounding the removals and prosecutions, it seems likely that the anticorruption campaign has made a dent in the scope of corruption within Soviet officialdom, even though it has not addressed the root causes. [redacted]

the campaign has snared some 200 persons in the fisheries industry alone; 150 officials in Lithuania alone; 5,000 officials in Uzbekistan, including nearly all of the republic's top leadership and thousands of lower level officials; tens of thousands of MVD officials; scores of ministers and their deputies in Moscow and in the republics; hundreds of Soviet officials posted abroad; and a significant percentage of the officials involved in trade and finances—in addition to the 1,500 enterprise directors reportedly removed earlier for corruption or malfeasance by Andropov. [redacted]

The anticorruption drive has also been a spur to party rejuvenation. Most of the changes have occurred at the lower ranks, but, since 1982 more than 60 officials have been elevated to positions that in the past warranted full membership on the Central Committee. The drive has also had a perceptible impact on other key Soviet institutions. The KGB has expanded its mandate, increased its political weight, and emerged as the protector of the party and the system. Other police institutions have been made more effective and brought more tightly under the regime's control. The MVD and its militia have been reconstituted: 55,000 new cadre members have been added recently to the Ministry, [redacted] and many thousands have been purged. Better trained cadre members have also been installed throughout the Procuracy. Such moribund organs as the party and People's Control Committees have become more active. [redacted]

The anticorruption effort also reinforced the discipline campaign—weakening the tendency to pursue illicit gain on the job and shifting labor's attention and efforts to approved activities. In fact, the anticorruption and discipline initiatives begun by Andropov and reaffirmed by his successors have seemed to spur both

labor and management to greater effort and contributed to the faster growth of GNP as a whole since 1983 and in most sectors outside agriculture. The average number of hours worked per person increased in 1983 and 1984, presumably because of such practices as spot checks for unauthorized leave. More generally, the official crackdown on corruption and inefficiency resulted in firings for incompetence—which may have led to better management. [redacted]

As part of a broader range of measures intended to improve economic performance, the anticorruption drive has had an impact on legislation. The regime, for example, has sought in recent legislation to increase pay and incentives in a selective manner and to link pay more closely with productivity. It has also increased the number of private activities that are legal. In May, Gorbachev announced that land for private plots had been earmarked for more than a million families. An expansion of the private sector would authorize some economic activities that currently are illegal, removing some opportunities for corruption and diminishing the burden of law enforcement. [redacted]

The fight against corruption has also provided a psychological boost to public morale and improved the regime's image in the eyes of the population. The campaign unleashed an element of candor and realism about the failures of the system—a prerequisite to remedying the situation. Moreover, there is increased confidence about the regime's ability to rule effectively and cope with serious problems. While this uplift will be short lived if Gorbachev does not sustain the attack on the various domestic ills, the campaign so far has been a political plus for him, helping to nurture the image of an energetic and decisive new leadership. [redacted]

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