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The 26th Soviet Party Congress: Brezhnev's Show of Unity

An Intelligence Assessment

*Information available as of 31 March 1981
has been used in the preparation of this report.*

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED
1999

This paper was written by the
Office of Political Analysis.

This paper has been coordinated with the Offices of
Economic Research, Central Reference, Geo-
graphic and Societal Research, Scientific and Weap-
ons Research, Strategic Research, and the Na-
tional Intelligence Officer for the USSR.

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PA 81-10154
April 1981

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The 26th Soviet Party Congress: Brezhnev's Show of Unity

Key Judgments

The 26th Soviet Party Congress was an orchestrated show of unity from its opening on 23 February to its closing on 3 March. The congress underscored as never before Brezhnev's intention to surround himself with his close supporters and to hold onto power as long as his health allows. No changes were made in the composition of the Politburo or Secretariat, and the minimal turnover in the new Central Committee favored Brezhnev's family, associates, and proteges. The General Secretary packed the elite ranks more than ever before and emerged from the congress with his power and prestige at an all-time high.

Substantively, Brezhnev advanced a package of proposals aimed at seizing the initiative for the USSR in international security affairs and impeding Western arms deployment programs. The proposals were designed to appeal to Western public opinion and focused on both strategic and theater nuclear force issues. Brezhnev's overall assessment of the international scene, however, was essentially pessimistic. His remarks reflected concern that new Western armament programs threatened the USSR's relative strategic gains of the past decade, and he implicitly acknowledged that his detente policy was in trouble.

Despite Brezhnev's enhanced status, he seemed no more willing at this congress to alienate any of the USSR's major power groupings than he has been in the past. He did not, for example, join battle with powerful government ministries over reform of economic management. The congress reaffirmed that the present Soviet leadership does not intend to change its course in dealing with problems in energy, transportation, labor productivity, and agriculture, even though these policies have failed to arrest the worsening trends of the past decade.

Regional leaders at the congress competed for increasingly scarce resources and investment funds as they have in the past. Lobbying efforts by republic party bosses, as well as the absence of specific investment figures in Premier Tikhonov's report on the 1981-85 plan directives, conveyed the impression that investment priorities are still being hammered out.

Speeches at the congress showed that nationality and ethnic concerns are very much on the minds of the Soviet leadership, but Brezhnev's recommendations for dealing with them stuck to traditional Soviet formulations that seek primarily to protect Russian interests. The leadership's

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concern about the shifting demographic balance away from the dominant Slavs was highlighted in Brezhnev's and Tikhonov's speeches. For their part, Central Asian leaders proved sensitive to the survival of strong national sentiments in their areas and alleged foreign exploitation of these sentiments.

Perhaps reflecting the leadership's lack of innovative approaches to its ethnic, labor, and other economic problems, Brezhnev unenthusiastically presented a proposal to revise the Party Program that was approved by the 22nd Party Congress in 1961—a Khrushchevian product embarrassing in its promise of a Communist Soviet society by 1981; the proposal may have been an initiative of ideologue Mikhail Suslov. The congress instructed the Central Committee to work on a new program for consideration at the next party congress. Because it could be used either to justify or to renounce Brezhnev's philosophies and policies, the issue could become prominent in succession maneuvering of the next few years.

Despite this hint of controversy, no important leadership divisions emerged at the congress. By enduring the eight-day proceedings, moreover, Brezhnev demonstrated that he has the political will and the physical strength to continue performing his duties—albeit at a reduced pace. He almost certainly interprets the show of unity at the congress as a mandate for the present aging oligarchy. By its inaction, however, the congress has also increased the potential for shocks to the power structure when the transfer of power does occur.

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I. The Setting

The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was the fourth to be presided over by Leonid Brezhnev as General Secretary. The routine nature of the regional party conferences and republic party congresses that preceded the national congress had predetermined, in effect, that the meeting would be marked by political consolidation rather than transition to a successor regime. Each congress in the Brezhnev period has been more orchestrated and routine—"businesslike," to use a favorite Soviet euphemism—than its predecessor. In fact, the 26th congress was probably the most perfunctory meeting of its kind in Soviet history, an organized show of unity intended to impress on the party faithful and the outside world that the aging Brezhnev leadership is not buckling under the pressures for rejuvenation.

Despite its obvious staging, however, the approximately 5,000 delegates to the congress considered it a forum for the discussion of significant domestic issues. Judging from the published accounts of their speeches, regional party leaders were most concerned with problems of economic management, resource allocation, consumer welfare, and foreign exploitation of ethnic tensions between Soviet nationality groups. Although their speeches often were a familiar litany of concerns and complaints, most of the delegates seemed determined to take the opportunity to be heard by the senior leadership, and many of them engaged in outright lobbying for favored programs.

The highlights of the congress were, as usual, Brezhnev's review of Soviet foreign and domestic policies over the past five years, and his assessment of present and future requirements; Premier Nikolay Tikhonov's report on the draft directives of the 11th Five-Year Plan (1981-85); and the "election" of a new Central Committee and Central Auditing Commission—the party's "leading organs," comprising 545 of the Soviet elite. Media attention to Brezhnev's foreign policy

statements tended to upstage the discussion of economic and other significant domestic issues, but did not overshadow the importance of these issues as revealed in the reports of Brezhnev, Tikhonov, and other speakers.

II. Leadership Stability

Brezhnev emerged from the congress with his power and prestige at an all-time high. His physical endurance, the near cult surrounding his personality, congress protocol, the composition of the party's elite bodies, the lack of any serious policy challenges—all indicated the strength of his current position.

Brezhnev's physical ability to withstand the rigors of an intensive political marathon like the party congress seemed in doubt since his enervating visit to India last December, but, after a shaky start, he proved equal to the task. Television coverage of the opening of the congress ceased when Brezhnev, after speaking for six minutes, stumbled over the text of his report, but video replays made it clear that he managed to deliver at least an abridged version and perhaps even improved his delivery as he went along. He probably was driven by vanity or political necessity to deliver the speech himself and to participate in the entire congress, which apparently was reduced from the customary 10 working days to eight, presumably in deference to the party leader's reduced stamina. His endurance demonstrated that he has the political will and the physical strength to continue performing his duties, albeit at a reduced pace.

Brezhnev's prestige at the congress was as high as ever, judging by the praise he received from most speakers. Nonetheless, subtle signs of displeasure with the near-personality cult were apparent in the failure of some speakers to join in the paeans to the General Secretary. Two speeches in particular—by Ukrainian First Secretary and Politburo member Shecherbitskiy and by the

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Interlocking Directorate of the Soviet Leadership

Party	Date of Birth	Date of Election	Position	Secretariat	Government Council of Ministers	Presidium of Supreme Soviet
Politburo						
Full Member					Members	Member
Brezhnev	19 Dec 06	29 Jun 57		Brezhnev, General Secretary	Andropov, KGB	Brezhnev, Chairman
Andropov	15 Jun 14	27 Apr 73				
Chernenko	24 Sep 11	27 Nov 78		Chernenko, Politburo Administration		
Gorbachev	2 Mar 31	21 Oct 80		Gorbachev, Agriculture		Grishin
Grishin	18 Sep 14	9 Apr 71	Moscow party boss		Gromyko, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
Gromyko	18 Jul 09	27 Apr 73				
Kirilenko	8 Sep 06	25 Apr 73		Kirilenko, Industry, Cadres		Kunayev
Kunayev	12 Jan 12	9 Apr 71	Kazakhstan party boss			
Pelise	7 Feb 99	8 Apr 66	Party Central Committee			Romanov
Romanov	7 Feb 23	6 Mar 76	Leningrad party boss			Shecherbitskiy
Shecherbitskiy	17 Feb 18	9 Apr 71	Ukraine party boss			
Suslov	21 Nov 02	12 Jul 55		Suslov, Ideology and International Communism		
Tikhonov	14 May 05	27 Nov 79			Tikhonov, Chairman	
Ustinov	30 Oct 08	6 Mar 76			Ustinov, Ministry of Defense	
Candidate Member						
Aliyev	10 May 23	6 Mar 76	Azerbaijani party boss			
Demichev	3 Jan 18	1 Nov 64				
Kiselev	12 Aug 17	21 Oct 80	Belorussian party boss			
Kuznetsov	13 Feb 01	3 Oct 77				Kuznetsov, First Deputy Chairman
Ponomarev	17 Jan 05	19 May 72		Ponomarev, Nonruling Communist Parties		
Rashidov	6 Nov 17	31 Oct 61	Uzbek party boss			
Shevardnadze	25 Jan 28	27 Nov 78	Georgian party boss			
Solomentsev	7 Nov 13	23 Nov 71				
				Kaplanov, Cadres		
				Dolgikh, Industry		
				Zimyanin, Propaganda and Ideology		
				Rusakov, Ruling Communist Parties		
					Solomentsev, RSFSR Premier	
						Rashidov

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Sverdlovsk party chief—were notably cool toward Brezhnev. Their coolness may have reflected pique at the lack of progress in preparing for the succession. Both men are believed to be close to the 74-year-old heir apparent, Andrey Kirilenko.

Protocol also made clear Brezhnev's continued grip on power, indicating that little significant change can be expected in the political configuration of the Politburo. The departure of Nikolay Podgornyy and Aleksey Kosygin from the leadership since the last party congress in 1976 permitted Brezhnev to boost some of his clients to higher places of honor. Thus two of his closest associates—Party Secretary Chernenko and Premier Tikhonov, neither of whom were Politburo members at the 1976 congress—ranked fourth and fifth after Brezhnev, Suslov, and Kirilenko, according to the order of their presiding over the sessions of the congress. The "Old Bolshevik" Arvid Pelshe, at 82 the only major Soviet figure to have known Lenin, dropped from fifth to eighth place, but his historical standing and rumored closeness to Suslov may protect him from the political downfall that frequently follows such a drop in the pecking order.

A low turnover among Central Committee members also bore Brezhnev's stamp. The stability that has been a feature of personnel policy under Brezhnev was evident in the retention of 81 percent of the Central Committee members who had been elected in 1976. Candidate members of the Central Committee and members of the Central Auditing Commission had a higher rate of turnover: 72 and 68 percent, respectively, remained in place or were promoted. The overall retention rate among all of those still living who were elected to the leading organs in 1976 was about 83 percent—equaling the record retention rate set by the 25th Party Congress.

Brezhnev's influence in the composition of the new elite bodies is strikingly evident in the number of his proteges, associates, and even family members who were promoted at the congress. Brezhnev, who had made some tentative moves in this direction in 1976, came as close as he ever has to stacking the Central Committee to the extent possible, given the high retention rate and the ex officio claims on Central Committee seats.

Some of the promotions were prefigured by Brezhnev's appointments of favorites to key positions in the past year or so. The promotion of his son Yuriy to the position of First Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade in March 1979 made it possible for Yuriy to become a Central Committee candidate. Similarly, his son-in-law Yuriy Churbanov's assignment as First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs in February 1980 resulted in his promotion from Central Auditing Commission member to Central Committee candidate at the congress.

At the same time, several of Brezhnev's closest associates won promotions at the congress without moving up in position; in effect, the posts they hold were upgraded in status. Thus A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, a Brezhnev assistant, joined two other assistants as members of the Central Committee, while a fourth assistant, Viktor Golikov, became a member of the elite for the first time as a Central Committee candidate. In addition, three KGB deputy chairmen—all political appointees of the 1960s who have been closely associated with Brezhnev—were elevated to the rank of Central Committee member.

Brezhnev presumably was also influential in the promotion of several officials who—along with Aleksandrov-Agentov—have given close support to the leadership in the formulation of foreign policy. These include, most notably, Georgiy Arbatov, director of the Institute for the United States and Canada, and Nikolay Inezemtsev, director of the Institute of World Economics and International Relations, who were promoted to Central Committee members, as well as *Izvestia's* Political Observer Aleksandr Bovin, who became a member of the Central Auditing Commission. Several others with reputations as "Americanists"—including First Deputy Foreign Minister Korniyenko and Ambassador to India Vorontsov—won promotions to Central Committee member, and another, Ambassador to the United Nations Troyanovskiy, became a Central Auditing Commission member. In the case of these three, however, the tie to Brezhnev is tenuous at best, and the post itself may be sufficiently important to rate a place on the leading bodies.

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Finally, Brezhnev's influence was reflected in the high proportion of party officials who were promoted to Central Committee membership from a position which did not carry such status at the last party congress. Those whose positions were upgraded in status included 17 party officials, eight government administrators, and two military officers, as well as several token workers, the three KGB deputy chairmen, and Arbatov and Inozemtsev. The government officials were career bureaucrats who had risen under former Premier Kosygin, while the two new military men had assumed important command positions.

The failure of the leadership to make any change in the composition of the Politburo or the Secretariat underscores Brezhnev's interest in continuing to work with the policy team he has laboriously assembled over the years and to postpone any rejuvenation that might hasten the succession process. Even Ivan Arkhipov, the newly appointed, 73-year-old First Deputy Premier, failed to attain Politburo status, although he has been a close associate of Brezhnev and Tikhonov. The leadership may well have decided to postpone actions affecting the Politburo and Secretariat so as not to detract from the show of unity at the congress. The aging oligarchy has thus given itself a mandate to continue basically conservative policies. This inaction, however, has increased the potential for shocks to the power structure when the transfer of power does occur.

III. Foreign Policy

Responding to US criticism of Soviet actions, Brezhnev sought to portray Soviet policy as moderate and conciliatory while putting the blame for international tension on the United States. He generally avoided comment on current US-Soviet points of tension such as El Salvador and Afghanistan. The package of diplomatic and security proposals he advanced was designed to seize the initiative for Moscow in international relations and to impede, or at least retard, US and NATO arms deployment programs. The proposals were carefully crafted for the widest possible appeal to Western public opinion while advancing formulations for negotiations that would be to Moscow's advantage.

Daily briefings for Western correspondents throughout the congress by the chief of the CPSU International Information Department, Leonid Zamyatin, and others, presaged a massive post-congress diplomatic and propaganda campaign designed to draw the United States into a new dialogue while undercutting Western support for US foreign policies. Given Brezhnev's imprimatur, and the immediate and continuing diplomatic and propaganda offensive, the package of proposals may ultimately rank with the Brezhnev "peace program" announced at the 24th CPSU Congress in 1971.

A Deteriorating International Situation. Brezhnev monopolized the role of spokesman for Soviet foreign policy, as he has since the early 1970s. There was little serious discussion of foreign affairs by other officials and delegates. Several republic party first secretaries elaborated on issues of special concern to their own political domains, but they did not go beyond Brezhnev's remarks.

While Brezhnev mentioned some specific gains in foreign affairs for the Soviets, his characterization of the international scene was generally pessimistic and reflected the deterioration of the international climate from the Soviet point of view since the previous congress in 1976. He set the tone with the statement that the past five years were a "complex, tempestuous time," when the "aggressiveness of the policy of imperialism, above all American, sharply increased." This was a tacit admission that his detente policy had encountered serious problems in the form of growing Western distrust of and reaction to Soviet intentions and actions.

US-Soviet Relations. Brezhnev noted that the international situation depends "to a large degree on the policies of the Soviet Union and the United States," and left no doubt that his overriding objective was to reverse the continuing deterioration of bilateral relations. He referred to "candidly bellicose calls and statements . . . being heard from Washington . . . which seem to be specially intended to poison the atmosphere of relations between our countries," but refrained from slashing attacks on the United States and rendered a cautiously positive assessment of US intentions.

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Brezhnev appeared to be preoccupied with US efforts to alter the East-West strategic relationship through new deployment programs in the United States and other NATO countries. His remarks were designed to inhibit or slow down these deployments, particularly in theater nuclear forces, and exploit differences between the Western allies on these issues. His remarks reflected concern that newly vigorous Western armament programs threaten the USSR's relative strategic gains of the past decade. His inability to offer the assembled Soviet elite any assurances that this trend could be halted contributed to the general pessimism of his remarks.

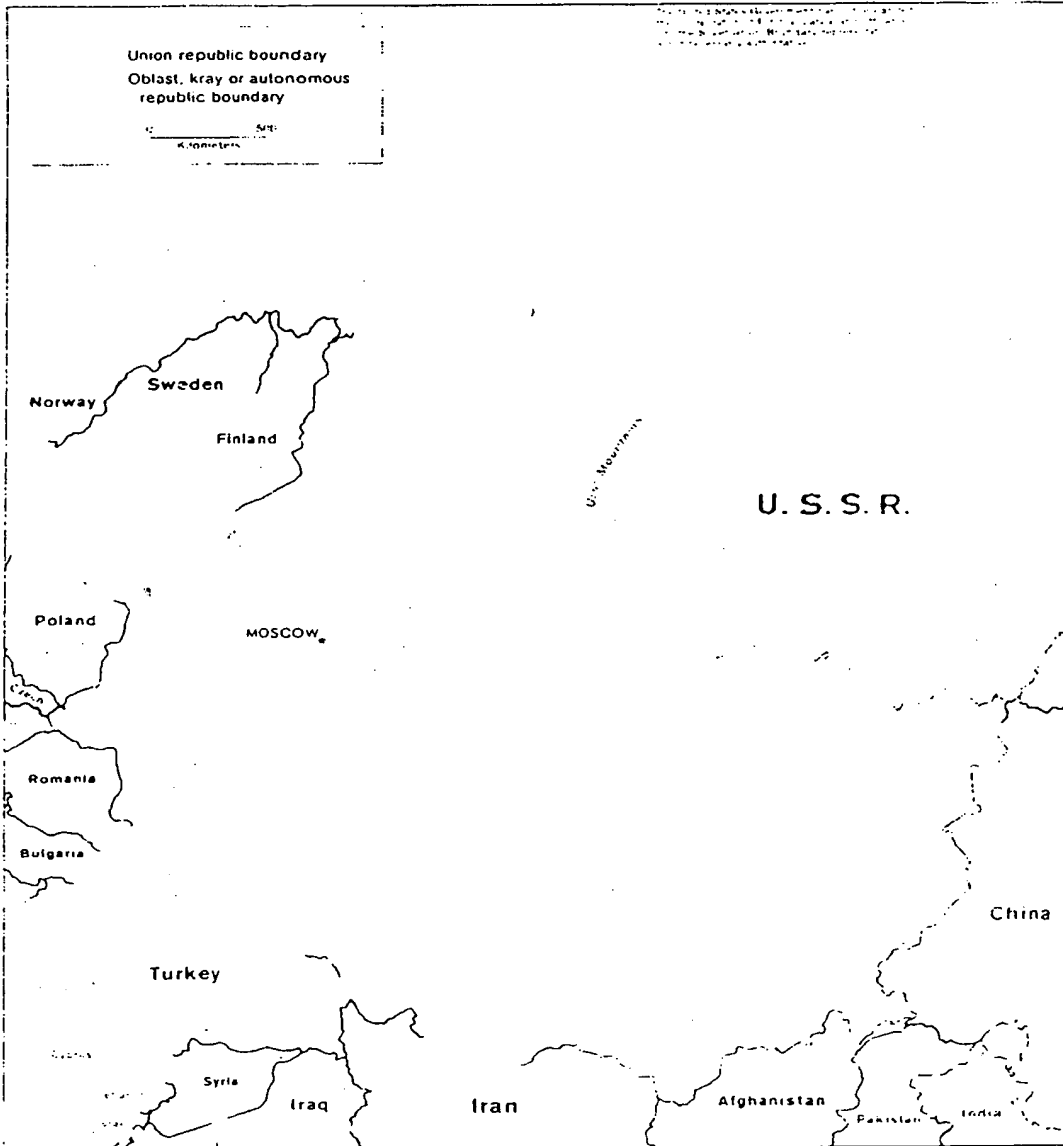
SALT Negotiations. Brezhnev's offer to negotiate limitations and reductions of strategic arms "without delay" is the most direct and urgent statement since the US elections, indicating Soviet willingness either to renegotiate SALT II or, perhaps, to negotiate a "SALT II-and-a-half" accord.

His specific proposal to limit deployment of the newest types of US and Soviet nuclear missile submarines and to ban modernized and new missiles for them suggests that the Soviet approach to any renewed disarmament talks will be more active than simply responding to issues raised by the United States.

Theater Nuclear Forces. Brezhnev's proposal for a "moratorium" on deploying new nuclear missiles in Europe and for freezing the "quantitative and qualitative" level of these missiles and of existing US "forward-based" nuclear systems is aimed directly at NATO's plan to deploy new US missiles. It also responds to West German Chancellor Schmidt's past expressions of interest in achieving some kind of limitations.

The proposal appears to preserve a Soviet option to continue deployment of SS-20 missiles but to leave little room for possible US replacement of existing systems with new ground-launched cruise and ballistic

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missiles. Brezhnev also struck at Chancellor Schmidt indirectly in several places in his speech, seemingly challenging him to be more helpful to Moscow on the theater nuclear forces issue.

Confidence-Building Measures. In deference to the West Europeans, Brezhnev offered to consider extending the zone for military confidence-building measures to the entire European part of the USSR if the West would "reciprocate," presumably including US territory. This offer was in part meant to portray an image of Soviet flexibility for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe review being held in Madrid, although it alone does not bridge the gap between the Eastern and Western positions.

In an offer seemingly aimed at repairing battered Soviet relations with Asian countries and at constraining possible US, Chinese, and Japanese military measures, he also proposed that confidence-building measures be considered for the Far East.

IV. The Economy

Tinkering With Economic Management. Among the domestic issues raised at the congress, management of the economy occupied the attention of virtually every speaker. Despite deep and widespread concern, little evidence was given of progress on important management reforms. The congress demonstrated again Brezhnev's reluctance or inability to confront powerful ministries on such issues as the balance between party and state control of the economic mechanism, and the relative priorities of national and regional prerogatives. Despite his increased prestige and ability to manipulate the composition of the party apparatus, Brezhnev showed no inclination to attack the Stalinist economic legacy that is responsible for many of the current ills. The congress affirmed, if there ever was any doubt, that his leadership will pass on that legacy intact.

It is immaterial whether this reluctance to force change is based on a more optimistic assessment of Soviet economic prospects than that held in the West or whether it stems from the leadership's reluctance to join a battle it may well lose. The end result is that the current leadership will struggle with its serious energy, agriculture, transportation, labor productivity, and

other economic problems using essentially the same tools that have failed in the past to arrest the worsening trends.

Brezhnev has long advocated organizational changes to improve coordination among the various branches of the economy and achieve a better integration of national and regional plans. In his October 1980 Central Committee plenum speech, he called on the Council of Ministers to conclude its work on reorganization proposals "before the congress" so that "obsolete structures" would not be brought into the new Five-Year Plan. In his report to the congress, however, Brezhnev indicated that the Council of Ministers had adopted only a series of halfway measures "steps in the right direction."

Despite the apparent failure of the Council of Ministers to come up with a comprehensive reorganization plan, Brezhnev retreated somewhat from his previous position, warning that "sluggishness" in improving the organizational structure would not be tolerated but setting no new deadline for completion of that task. Premier Tikhonov, assuming a stance that differed little from that of his predecessor Kosygin, placed the main burden for the solution of management problems on the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) and offered no suggestions for major organizational change. In contrast to Brezhnev, he placed more emphasis on changing the "methods and style" of management, suggesting a piecemeal approach to the problem.

Three relatively small managerial changes were revealed at the congress. The first of these--the establishment of "integrated interindustry subunits" within Gosplan--is an essentially conservative response to management difficulties caused by the inability of the economy, organized "vertically" by industrial branch, to cope with complex problems requiring extensive "horizontal" coordination. That idea has been strongly resisted by the government bureaucracy, and especially by Kosygin. The new subunits seem designed to correct Gosplan's excessively departmental approach to planning, but they are a far cry from the supraministerial organs that Brezhnev has proposed to handle these problems.

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A second organizational change was the establishment of an "interdepartmental territorial commission" attached to Gosplan and located in Tyumen Oblast, the petroleum development center. This apparently is an experimental effort to deal with complaints of inadequate regional control coming from areas that serve as sites of important national programs (such as the development of petroleum in western Siberia) and from "territorial-production complexes" for exploiting natural resources. Some local party officials had argued that new organizational forms of management were needed just to cope with these problems. Kosygin and other government leaders, however, had simply called on Gosplan to improve its integration of national and regional plans—an approach that would leave the branch principle of management fully intact. In an apparent compromise of these two positions, the Tyumen-based commission may increase local influence in the management process, but only under Gosplan's overall control.

Both Brezhnev and Tikhonov mentioned the establishment of a commission under the Presidium of the Council of Ministers to oversee development of the West Siberian oil and gas complex. The Presidium already has a number of specialized commissions reporting to it, but this one apparently is the first to focus on development of a particular region. When it was originally proposed by Siberian economists in 1978, it was to have been subordinate to both the party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers, an arrangement that would have given it added clout.

Despite these "steps in the right direction," regional delegates to the congress indicated that they were far from satisfied with the management structure, filing their usual complaints about central government neglect of their interests. Gennadiy Bogomyakov, party leader in Tyumen Oblast, failed even to mention the new Tyumen-based commission, suggesting that he may view this as an inadequate remedy.

Some regional officials proposed their own managerial solutions, most of them involving an increase of local party influence in central planning and management. The Moscow Oblast leader, for example, proposed the adoption of a comprehensive plan for the socioeco-

nomie development of his oblast, an idea that previously has been tried in Leningrad and Sverdlovsk. Regional party officials generally have supported the development of such plans (encompassing housing, education, medical, and other services) as one way of cutting across departmental boundaries and increasing their influence in the central planning process.

In a similar bid for increased local control, the party first secretary in Sverdlovsk Oblast suggested that the hundreds of construction organizations in his oblast now subordinate to 36 different ministries and committees—be combined under one local coordinating organ. This would both reduce the numbers of managerial personnel, he said, and strengthen party influence in the construction sector.

Despite this kind of party pressure—-from oblast to Politburo level—for reform of the management structure, the evidence suggests that central government forces can still resist any reorganization that might diminish their influence. At the 25th Party Congress, Brezhnev had sought to assure his audience that his proposals for management reform had not been hastily conceived, saying that he had abided by the saying that "one must measure not seven times . . . but eight or even 10 times before cutting." The lack of progress reported at this congress, however, indicates that the "measuring" continues, while meaningful reform remains a distant prospect.

Food Problems. The congress also provided evidence that the leadership has not yet been able to hammer out the details of its much advertised program to ensure an adequate supply of food following two successive harvest disasters. Once again the regime seemed unable to overcome bureaucratic inertia and obstructionism, despite the importance of food as a key incentive to raise labor productivity in an environment where resources are increasingly scarce. Instead, the regime apparently intends to rely on exhortation, some renewed emphasis on stimulating private farming, and large imports of foodstuffs.

Brezhnev acknowledged at the congress that the vaunted food program was only in the beginning stages, although he had insisted last October that it

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should be an integral part of the new five-year plan. A high-level Gosplan official, who held a press conference during the congress, was even more emphatic about the lack of progress, admitting that it was impossible to be specific about how the food program would be implemented.

Brezhnev's report stressed that the program would link agriculture more closely with the industries involved in storing, processing, and marketing farm products and with other components of the agro-industrial complex. Although Brezhnev did not reiterate his proposal of last October that this complex be administered as a single unit, the foreign policy section of his report did refer favorably to the Hungarian and Bulgarian experiences with integrated agro-industrial management, suggesting that he still favors this idea.

Several regional party leaders used the food program to praise experiments in new forms of agricultural management being conducted in their regions. Georgian party boss Shevardnadze called attention to the establishment of district-level agro-industrial associations in his republic, claiming that good results had been achieved from cooperative arrangements between private farmers and the collective farms modeled after the practice in Hungary. The newly appointed Moldavian party boss was equally forceful in praising his republic's rival experiments in interfarm cooperation and agro-industrial integration.

Both Brezhnev and Premier Tikhonov made clear that the food program—however it is to be managed—is intended to ensure a more balanced development of all sectors comprising the agro-industrial complex and that some redistribution of resources to bring lagging sectors up to an acceptable level is contemplated. The storage, transportation, and processing industries make up one area of concern. In his congress report, as on earlier occasions, Brezhnev called attention to the enormous losses of agricultural products due to inadequate storage and processing facilities. "I believe," he added, "that the five-year plan should call for a more rapid growth in investments in these industries." On the other hand, complaints at the congress by regional officials about the poor quality, insufficient quantity, and limited range of agricultural machinery suggest

that there is considerable pressure to put more resources into modernizing this sector. Brezhnev's lobbying suggests that the issue is not completely resolved.

Tikhonov stated that investments in the agro-industrial sector would amount to "almost one-third" of total investments in the economy. Though still exceedingly large, this represents a slightly smaller share than was allocated in 1976-80 collectively to agriculture and to those industries that would be included in the agro-industrial complex. Thus, the added help to lagging sectors that Brezhnev and others called for presumably will have to come from a redistribution of resources within the agro-industrial sector itself.

The Tugging Over Investments. Active economic lobbying for resources on the part of republic and oblast party leaders stood in contrast to the balanced, consensus presentations of Brezhnev and Tikhonov. The lobbying seems to have had little immediate impact, since the plan directives were approved at the end of the congress with no dramatic changes, but local leaders may still hope to effect some minor shifts before October, when the complete plan is scheduled to be approved.

Brezhnev stressed the need to husband scarce resources including energy, metals, and manpower, as well as the need to improve quality and raise productivity. Tikhonov, in a comparatively short report, also stressed the "intensive" development of the economy.

Tikhonov, for the first time, tied the food program to a consumer goods program last mentioned a year ago. The consumer goods program, according to Tikhonov, would "renew and extend the range of consumer goods, improve their quality, and increase the sale of new, fashionable, inexpensive, quality products." The consumer goods program was among six priority programs named in March 1980 by State Planning Committee Chairman Baybakov. Talk of a consumer goods program, however, ended in the late summer when Brezhnev began to push the food program. Now it is apparently being revived, at least rhetorically.

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Neither leader dealt at length with regional development, though Brezhnev, in his discussion of the nationality question, went further than he had in 1972, when he declared that basic equalization between the republics had been achieved. On this occasion he tilted in favor of greater development of the heartland of Great Russia, the so-called nonblack earth zone

Vigorous lobbying took place at the congress on the critical issue of water resources, so necessary for drought-prone Soviet agriculture. The party leaders of Kazakhstan and two Central Asian republics that stand to gain the most from a massive project to divert Siberian rivers repeated demands voiced at the last party congress in 1976; other regional leaders also made claims to water, albeit through less grandiose projects

The diversion of part of the flow of the Siberian rivers to irrigate Central Asia has been discussed for many years. At the last party congress Kazakh party boss Kunayev, Uzbek First Secretary Rashidov, and Turkmen party leader Gapurov pushed for immediate action. The 10th Five-Year Plan directives (1976-80), approved by that congress, reflected their appeal by providing that preliminary scientific studies be initiated. Renewed pressure from these leaders in late 1978 resulted in a joint decree of the Central Committee and Council of Ministers calling for the completion of preliminary work. When the draft directives appeared last December, however, they only proposed more preliminary scientific work, while a similar project to divert water to the North Caucasus -- pushed at the last congress by Krasnodar kray party boss Medunov -- was slated to begin "preparatory work."

The Central Asian party leaders, probably with the aim of placing their project on a par with the North Caucasus scheme, began a concerted media and political campaign to drum up support both locally and nationally. They mounted an extensive campaign in conjunction with the public discussion of the plan, including a 20-minute documentary color film produced in Tashkent as well as several articles in the national and local press. In the past Uzbek party boss Rashidov pressed for speedier action and, at the Uzbek party congress in January, he called for "the practical start of this work during this five-year plan."

Kunayev, Gapurov, and Rashidov linked the diversion scheme with Brezhnev's "food program," undoubtedly in the hopes of gaining greater support than Moscow has given in the past five years. Rashidov, for instance, claimed that the scheme would "permit the creation of a unique and highly productive region" and "be a major contribution to the food program." Kirgiz party boss Usubaliyev, while not directly supporting the others, also referred to the food program in promoting a more modest scheme to divert part of the Sarydzhaz River.

The lobbying on the Siberian river diversion project appears to be a rare, publicly coordinated effort to increase support for a controversial and very costly project. Those pushing the project may have been frustrated temporarily, despite the presumed political influence of Kunayev, who is a Politburo member, and Rashidov, a Politburo candidate, since the congress approved final directives that did not modify the initial draft's language. They will undoubtedly continue their efforts behind the scenes, but Brezhnev's call for focusing new investment in Central Russia, as well as more pressing investment needs in energy and the retooling of Soviet industry, does not bode well for their success.

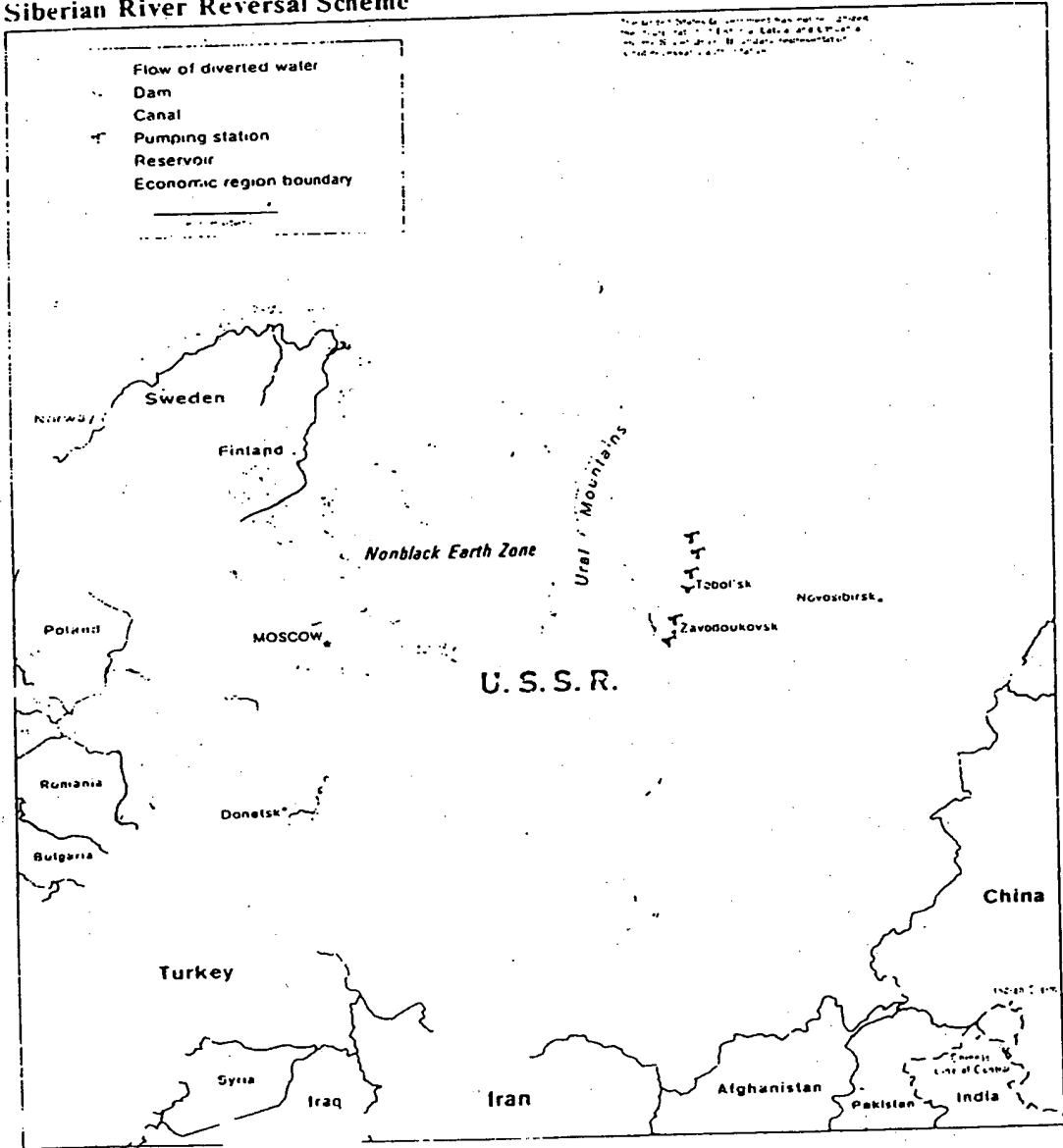
In addition to the Central Asians, the Altay and Novosibirsk party leaders also laid claim to a share of Siberia's water reserves, while RSFSR Premier Solomentsev, a Politburo candidate, lent support to the idea of irrigating arid parts of Siberia and called for a "comprehensive approach to the use of natural resources," including water. His comment seemed aimed at countering pressure for water from the Central Asians.

There were noticeable differences in the way regional leaders pressed for increased investments. Many speakers from east of the Urals expressed relative satisfaction with the party's economic program and lobbied only for comparatively minor readjustments such as new factories and more housing. They seemed more concerned with management issues, asking for better coordination between ministries in support of the massive construction projects under way in Siberia.

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Siberian River Reversal Scheme



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Their overall satisfaction contrasted sharply with the complaints of spokesmen for older industrial areas. The Moscow Oblast party boss, for example, carped that "we are forced to beg money" from the USSR and Russian Republic Gosplans for "numerous acute needs in the municipal service sphere." He also asked that the Ministry of the Automotive Industry modernize an existing factory in his oblast rather than build a new one elsewhere-- a request to which the minister seemed to accede in a later speech. Similar frustration showed in the speeches of the Tatar party leader, who pleaded that Siberia's surplus petrochemicals be sent to his region to keep factories there operating. The party boss in the Siberian area of Kemerovo complained that no new mine had been opened in 20 years in his region, implying that this older area would be hard pressed to meet the demands of the new five-year plan.

The Ukrainian speakers, however, displayed the most consistent dissatisfaction. The Ukrainian Premier, the Donetsk party leader, and even Ukrainian republic party boss Sheherbitskiy showed signs of unhappiness with economic plans. Sheherbitskiy did not directly address the issue of investments, but subtle signs of his frustration were apparent. At one point, he called for plans that were feasible, suggesting that funds for Ukrainian development have been insufficient in recent years. In the past, Sheherbitskiy has consistently eschewed lobbying publicly for more investment in his republic, but the pressing needs of the Ukraine's aging industry -- which was a theme of some of the speakers at the earlier republic party congress -- may have convinced him that it is necessary. In the last five-year plan, investment in the Ukraine grew only 19 percent compared to 29 percent for the USSR as a whole; according to Sheherbitskiy, the new plan set investment in the Ukraine at nearly the same level.

The impression of discontent was strengthened by the Ukrainian Premier, who reminded the congress of the need to modernize industry, particularly in his home base -- the Donbas. He called for investments to modernize the stagnant Ukrainian coal and metallurgical industries. The Donetsk party boss delivered similar requests. (U)

The Ukrainians' lobbying for their aging industrial base recalls the case of former Ukrainian party boss Shelest, who complained of investment inadequacies at the 24th Party Congress in 1971 and was demoted soon afterwards. At that time, Sheherbitskiy championed Brezhnev's concept of "proportional development" of the national economy, a roundabout way of approving the eastward shift of investment, but he now appears to be moving gradually away from this position.

V. Political-Ideological Issues

Nationality Problems. Brezhnev displayed sensitivity to continuing problems in this area, and sought to strike a balance between recognition of minority rights and "exaggeration" of national "differences" in the Soviet Union. He conceded that modernization was giving rise to ethnic tensions but offered no clear solution. Although he acknowledged the right of ethnic groups to "due representation" in party and state bodies, he failed to spell out what constitutes such representation.

Brezhnev seemed primarily concerned to protect Russian interests. He remarked that the number of citizens of nonindigenous ethnic groups have increased considerably in some republics in recent years and they have their specific requirements in the sphere of culture, language, and everyday life. Russians, of course, compose the vast majority of this group.

Brezhnev's statements on ethnic problems take on added significance in a congress marked by heavy lobbying by regional leaders for a share of the investment pie. He told his audience that the progress accomplished by backward areas of the Soviet Union was directly attributable to the assistance of the Russian people. Now that these areas are no longer backward, Brezhnev argued, the assistance should flow in the other direction -- specifically to aid agricultural development of the Russian republic's nonblack earth zone.

Both Brezhnev and Tikhonov referred to new provisions for an unprecedented, regionally differentiated demographic policy that is clearly designed to stimulate the birth rate in the low-fertility, predominantly

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Slavic regions of the country. The limited provisions stress maternity and child-care benefits, to be implemented gradually and "by region." This suggests that they may never see the light of day in the high-fertility, predominantly Muslim regions.

The measures, which apparently were elaborated in response to Brezhnev's call at the 25th Party Congress for an "effective" demographic policy, are a radical departure from the single standard that has been applied in all regions of the Soviet Union since the October Revolution. Until now the regime has appeared reluctant to abandon the single standard because to do so would imply the state's interest in regulating the size of the country's minority groups. It appears, however, that the growing economic, political, and social pressures caused by the continued imbalance in population growth between Slavs and Muslims have impelled the leadership toward greater pragmatism.

Regional leaders who followed Brezhnev to the congress podium predictably offered glowing tributes to the Russian people. For example, Georgian party boss Shevardnadze compared the help of the Great Russian people to a beacon of light that lifted Georgia out of its former darkness, and the Armenian party leader, Demirehyan, gave thanks to the Russian people who, he said, "more than 150 years ago held out a fraternal helping hand and led us to the shore of salvation."

At the same time, party leaders from most republics, particularly those in Central Asia, demonstrated sensitivity to the continued evidence of strong national sentiments in their areas and concern over Western exploitation of this issue. For example, the Turkmen party chief blamed "imperialist forces" and Maoists for distorting the essence of the party's nationality policy and using religious propaganda to sow discord among the population. The Kirgiz leader explicitly charged that "class enemies" of the Soviet Union were using the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan to undermine the "unity of the Soviet people."

Events in Poland evidently are heightening ethnic tensions in the Baltic republics. The Estonian party boss stated that "ideological warfare" was being waged

toward his republic due to its location on the "front lines." The Lithuanian leader railed against Lithuanian emigres calling them "stooges of American imperialism." The Armenian party boss chastized "friends" of the Soviet Union who occasionally join in the abuse—an apparent reference to Eurocommunists who have been critical of Soviet policy toward Poland.

Trade Unions in an Ambiguous Position. Against the backdrop of continuing labor unrest in Poland, discussion at the congress on trade unions and consumer welfare reflected leadership concern over the possible spread of the Polish virus and the need to take preventive action.

Brezhnev's discussion of the role of trade unions was aimed at boosting the unions' prestige with the Soviet worker. He emphasized the right of trade unions to lobby for worker interests, berating the unions for insufficiently exercising their "wide-ranging" rights on behalf of workers. This is in marked contrast to his 1976 congress report, where the only mention of trade unions occurred in the context of raising production.

Worker representation in the party's leadership also was an issue at the congress. Ordinary workers had been "elected" to several republic Central Committee bureaus before the congress—a fact that Brezhnev noted approvingly. The party leader's approbation, however, evidently was an exercise in rhetoric. The congress failed even to promote the chairman of the Soviet trade unions to the ranks of the Politburo, a status the post had enjoyed until 1975, when trade union head Aleksandr Shelepin was sacked. None of the other speakers endorsed an expanded role for the unions. The remarks of Soviet trade union leader Shibayev were generally conservative in tone, describing the purpose of trade unions as raising production. At the end of the congress, neither he nor any other representative of the trade unions or workers was included in the newly "elected" Politburo.

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The Party Program Brought Out of the Dustbin. In a move of potentially major ideological significance, Brezhnev put forward a proposal to revise the 1961 Party Program. Ostensibly, such a revision would produce a program that better reflects changed conditions in the domestic and international arena. The old program's excessively optimistic predictions for Soviet society — a source of embarrassment to this conservative regime — presumably will be toned down.

The 1961 program was a political platform from which Nikita Khrushchev pursued his own particular vision of detente and economic reform. Its theoretical innovations as well as its practical political aspects were designed to enhance the power of the party at the expense of the state bureaucracy. Khrushchev's announcement that the material-technical basis of Communism had been established in the Soviet Union immediately raised the question of whether the state and party were obsolete. His solution to this dilemma of Marxian theory was the proposition that the party would grow while the state withered away. Various functions carried out by government organs would

eventually be taken over by "public organizations." This process made some headway under Khrushchev. For example, tasks formerly handled by the militia were taken over by voluntary citizens' groups, and "comrades courts" began, at least partially, to supplant official courts of law.

What form a revised party program might take is not known, but it seems doubtful that it would again serve as a focal point of conflict between the party apparatus and the state bureaucracy. The Brezhnev leadership has not attempted seriously to supplant the government in economic affairs. Reports from Leningrad last fall linked a proposal to revise the party program with a scheme to create a new party organ, called Partiplan, as a counterpart to Gosplan — an obvious ploy to encroach on the state planning apparatus. This scheme never got off the ground, however, and there was no hint of it in discussions at the congress.

Brezhnev's vague comments on the economic goals to be established by the new program and his use of the concept of developed socialism suggest that the revision is intended merely to legitimize the status quo. In

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this context, he called for elaborating economic principles rather than predicting economic particulars-- an apparent allusion to the 1961 program's optimistic promise of a living standard higher than that found in any capitalist country, including the goal of a 34- to 36-hour workweek and a month's paid annual leave for workers by 1980.

It is possible that Brezhnev, at the height of his political power, intends to use revision of the party program to legitimize political developments since the fall of Khrushchev, particularly such initiatives as detente that are associated with Brezhnev. At the same time, a revised party program could provide Brezhnev with the opportunity to set a political agenda for the future.

The idea may not have originated with Brezhnev. His call for a new program seemed lukewarm at best, and he did not personally identify himself with the proposal. This is in marked contrast to 1961, when Khrushchev headed a special commission for revising the old program. The 26th congress instructed the Central Committee to prepare a new program, but Brezhnev was not identified as heading the effort.

Brezhnev, in fact, may be reluctant to begin a review of party doctrine when it is unlikely he will be able to see it through to completion. Drafting a new party program raises the possibility-- especially if a succession struggle has begun during the process-- that the Brezhnev years could be condemned rather than praised. In any case, revision of the program seems more likely to be in the interest of party ideologues than pragmatic politicians like Brezhnev. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the dean of Soviet ideologues, Party Secretary Suslov, sponsored the proposal. The delegates who endorsed the proposal-- including Romanov, Grishin, Solomentsev, and Kiselev from the Politburo--are thought to have close ties to Suslov. On the other hand, Politburo members identified with Brezhnev-- Kunayev, Sheherbitskiy, Aliyev, and Shevardnadze-- failed even to mention the idea in their congress speeches. In view of this lineup, progress on any revision is likely to be slow.

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