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National
Foreign
Assessment
Center

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Review of Soviet Internal Affairs February-March 1981

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

1999

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CLASS. BY PA 81-10044X
SECURITY CR 91-100111X

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Summary

The 26th Party Congress delivered a clear mandate for continuing the conservative policies associated with Brezhnev's leadership over the years, but failed to prepare for a succession, rejuvenate party institutions, or take measures to revive the sagging economy. Indeed, Brezhnev may have been disappointed over the lack of support the congress gave to programs he has advocated for coming to grips with the continuing decline in Soviet economic performance. The goals of the 1981-85 plan, endorsed by the congress, imply that the regime has little hope of changing the pattern of decline.

This review is one of a series. It is based on information and analysis available through 31 March 1981. The contributions are uncoordinated, representing the views of the analysts named at the end of each section. Comments are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief.

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I. Domestic Politics

The Leadership: Stasis Prevails

The 26th CPSU Congress was a celebration of Brezhnev's continuation in office, rather than the prologue to a successor regime. By embellishing the Brezhnev cult, exhibiting the General Secretary's determination to perform his official duties despite his variable physical condition, and projecting the image of a Politburo unified under his leadership, the congress boosted Brezhnev's prestige to an alltime high.

The congress speeches struck a common theme of the indispensability of Leonid Ilich's "contribution" to the Soviet party, state, and people. Although Brezhnev experienced initial difficulty in delivering his lengthy report to the congress, his overall performance demonstrated his ability to continue performing his official duties, if only at a reduced level.

The congress produced no changes in the composition of the Politburo or Secretariat—despite the increasing decrepitude of several Politburo members (Pelshe is 82 years old), the failing health of others (Ustinov is said to have cancer), and the advancement of some leaders (such as First Deputy Premier Arkhipov) to positions that warrant promotion to the Politburo. The two leaders best placed to succeed Brezhnev as General Secretary—Andrey Kirilenko and Konstantin Chernenko—emerged from the congress with no significant change in their protocol rankings, with the latter still a notch below the former. Brezhnev, having surrounded himself with old cronies who constitute no threat to his position, apparently is content to perpetuate the status quo.

Minimal Change in the Central Committee

Continuity also characterizes the new Central Committee "elected" by the congress. The overall retention rate among those still living who were elected to the 1976 Central Committee equaled the record retention rate set by the 25th Party Congress. As a consequence, the average age of a Central Committee member today is higher than for any newly elected Central Committee in Soviet history.

The few changes that did take place on the Central Committee generally benefited groups closely associated with Brezhnev—his family, personal assistants, Central Committee functionaries, and KGB officials. Both Brezhnev's son and son-in-law became Central Committee candidates. More important, several members of his personal staff won promotions, bringing to four the number of his assistants who sit either as candidate or

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full members. Of Brezhnev's predecessors, only Stalin had a personal aide honored by election to the Central Committee.

At the same time, the congress promoted most Central Committee department heads to membership on the Central Committee. Previously, whereas most government ministers were Central Committee members, only a few of their counterparts in the party enjoyed this distinction. The upgrading of the department heads will presumably increase their authority in dealing with the government ministries. Finally, several deputy chairmen of the KGB—long a preserve of Brezhnev clients—were elevated to Central Committee membership.

Implications for the Succession

The failure of the Brezhnev regime to undertake significant reforms or to begin the process of generational renewal increases the potential for unsettling shocks to the political structure when the transfer of power finally occurs. The absence of a younger man well positioned and qualified to succeed Brezhnev makes it more likely that a power struggle will accompany Brezhnev's demise. The advanced age of the senior leadership and of the Central Committee probably will require a successor regime to replace numerous high officials over a short period of time. In addition, because of the continued "stability of cadres," tension is probably building between the lower level officials who have limited opportunities for advancement and the entrenched higher level officials who have profited from the current regime's personnel policies.

Meanwhile, the stagnation of the economy is heightening competition for scarce resources among economic sectors and regions. At the congress, regional leaders lobbied vigorously for increased investment in various local economic projects. Such lobbying will intensify as contenders for the succession begin to compete for the support of regional party cadres.

The leadership's neglect of consumer grievances will probably make it difficult for a successor regime to prevent an increase in sporadic strike activity during the coming decade. Even as the Polish disorders threaten to cause repercussions in the western republics of the Soviet Union—where national grievances reinforce dissatisfaction with living conditions—the congress failed to take action designed to discourage labor unrest. While touting the importance of Soviet trade unions, speakers at the congress did not endorse an expanded role for them. By raising the subject of revising the 1961 party program, presumably in order to scale down its ambitious projection of rapid improvement in the standard of living, Brezhnev may have inadvertently drawn the public's attention to the party's failure to fulfill Khrushchev's promises.

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Implications for US-Soviet Relations

Squabbling over investment priorities at the congress suggests the possibility of a division of opinion over how best to deal with economic stringencies that could have an impact on leadership attitudes toward US-Soviet trade relations. Some officials who spoke at the congress—such as Academy of Sciences President Aleksandrov and Minister of the Electronics Industry Shokin—tend to favor an autarkic approach, particularly with regard to the importation of foreign technology. Nonetheless several Soviet officials who reportedly favor an expansion of trade with the United States were elected to the new Central Committee. The elevation to the Central Committee of a number of Brezhnev's foreign policy advisers who have specialized in American affairs also suggests that the leadership remains attuned to the complexities of the US-Soviet relationship.

Since the congress, a number of rumors and reports have indicated that major personnel changes in the Soviet foreign policy establishment may be in the offing. Nikolay Patolichev, longtime Minister of Foreign Trade, may retire soon because of illness. A possible successor is his deputy, Nikolay Komarov, whom [] describe as opposed to expansion of US-Soviet trade. According to another rumor, First Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Maltsev may replace Patolichev. Maltsev, who has spent most of his career as a party *apparatchik* rather than a foreign policy specialist, apparently has ties to Kirilenko. This suggests he probably is disposed to favor the tactic of developing cooperation with European powers rather than with the United States.

The retirement or transfer of Ambassador to the United States Dobrynin also has been rumored. Probably none of the men most likely to succeed him, should he depart, enjoy as much access to the top Soviet leadership as this veteran Americanologist has developed over the years.

II. Military Affairs

For the Soviet military, representation in the ruling bodies of the Communist Party seems to be largely a matter of prestige and probably material perquisites. Selection appears to be based on a requirement to provide central representation for broad "constituencies" of Communist Party members in the armed forces, such as the military services and the important field commands. When the officers leave these posts they are usually dropped from the ruling bodies. The old, now inactive Marshals of the Soviet Union, such as Chuykov, Bagramyan, and Batitskiy, are exceptions to this policy.

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At the 26th Party Congress the military selections for full and candidate (nonvoting) membership in the Central Committee and for the Central Auditing Commission generally followed previous practice. Again, however, the selections proved to be not completely predictable or satisfactorily explainable by outsiders. The inactive Marshals were given what must be considered honorary membership. The Defense Minister and all but two of his deputies were named as expected, as were the principal regional commanders—Kulikov, the Warsaw Pact commander (who is a First Deputy Minister of Defense), Zaytsev (Germany), Ivanovskiy (Belorussia), Govorov, Salmanov, and Tret'yak (the Far East). The naming of A. I. Gribkov, the Warsaw Pact Chief of Staff, to full membership upset what could have been an east-west regional balance of representation and was a mild surprise. No previous Warsaw Pact Chief of Staff has ever been given full Central Committee status.¹ His selection may have been in anticipation of some increase in his military responsibilities.

There were also some minor surprises among the 13 military officers made candidate members of the Central Committee. V. M. Shabanov, a Deputy Minister of Defense who served as a Deputy Minister of the Radio Industry until July 1978, was given candidate membership although none of his predecessors who have held portfolios dealing with defense technology have ever been so honored. The invasion of Afghanistan and the events in Iran appear to have increased the military significance and probably the military population of the Turkestan Military District. These factors may have led to the elevation of Yu. P. Maksimov, the military district commander, to candidate status. The selection of M. I. Druzhinin, last identified as political officer of the Far East Military District, was also unexpected. Druzhinin may owe his improved political status to increased responsibilities—for example, it is possible he is now political officer for General Govorov, who reportedly commands Soviet forces in the Far East.

Finally, there is the uncertain political status of A. M. Mayorov, currently the senior Soviet military officer in Afghanistan. Mayorov was selected as a candidate member at the 24th and 25th Party Congresses while commanding the Central Group of Forces in Czechoslovakia in 1971 and the Baltic Military District in 1976. He was not selected for either of the higher party organs in 1981. It is possible that his failure to be selected has something to do with the fact that the Soviets have not seen fit to publicize Mayorov's presence in Afghanistan or his current military position. In Afghanistan, Mayorov is functioning as chief of the military advisory group as well as

¹ Previous Warsaw Pact Chiefs of Staff were: A. I. Antonov, 1955-62; P. I. Batov, 1962-65; M. I. Kazakov, (who was a candidate member of the Central Committee while holding this position) 1965-68; and S. M. Shtemenko, 1968-76. Gribkov has held the post since Shtemenko's death in 1976.

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senior officer in the country. There has been some indication that Mayorov may also be a first deputy chief of the Ground Forces. Neither of these positions would normally merit high party status.

III. Economic Affairs

President Brezhnev's address to the congress indicates that, despite the economy's poor showing in recent years, the leadership remains unwilling to risk even minor changes in the basic economic structure. The plan fulfillment data for 1980, released just before the congress opened, must have been especially embarrassing as overall growth was less than half the targeted rate. Brezhnev, however, offered no major policy initiatives or reforms to revive the economy. For the most part, his speech repeated the general policies set forth in the decrees of July 1979 on planning and management, which involve tinkering at the margin of, rather than major changes in, the system. The one relatively new idea—establishing a major agro-industrial complex—apparently received only lukewarm support.

The main guidelines of the 11th Five-Year Plan (1981-85), adopted at the congress, also seem to be rooted in the past. Following a well-trodden path, the guidelines place the greatest emphasis on the development of heavy industry, energy, and agriculture. Brezhnev's address contained much rhetoric on the need to boost living standards, but the plan goals indicate that few new resources are to be devoted to this task. Gains in consumption will be sacrificed for investment in future capacity and continued modernization of military forces. Whatever anxiety the leadership feels about the worsening plight of consumers—or the possible spread of the "Polish disease"—it is not yet enough to cause a significant reallocation of resources in their favor.

Overall, the new plan goals imply a GNP growth rate of 4 percent per year during 1981-85, substantially above that achieved during 1976-80. To meet this ambitious target, Soviet leaders are again counting on major gains in productivity. Indeed, 90 percent of the growth in industry and all the growth in agriculture are to come from more efficient use of resources. Previous campaigns to raise productivity have failed badly, however, and Moscow's current agenda (or lack of one) offers little hope for changing this pattern.

Agriculture: Hoping for the Best

The 1981-85 plan calls for farm output to increase an average of 5 percent per year. Although almost half of this increase would be a recovery from the decline suffered since 1978, the goal seems too ambitious. In particular, the target for grain production, calling for an average annual increase of roughly 8 percent, is almost certainly too high. This increase is to come entirely from higher yields, and the Soviets appear incapable of either

obtaining the necessary inputs or of making efficient use of those they do obtain. In particular, it is unlikely that they can increase fertilizer production and distribution as much as required because of difficulties in constructing and operating new Western-equipped fertilizer plants.

Industry: Temporize and Modernize

The problems facing Soviet planners in the 11th Five-Year Plan are especially evident in the targets for industry. Although the overall planned growth of 4.9 percent is lower than for any previous plan period, industry would have to perform considerably better than it did during the 10th Five-Year Plan to reach this goal.

Reflecting the leadership's continued emphasis on heavy industry, machinery production—the principal source of investment goods, defense hardware, and consumer durables—is scheduled to increase at an impressive rate of 7 percent annually. Moscow, however, will first have to overcome serious problems in the steel industry, where output, especially of high-quality products, has lagged badly in recent years. The unusual absence of a target for crude steel production in the plan directives suggests that Soviet planners themselves are unsure of this sector.

Soviet Energy Production: Substituting Gas for Oil

Energy production in 1981-85 is planned to grow at 2.9 percent to 4.1 percent annually, compared with 4.2 percent achieved during the 10th Five-Year Plan. Slower increases in oil production are to be offset by a sharp increase in gas output, which is to account for more than half of the growth in total energy output. We believe that even the low end of the target range will not be achieved, largely because oil output is likely to decline and the goal for gas production is too ambitious.

The 1980 Boxscore

The difficulty of the tasks facing Soviet planners is reflected in the recently released plan fulfillment data for 1980, which showed overall GNP growth up only 1.5 percent. Although the dismal 1980 performance was attributable, in part, to last year's weather-related harvest failure, the severity and wide-ranging nature of the slowdown reflect more fundamental problems. Industry's performance was especially bad, as production was barely able to move ahead of the poor 1979 performance. The 3-percent increase posted in 1980 was one of the lowest since World War II and involved shortfalls in the production of such important industrial materials as steel, oil, coal, and construction materials.

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The one bright area in the Soviet economy was foreign trade, where Moscow was able to take advantage of the rise in the world price of oil to increase hard currency imports (primarily grain) and still earn a current account surplus of over \$1.5 billion. Even this picture could change during 1981-85, however, as Soviet oil exports to the West are expected to decline by the mid-1980s. Moscow is already cutting back exports of crude oil and oil products to Western Europe. Most recently, Soviet officials told the Italians to expect a reduction in deliveries of about 40,000 barrels per day (b/d) of crude. This follows requests made of the French to accept approximately 20,000 b/d less oil. Our analysis of the Soviet domestic oil balance in 1981 indicates that oil shipments to hard currency Western customers will drop by 200,000 b/d this year to 700,000 b/d.

To replace oil revenues, the Soviets are pushing ahead with the proposed Siberia-to-Western Europe natural gas pipeline, the largest East-West trade project ever negotiated. The project entails constructing a trunkline from the Yamal gasfield in West Siberia to West Germany by 1986. It would involve the export of gas to six European countries and could more than double the proportion of Soviet gas in total West European gas consumption from about 10 percent to 25 percent. Although the project could be used for political leverage, West European governments see increased use of Soviet gas as an acceptable risk.

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