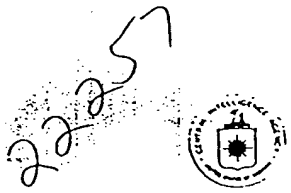

Directorate of
Intelligence

The Soviet Political Succession: Institutions, People, and Policies

An Intelligence Assessment

Information available as of 20 April 1982
has been used in the preparation of this report.

This report was prepared by
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SOV 82-10063X
April 1982

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The Soviet Political Succession: Institutions, People, and Policies

Key Judgments

Sickness and death among the aging Soviet leadership have propelled succession to the top of Moscow's political agenda. Following party secretary Suslov's death in January, President Brezhnev moved quickly to bolster the status of his protege, Konstantin Chernenko, at the expense of Andrey Kirilenko, the man who previously had been best placed to become the next party chief. Behind-the-scenes opposition to Chernenko's advancement has developed and has made Brezhnev's own position more vulnerable. This opposition—together with the reported illnesses of both Brezhnev and Kirilenko—indicates that succession maneuvering is intensifying and increasingly preoccupying Soviet leaders

In the three past successions, the key to victory in the power struggle has been control of the party Secretariat and its powerful staff. This, in turn, has led to control of the provincial party apparatus and to some influence over the economic ministries, the security apparatus, and the military command. Only Stalin succeeded in winning complete control over the regime's entire machinery. Short of this, however, a strong and reasonably stable leadership has been possible when the General Secretary, basing himself in the Secretariat, has had sufficient strength to dominate the Politburo, the party's chief policymaking institution

Precedent would suggest that Brezhnev's successor will be chosen from the senior secretaries who hold membership in the Politburo. This had formerly led us to believe that the succession would come in two stages, with an older interim successor, such as Kirilenko (75) or Chernenko (70) being replaced in a few years by one of the younger members of the leadership. Several factors—the death of king-maker Suslov, the possible incapacitation of Kirilenko, the apparent lack of Politburo support for Chernenko, and the weakened condition of Brezhnev—have made it equally likely, however, that a more dramatic change could occur, pushing a younger member of the leadership quickly to the top without an interim phase. Any such change would require the strong support of the military and KGB and probably would be prompted by a shared belief that Soviet problems—especially in the economic area—require vigorous action and leadership sooner rather than later

Whoever ultimately comes out on top, the succession process is politicizing policy differences within the leadership. The post-Brezhnev leadership will have to grapple with complex and increasingly urgent political and

economic issues, none of which lend themselves to easy solutions. Some notable policy differences already have emerged between senior secretaries Kirilenko and Chernenko that probably represent viewpoints shared by others in the leadership and within the bureaucracy:

- On foreign policy issues, Kirilenko has been equivocal in his support of Brezhnev's overtures to the United States, less optimistic than Brezhnev about the prospects for resolving Sino-Soviet differences, and less tolerant than most leaders about East European deviations from Moscow's guidance and direction. Although Chernenko has a shorter track record than Kirilenko on foreign policy issues, he has been far more enthusiastic in his support of improved relations with the United States and of arms limitation, and well ahead of his colleagues in warnings about the consequences of nuclear war.

- On domestic issues, Kirilenko has been fairly consistent in his advocacy of a strong defense posture, strict cultural and ideological discipline, and the preferential development of heavy industry, while Chernenko has stressed the need to improve the lot of the Soviet consumer and called for greater intraparty "democracy."

Conflict over these issues could lead to some important policy shifts:

- The most immediate changes are likely to be made in economic policy, with some reallocation of resources away from agriculture likely after Brezhnev leaves. Even the defense budget, virtually sacrosanct since the early 1960s, probably will come under some attack. Given the momentum of current weapon programs and the need for a new leader to obtain the support of the military and security services, however, reductions in the growth of military spending seem unlikely in the near term.

- Concern over declining growth rates also will intensify efforts to improve efficiency and could bring changes in the economic management structure, although changes that seem politically feasible probably would not significantly improve the economic situation.

- Departures in the foreign policy arena seem less imminent. Soviet strategy already has shifted to reflect a more pessimistic consensus about the prospects for improved relations with the United States, and this new direction appears unlikely to change, barring major US initiatives in the

immediate post-Brezhnev period. As the pessimism about Soviet-US relations becomes increasingly self-fulfilling, Soviet leaders may become even more inclined to pursue policies in the Third World that the United States would find disturbing and perhaps threatening to its interests.

Despite the likelihood of some policy change, no leader who succeeds Brezhnev—whether selected from his contemporaries or a younger group of Politburo members—initially will have the power to push through a comprehensive package of domestic and foreign policy programs. We know less about the policy preferences of the younger group than those of the seniors, however, and are less able to predict what Soviet policy might be after a younger leader has had time to consolidate his position as party chief. As Politburo members, these younger leaders have been participants in the policymaking process for some time, a factor that may lessen the likelihood of radical policy shifts when they assume more responsible posts, but their future policy preferences undoubtedly will be strongly influenced by the environment at the time.

We are even less able to gauge the policy inclinations of the generation of Soviet leaders who will come to the fore in the late 1980s. Although these leaders could respond to increased domestic and international pressures by attempting to liberalize the Soviet system, we believe a more likely response would be a return to some form of neo-Stalinist orthodoxy. This would be more consistent with the Russian and Leninist tradition than significant, liberalizing reforms

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Preface

The leadership of the Soviet Communist Party has changed only three times in 65 years, and each time under dramatically different domestic and international conditions. This is the first time in Soviet history that an entire generation of leaders is departing history's stage more or less together. Accordingly, precedents are fragile and the uncertainties great. The Politburo does not yet know who next will wear Lenin's mantle, nor do we. But this paper will help the reader better understand the process, the people, the political dynamics, and the possible outcomes of the struggle for power in the Kremlin—and the implications for the United States.

The first section discusses the institutional and historical setting in which the political struggle takes place. We then analyze current indications of succession maneuvering and speculate about Brezhnev's role in trying to prearrange the succession. The policy issues that will play an important role in Kremlin politicking and the policy views of the leading contenders, Konstantin Chernenko and Andrey Kirilenko, are explored next. (Although Kirilenko is now reported to be in poor health and could eventually be eliminated from contention, his views have such strong institutional backing that other leaders undoubtedly will pick up the banner if he falls.) Finally, the paper looks at likely areas for policy change in the post-Brezhnev era and some of the institutional factors that could affect new policies.

The Soviet Political Succession: Institutions, People, and Policies

Institutions and Their Role in Soviet Succession

Three institutions—the Politburo, the party Secretariat, and the Council of Ministers—will play key roles in the coming succession struggle. Although the distribution of power often shifts among these institutions and their respective members during a succession, officials based in the party Secretariat, and especially its nominal head, the General Secretary, have historically had the upper hand in this contest.

The Succession Process

The death or ouster of the party leader in the USSR in all three previous successions (1924, 1953, 1964) led to a prolonged power struggle. While the initial appointment of a successor is made quickly, the new General Secretary needs several years to consolidate his position. His colleagues in the Politburo do not as a rule readily submit to his attempts to assume the power and authority of his predecessor. Lacking a constitutional basis for his claims, he is forced to build support gradually—and since Stalin—through political means. Stalin overcame these obstacles in the late 1920s, as did Khrushchev in the late 1950s and early 1960s and—in more limited measure—Brezhnev in the 1970s. It took several years (an average of about five) to resolve each of the three succession crises.

While the new General Secretary maneuvers to consolidate power, the leadership often has trouble making decisions on complex policy matters. Policy lines tend to become fouled with political ones, and institutions just below the top leadership temporarily exercise increased influence on policy. If the party boss fails to consolidate power quickly, the Secretariat may become an arena of acute conflict, as in the 1964-67 period, or there may be an increase in the strength and assertiveness of the government in relation to the party apparatus, such as occurred in the early post-Stalin years. The political arena is widened even further by the enhanced activity of institutional "interest groups" in the military, the economic bureaucracy, the scientific establishment, and the creative intelligentsia.

The Central Committee and the Politburo: Arenas of Conflict

By statute, the supreme organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) is the party congress, held at least every five years. Between congresses, that role is assigned to the party Central Committee, which theoretically is responsible for electing the General Secretary. In practice, however, the Central Committee has been used since the 1920s primarily to legitimize the regime's decisions and actions. Its membership has become much too large and unwieldy—it now has over 300 full (voting) members and about 150 candidate (nonvoting) members—to serve as an effective decisionmaking institution, and it rarely meets more than twice a year.

The Politburo, in fact, provides the real forum for the struggle. It is the most important decisionmaking organ in the Soviet political system. Although nominally elected by the Central Committee, it is a self-appointed group of oligarchs who are empowered by party statute to "direct party work between plenums of the Central Committee." With this authority its members collectively are best placed to speak in the name of the Central Committee. The Politburo, thus, formulates national and foreign policies, issues directives to all other institutions, and approves appointments to leading positions in these institutions.

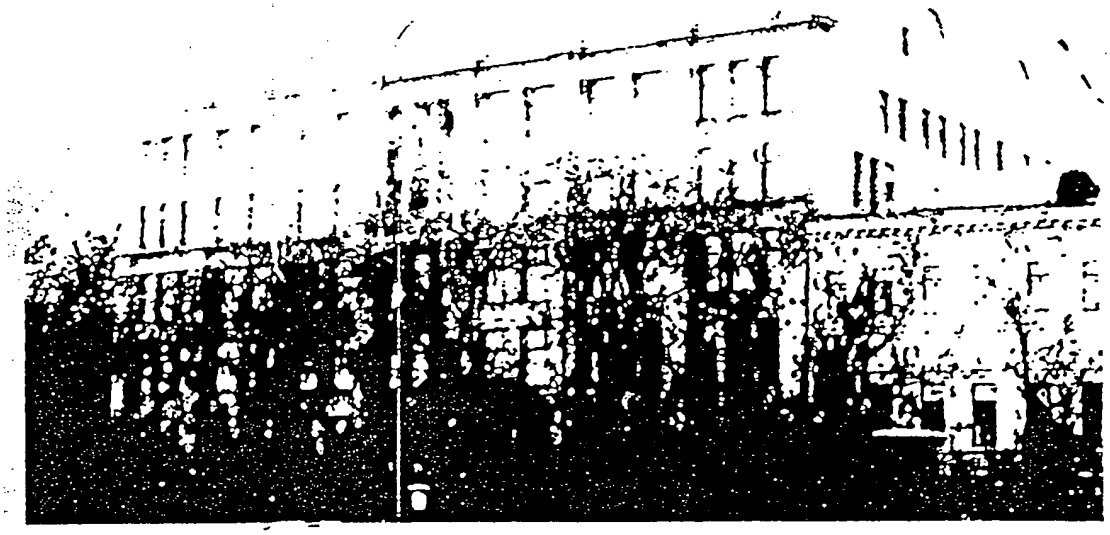
Bureaucratic as well as political considerations dictate the size and composition of the ruling group. Since Stalin, membership generally has ranged from 12 to 16 full (voting) members and from six to nine candidate (nonvoting) members. Most of these slots have been allocated on almost an ex officio basis to men (only one woman has ever served on the Politburo)

who hold top positions in the party Secretariat, the Council of Ministers, and key regional party and state organizations. For some jobs—General Secretary, Premier, and President—on the other hand, Politburo membership is a prerequisite. Considerable room for political maneuvering, nonetheless, exists concerning the status of the slots (full or candidate), the number of party secretaries on the Politburo, and the representation of the military, police, and Foreign Ministry.

The power and influence of individual Politburo members vary widely despite the formal appearance of equality, and personal clout depends primarily on executive position in the ruling institutions. The General Secretary, the Premier, and the President, as head of their respective organizations, have more influence, for example, than lower ranking officials in their organizations, that is, other secretaries or deputy premiers. Since Khrushchev's triumph in 1957, party secretaries have usually been in a stronger position within the Politburo than government officials with comparable responsibilities. Moscow-based leaders, as regular participants in Politburo proceedings, have more influence on national policy than their colleagues who work outside of Moscow and do not attend all sessions.

Under Brezhnev, Politburo meetings have apparently become routine decisionmaking sessions, not the political free-for-alls that occurred under Khrushchev. They normally have been held once a week, usually on Thursday, and typically consider only three or four major questions during a four-hour session, leaving lesser issues to phone or buckslip coordination. Issues are usually placed on the agenda in advance, with the necessary documents properly coordinated and given to the members prior to the meeting. The discussion normally focuses on whether to take the action proposed in the documents and is not a wide-ranging debate of many different options. If new information or issues arise as a result of this discussion, final resolution will often be deferred until the new point can be properly staffed out. Consensus decisionmaking appears to be the rule, with formal votes rarely taken.

Despite its vast authority, the Politburo lacks its own administrative apparatus. It has to rely on the party Secretariat to execute commands to the party. To carry out state policy, the Politburo depends on the Council of Ministers: for economic affairs on its Presidium, and for security affairs on its specialized ministries (Foreign Affairs, Defense, and the KGB).



Central Committee building

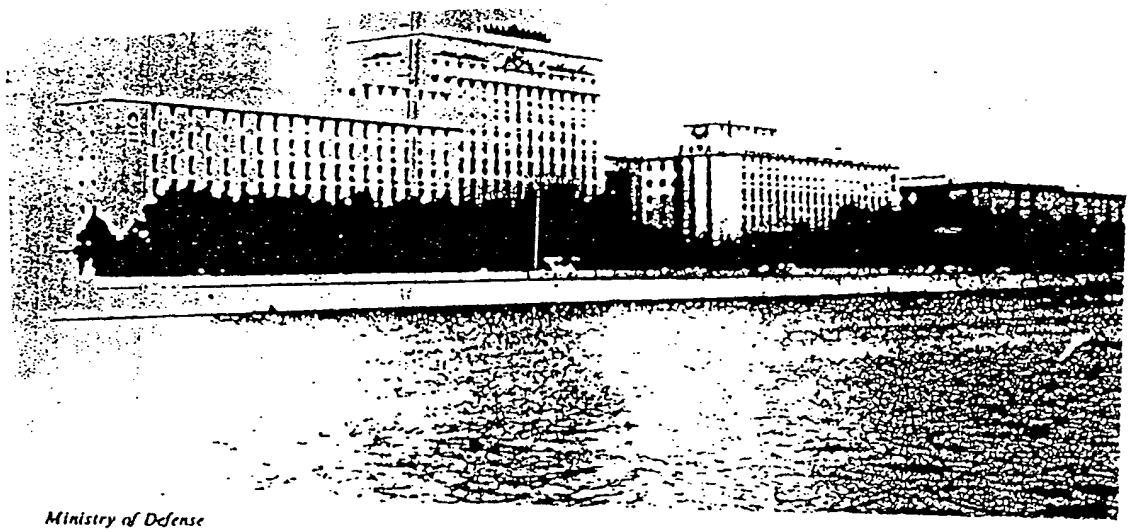
Consequently, the struggle for power in the Politburo has in the past become a battle for influence within and among the institutions that implement Politburo policies. Stalin used his position in the party Secretariat to achieve political preeminence, but in the 1930s he relied on the security organs to establish a personal dictatorship over the Politburo and all other Soviet institutions. Stalin's rule so weakened the party's bureaucratic machinery that the institutional pecking order was not self-evident in the early post-Stalin years. Leaders in three different institutions—the party (Khrushchev), the government (Malenkov), and the police (Beriya)—sought to gain primacy, with Khrushchev and the party winning out after four years. Brezhnev, too, used the party as his institutional base, although he had to share power and th spotlight with Premier Kosygin for a time

Institutional Interest Groups

The power struggles described above have gone through various stages--from collective leadership to triumvirates to individual political preeminence to personal dictatorship. Several institutions have played an active role in this process, among them the military, the security organs, the government economic bureaucracy, and, most importantly, the Central Committee Secretariat

The Military. While providing the backbone for the nation's and the party's security, military professionals have been indoctrinated from the regime's beginnings to stand aside from higher politics and historically have not been well positioned to become major players in the power struggle. Only twice, in fact, has a professional officer been elected to the Politburo — Marshal Zhukov in 1957 and Marshal Grechko in 1973.

Like that of other key institutions, the military's influence has varied directly with its own cohesion and inversely with the unity of the political leadership. Succession struggles particularly have given the high command more leeway for engaging in high politics. While the military has not initiated important leadership changes, its support is essential; for example, the



Ministry of Defense

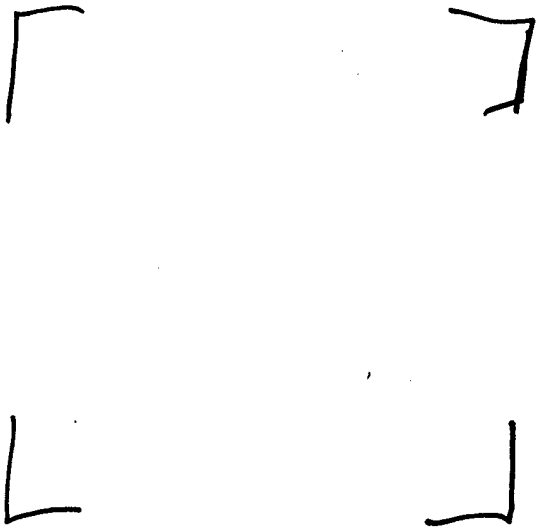
military threw its support to Khrushchev during his fight with the antiparty group in 1957 and probably acquiesced in the coup against him in 1964

Marshal Zhukov's experience, however, probably still serves as an object lesson for a military professional who gets heavily involved in Politburo politicking. He supported Khrushchev in 1957 and ordered military aircraft to bring Khrushchev's supporters in the Central Committee to Moscow. Khrushchev paid off this political debt by elevating Zhukov to full membership on the Politburo. Such dependence on a military leader, nevertheless, made the leadership nervous, and Khrushchev ousted him three months later, ostensibly for attempting to reduce political controls over the military

The party, moreover, has never been entirely comfortable with the presence of this large, disciplined, hierarchical organization in its midst. Various checks and controls have been developed to deal with it. The KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), for example, have their own military forces. More importantly, the party has penetrated the military by creating two oversight bodies—the Central Committee's Administrative Organs Department, which must approve all military promotions, and the Defense Ministry's Political Directorate, which has representatives in the armed forces and provides for troop indoctrination. The party also uses the KGB's Third Chief Directorate to surveil military activities.

More recently, the party leadership has placed a civilian—Dmitriy Ustinov—at the head of the military establishment. Although he has been closely involved with the Soviet military industrial complex for over 40 years and obtained general officer rank during the war, he has not been a line officer, and his appointment may have been opposed by the professional officer corps. He appears to be highly regarded by his Politburo colleagues and almost certainly is influential in Politburo discussions on security policy. Ustinov's position provides the leadership with an effective means of controlling the military. On the other hand, as a key "civilian" member of the Politburo, he is in a favorable position to ensure that military interests are promoted. Ustinov also can authoritatively use his position as civilian head of the military to vote its stock on sensitive political issues—without raising some of the fears such actions by a professional officer like Zhukov would prompt

Dmitriy Fedorovich Ustinov
Career Highlights



1938-41	Director, Bolshevik Factory, Leningrad
1941-43	Minister of the Armaments Industry (known as People's Commissariat for Armaments 1941-46)
1953-57	Minister of Defense Industry
1957-63	Deputy Chairman, Council of Ministers
1963-65	First Deputy Chairman, Council of Ministers; Chairman, Supreme National Economic Council
1965-76	Candidate member, Politburo; Secretary, CPSU Central Committee
Mar 1976-date	Member, Politburo
Apr 1976-date	Minister of Defense

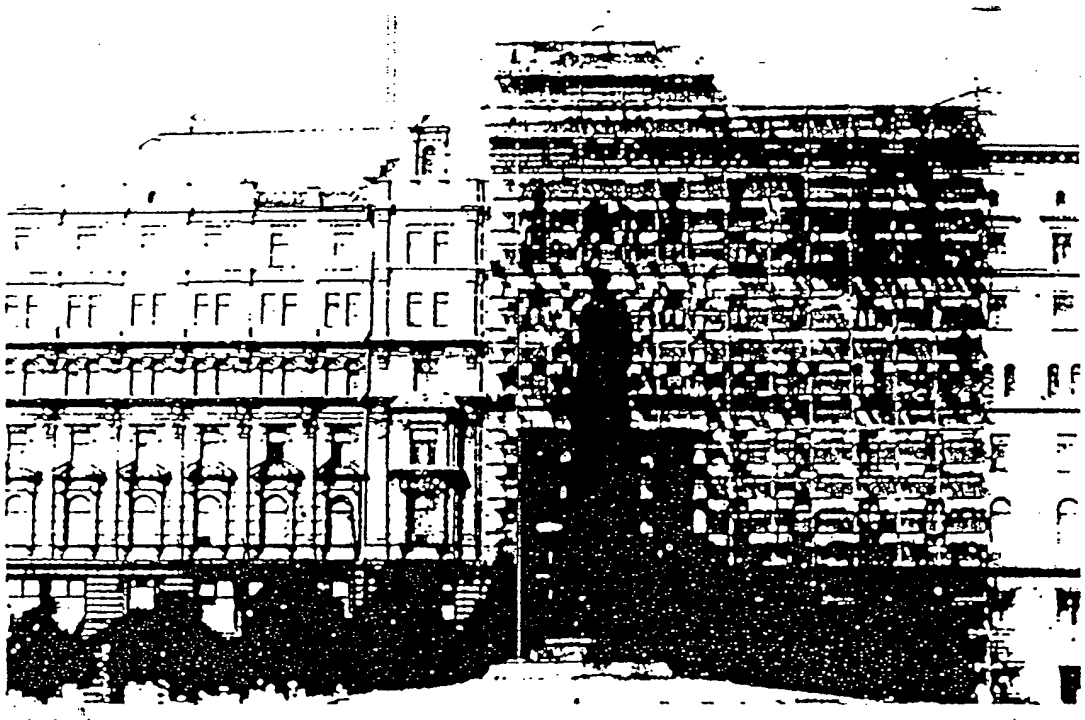
In spite of the party's obvious desire to check and control the military, the Soviet leadership under Brezhnev has given the military a near monopoly in defining the security threat to the USSR and in determining the programs required to deal with this threat. This deference reflects the party's need for the military's expertise, its confidence in the high command, and the considerable congruence of views between the two organizations on national security policy. The military, as a result, has been rather successful in protecting its principal political interest --obtaining the resources to carry out its mission.

The Security Organs. The KGB has been entangled in high-level politics at critical junctures. It became an active participant in the 1964 conspiracy to remove Khrushchev, and without its help the coup almost certainly would have failed. Stalin used the police to eliminate his rivals and decimate the professional officer corps in the military.

The KGB's potential clout in higher leadership politics stems largely from its role in providing leadership security and its control of leadership communications. It is in a good position to know about the political maneuvering or conspiracies under way. A strong leader can use it as an instrument of blackmail by exploiting privileged information the KGB acquires through performance of its duties. Realizing its potential for harm, Brezhnev placed three political cronies in key security positions—making use of this organization against him difficult and perhaps giving him some ability to keep tabs on his colleagues. It was used in this manner by Khrushchev in the immediate post-Stalin years.

The political leadership, nevertheless, has been remarkably successful in preventing heads of the KGB from using it for their personal advantage. Beriya attempted to do so in March-June 1953 in the advent of Stalin's death but failed and was executed. Subsequent chiefs until Andropov's appointment in 1967 were denied Politburo status while they held this position. Andropov, moreover, is a political appointee, not a career police official. If he has any hopes of becoming a contender for Brezhnev's mantle, Andropov would probably have to assume an interim position that has little to do with the KGB's stock in trade.

The Presidium of the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers Presidium is primarily responsible for managing the Soviet economy. It oversees the activity of more than 60 ministries responsible for particular sectors of the economy. This responsibility could make the Presidium and some of its attendant ministries influential in the Kremlin power struggle. For this potential to be realized, however, its leaders must be strongly represented in the Politburo while the central party apparatus is weak.

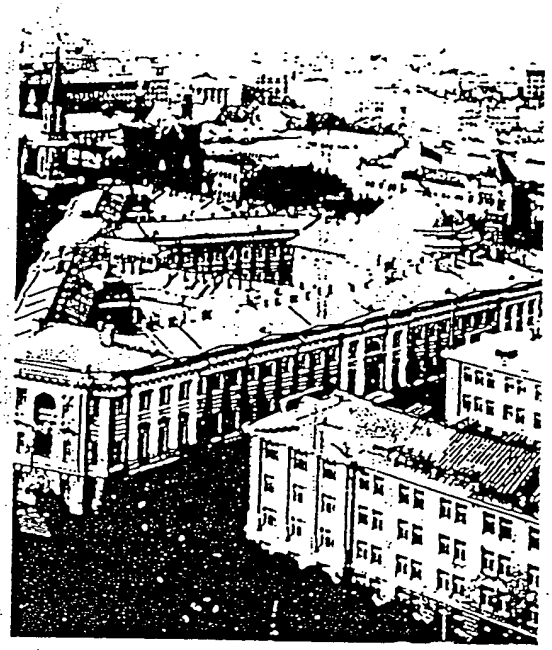


KGB headquarter

The leaders of this vast economic bureaucracy have for the most part been unsuccessful in translating this potential into real and enduring power. Only twice in the post-Stalin era has this group of leaders had considerable clout in the leadership. After Stalin's death they initially appeared to be more powerful than party officials in the Politburo—so much so that Malenkov may have chosen to take the Premiership over the top party post as his base of power. Khrushchev, nevertheless, overcame this early weakness and inflicted a severe defeat on the government bureaucracy in 1957 by abolishing most of their economic ministries and expelling its senior members from the Politburo.

The economic bureaucracy regained some of its status and power in the aftermath of the Khrushchev coup. As active participants in the conspiracy, its leaders were able to get agreement on reestablishment of the central ministries in Moscow and on an economic reform package. More importantly, its leader, Premier Kosygin, received equal billing with Brezhnev, and two of his deputies joined him in the Politburo. This power, nonetheless, proved fleeting, as Brezhnev used his base in the Secretariat to gain preeminence over Kosygin, and the reform was eventually undermined.

The Secretariat and the General Secretary. The real key to victory in the power struggle until now has been control of the party Secretariat and its powerful staff. The Secretariat, consisting of a General Secretary and usually from seven to 10 secretaries, participates in the elaboration of policy alternatives, oversees the implementation of Politburo directives and party policy generally, and maintains control of personnel appointments (the *nomenklatura*) in the party and all other institutions. It is assisted in its work by several thousand party officials organized into some two dozen departments, each of which is supervised by a



Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers.

secretary. These departments monitor the activity of government ministries, the military, the security organs, and other institutions. One of them, the General Department, provides staff support for Politburo activity

In past successions, control of the Secretariat has been converted into control of the provincial party apparatus and varying degrees of influence over the economic ministries, the security apparatus, and the military command. Only Stalin, after 1937, succeeded in winning complete control over the regime's entire machinery. Short of this, a strong and reasonably stable leadership has been possible when the General Secretary, basing himself in the Secretariat, has had sufficient strength to dominate the Politburo

The General Secretary's power and authority are neither constitutionally defined nor definitively established by historical precedent. They vary according to his capacities and ambitions and the strength of the forces supporting him on the one hand, and the influence of those opposing him on the other.

While he must maneuver politically to expand his authority, his position gives him some advantages in the contest with his colleagues. He is the nominal head of the party Secretariat and, through it, the party apparatus. This gives him an extra measure of status in party meetings. It very likely places him in the chair at meetings of the Secretariat and gives him more influence in determining the agenda and proceedings of that body than other secretaries have

This position in the Secretariat is likely to give him added clout in the Politburo as well. Despite its collective character, the Politburo needs a chairman to direct its activities, arrange its agenda, and preside over its meetings. The General Secretary, as the leading administrative officer in the Secretariat, is the most logical choice for this role. No one else is as centrally placed or has the breadth of responsibility in party work to perform this function

Brezhnev capitalized on this position at an early stage in his tenure as party boss. He sets the time of Politburo meetings and determines the agenda, based on recommendations from other members and institutions. He controls the flow of documents to his colleagues concerning issues to be discussed. He has the authority to invite non-Politburo members to its sessions. Most important, he sums up the results of Politburo meetings and states the consensus on the issue under discussion

The Players

The position of General Secretary, thus, is the highly coveted prize in the succession struggle. While it will be filled by a Politburo member, none of Brezhnev's colleagues have as yet established a very strong claim to the post. Precedent, to be sure, suggests that Brezhnev's successor will be chosen from the senior secretaries who hold membership in the Politburo—criteria met only by Andrey Kirilenko, Konstantin Chernenko, and the most recent addition, agriculture secretary Mikhail Gorbachev—but age, health, and experience in various ways make each of these men less than an ideal candidate. Kirilenko is 75 and reportedly very ill; he has been absent from leadership functions during the last month. Chernenko is 70 and

Vladimir Vasil'yevich Shcherbitskiy
Career Highlights

1948-52	Second Secretary, Dneprodzerzhinsk City Party Committee (Ukraine)
1952-54	First Secretary, Dneprodzerzhinsk City Party Committee
1954-55	Second Secretary, Dnepropetrovsk Oblast Party Committee (Ukraine)
1955-57	First Secretary, Dnepropetrovsk Oblast Party Committee
1957-61	Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of the Ukraine
1961-63	Chairman, Ukrainian SSR Council of Ministers
1961-63	Candidate member, Presidium (now Politburo)
1963-65	First Secretary, Dnepropetrovsk Oblast Party Committee
1965-72	Chairman, Ukrainian SSR Council of Ministers
1965-71	Candidate member, Presidium (now Politburo)
Apr 1971-date	Member, Politburo
May 1972-date	First Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of the Ukraine

Yuriy Vladimirovich Andropov
Career Highlights

1940-44	First Secretary, Komsomol, Karelia; worked behind German lines organizing partisan bands
1944-47	Second Secretary, Petrozavodsk City Party Committee (Karelia)
1947-51	Second Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of Karelia
1953	Chief, Fourth European Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Oct 1953-57	Charge d'Affaires, Counselor of Embassy, and then Ambassador, Budapest
Jul 1957-62	Chief, Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist Countries, CPSU Central Committee
Nov 1962-67	Secretary, CPSU Central Committee
May 1967-date	Chairman, KGB
Jun 1967-73	Candidate member, Politburo
April 1973-date	Member, Politburo

has served only a short time as a party secretary. Gorbachev, 51, has narrow responsibilities, and agricultural performance of late has not provided him with a strong campaign platform.

The lack of ideal candidates for the post could lead the Politburo to turn to other leaders, such as KGB Chairman Yuriy Andropov or Defense Minister Dmitriy Ustinov, who under other circumstances probably would not be considered. Both Andropov and Ustinov are handicapped by poor health and by the rest of the leadership's desire to keep the institutions they head firmly under control. In a field of poorly qualified candidates, however, both have the advantage of past experience in the Secretariat and expertise in key

areas—Andropov in foreign affairs and security matters and Ustinov in economic management and defense. If either should relinquish his present post and move back to the Secretariat, he would become a prime candidate for the top party post.

Among the Politburo's second-rank leaders, three regional party chiefs—Viktor Grishin (Moscow), Grigoriy Romanov (Leningrad), and Vladimir Shcherbitskiy (Ukraine)—are possibilities. Of the three, Shcherbitskiy recently has been the most visible and may be angling for a position in the Secretariat. A fourth regional leader, Kazakh party chief Dinmukhamed Kunayev, is disqualified by his ethnic origin.

The remaining Politburo members—Premier Nikolay Tikhonov, Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko, and Party Control Committee Chairman Arvid Pelshe—appear to be completely out of the running. Tikhonov and Gromyko are handicapped by a total lack of experience in the party apparatus, and Pelshe by his age (82) and Latvian nationality.

The Current Political Scene

Jockeying within the Politburo has intensified significantly since the death of ideology secretary Mikhail Suslov in January. Suslov was not an aspirant for the top party post but a key stabilizing force in leadership politics, working to maintain the existing balance of power and preserve a role for himself as power broker in the post-Brezhnev succession. His death triggered an immediate shakeup in leadership rankings that was beneficial to Brezhnev's protege, Chernenko, and damaging to Kirilenko, the party secretary who had been best placed to succeed Brezhnev.

The impact of Suslov's death was first reflected in the announcement of the funeral commission membership, which listed Kirilenko out of sequence and last among the full members of the Politburo on the commission. When Suslov was lying in state, Chernenko stood next to Brezhnev and ahead of Premier Tikhonov and Kirilenko, both of whom previously had outranked him. At the funeral and subsequent leadership appearances, Tikhonov was back in his usual

position next to Brezhnev, but Chernenko continued to outrank Kirilenko, standing in the number-three spot Suslov had held---status that makes him the unofficial "second secretary."

This boost for Chernenko was followed by some indirect sniping at Brezhnev that would seem to require high-level support, possibly from elements in the leadership who believe he is positioning Chernenko to become his successor. Numerous rumors linking people close to Brezhnev with various corruption scandals have been planted with Western correspondents in Moscow.

According to one set of rumors, Brezhnev's son, Yuriy, was about to lose his job as First Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade because of unspecified charges of corruption. Another set of rumors had Brezhnev's daughter, Galina, being questioned by authorities in connection with jewel scandals involving her alleged lover and the head of the state circus. When Brezhnev failed to sign the obituary of KGB First Deputy Chairman Tsvigun in January, still other rumors surfaced, suggesting that Tsvigun had committed suicide because he and Brezhnev were at loggerheads over a corruption case.

Brezhnev's Position

This sniping is probably troublesome and embarrassing to Brezhnev, but it is not particularly threatening. Such attacks, in fact, are risky and may reflect the desperation of those who oppose Brezhnev's recent moves.

Brezhnev has clearly demonstrated that he still controls events. He has strengthened Chernenko's position, attacked Kirilenko's, and made some key personnel changes. For example, he has promoted two cronies to first deputy chairmen of the KGB, moves that indicate he has not lost control of that organization. He also removed the trade union chief, who may have had the support of Suslov (he had served in Rostov, Suslov's old bailiwick) and Kirilenko (who presided over his installation), and replaced him with an official Kirilenko had indirectly criticized.

Although there are no signs that Brezhnev is considering retiring, a serious deterioration in his health could convince his Politburo colleagues that some form of retirement was necessary and make his leadership subject to challenge. It may have been Brezhnev's perception of this vulnerability that led him to block Kirilenko's move into Suslov's former position as unofficial second secretary—status that would have increased Kirilenko's ability to mount a challenge to his leadership—by giving the position to Chernenko, a trusted protege who is dependent on Brezhnev.

Kirilenko: An Heir Presumptuous?

Kirilenko, indeed, could well have posed a challenge to Brezhnev if left unchecked. Certainly no other

contender could match his credentials for Brezhnev's post, which even include on-the-job experience as Acting General Secretary during Brezhnev's absences. Kirilenko has primary responsibility for the supervision of nonmilitary heavy industry, ranks second only to Brezhnev as the party spokesman on general economic matters, and has considerable experience in international Communist party affairs

In recent years Brezhnev seemed to find Kirilenko's status, as a leader uniquely qualified and positioned to become the next party chief, increasingly disquieting. In an apparent effort to counter him, he engineered a series of rapid promotions for his longtime associate and General Department chief Chernenko—to party secretary in 1976, to candidate member of the Politburo in 1977, and to full member in 1978. Chernenko's rise was followed by a series of slights and political setbacks for Kirilenko, beginning in 1979, when his protege, Yakov Ryabov, was demoted from party secretary to first deputy chairman of Gosplan. Other moves that seemed designed to damage his image as the likely successor included the deletion of his picture from a newspaper photo of the 1979 May Day lineup and, more recently, the low-key treatment given his 75th birthday. Following the further blows to his prestige after Suslov's death, Kirilenko disappeared from public view.

Chernenko Broadens His Base

Despite Brezhnev's support, Chernenko's duties until recently had been confined primarily to running the Central Committee's General Department, a post he has held since 1965. Although the position is important—he oversees the Politburo's decisionmaking ma-

Andrey Pavlovich Kirilenko
Career Highlights

1939-41	Secretary, then second secretary, Zaporozh'ye Oblast Party Committee (Ukraine)
1941-42	Member, Military Council, 18th Army of the Southern Front
1944-47	Second Secretary, Zaporozh'ye Oblast Party Committee
1947-50	First Secretary, Nikolayev Oblast Party Committee (Ukraine)
1950-55	First Secretary, Dnepropetrovsk Oblast Party Committee (Ukraine)
1955-56	First Secretary, Sverdlovsk Oblast Party Committee (RSFSR)
1956-57	Member, RSFSR Bureau, CPSU Central Committee
1957-61	Candidate member, Presidium (now Politburo)
1961-66	Member, RSFSR Bureau
Apr 1962-date	Member, Presidium (now Politburo)
1962-66	First Deputy Chairman, RSFSR Bureau, CPSU Central Committee
Apr 1966-date	Secretary, CPSU Central Committee

Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko
Career Highlights

1941-43	Secretary, Krasnoyarsk Kray Party Committee (RSFSR)
1945-48	Secretary, Penza Oblast Party Committee (RSFSR)
1948-56	Chief, Propaganda and Agitation Department, Central Committee, Communist Party of Moldavia
1956-60	Sector chief, Propaganda Department, CPSU Central Committee
1960-65	Chief of Secretariat, Presidium, USSR Supreme Soviet
Jul 1965-date	Chief, General Department, CPSU Central Committee
Mar 1976-date	Secretary, CPSU Central Committee
Oct 1977-78	Candidate member, Politburo
Nov 1978-date	Member, Politburo

chinery, serving in effect as its chief executive officer—his responsibilities never have been commensurate with those of other senior secretaries. Chernenko, unlike Kirilenko, has had virtually no experience in economic management, having served in staff positions under Brezhnev for more than 25 years, and until recently he had only limited involvement in foreign affairs.

In an effort to bolster Chernenko's credentials as a senior secretary, Brezhnev has been trying for some time to expand his responsibilities—chiefly by involving him more in foreign affairs. Since Chernenko's election to the Secretariat in 1976, Brezhnev has involved him in his annual summer meetings in the Crimea with East European leaders and included him on the delegation to the Soviet–US summit in Vienna in 1979. Despite these efforts, Chernenko seldom appeared in any capacity that suggested independent authority in the area of Soviet–East European relations and reportedly played only a supporting role at the Soviet-US summit, taking a back seat to other Politburo members on the delegation

Recently, however, Chernenko's involvement in foreign affairs has been on the increase. Late last year Brezhnev reportedly went so far as to loan some of his own foreign policy advisers to a "brain trust" Chernenko was assembling, and *Pravda* identified a foreign policy aide to Chernenko, making him the only party secretary other than Brezhnev to have a publicly identified assistant. Chernenko received the Yugoslav Ambassador in October 1981, was the ranking leader at meetings with visiting Nicaraguan officials in October and November 1981, and met with a Greek Communist Party delegation in January 1982. In the short period since Suslov's death, Chernenko already has played a prominent role in interparty relations, heading the Soviet delegation to the Congress of the French Communist Party in February and participating in talks with Polish leader Jaruzelski last month.

More important, in terms of his succession prospects, there are signs that Chernenko may now have some direct involvement in personnel appointments—an area previously thought to be dominated by Brezhnev, Suslov, and Kirilenko. Reports of Chernenko's association with cadre matters began to surface with his promotion to full member of the Politburo in November 1978, when a Soviet source claimed that Chernenko was taking over Kirilenko's function of maintaining ties between the Central Committee and regional party leaders. While there never was any evidence to support that claim, Chernenko did head a major effort to get party and government officials at the middle and lower levels to carry out leadership decisions—an assignment that implied dissatisfaction with the way Kirilenko was supervising economic management. The first tangible evidence of Chernenko's involvement in personnel appointments came last month, when he and Ivan Kapitonov, the junior cadres secretary, presided over the replacement of trade unions chief Shibayev. (In 1976, when Shibayev was installed, the presiding secretaries were Kirilenko and Kapitonov.)

Infighting Will Intensify

Chernenko, despite his recent success, by no means has a lock on the succession. While he will attempt to improve his position further, it is unlikely that Brezhnev will name him as heir apparent. Brezhnev may believe that Chernenko would protect his historical legacy, but he is well aware that conferring such power—even on a friend—could endanger his own position

With Brezhnev gone, Chernenko's rivals could probably defeat him unless he obtains additional help. Among those who will make the decision—the Politburo minus Brezhnev—Chernenko appears to have few strong supporters and reportedly commands little respect from such leaders as Ustinov and Gromyko. The current behind-the-scenes sniping at Brezhnev suggests, moreover, that by tipping his hand in Chernenko's favor, Brezhnev may have crystallized the opposition to Chernenko's candidacy. If, as presently seems to be the case, Kirilenko's apparent illness eliminates him from contention, other Politburo members of similar views are likely to contest Chernenko's claim

This political infighting is not likely to lead to significant policy changes while Brezhnev remains on the scene. The debate over policy, nonetheless, will probably become more heated

Issues Become Politicized

Whoever ultimately comes out on top, the succession process will significantly politicize policy differences within the leadership. Various contenders will seek to exploit issues facing the Politburo for personal and factional advantage. (Chernenko, in particular, has seemed out of step with other leaders on a number of issues and may have to shift his position to gain support.) Given the seriousness and complexity of the problems a new leadership will have to deal with, moreover, debate and conflict over policy is likely to be particularly sharp and intense

Domestic Issues

Along with Brezhnev's title, the new General Secretary will inherit a difficult and increasingly complex economic situation. Economic growth has fallen to less than 2 percent a year for the past three years, leading to reductions in the increments allocated to consumption and investment. Although partly the result of past planning failures, this decline in growth has been largely attributable to the decreasing availability of low-cost resources (chiefly fuels) and a series of harvest failures—factors in the regime's recent decision to invest heavily in energy and agriculture despite a cutback in overall investment. Such decisions, if coupled with the usual increments to defense, leave little room for increases critically needed in ferrous metallurgy, machine building, transport, and other sectors. We expect a further deterioration in the Soviet energy, labor, and hard currency positions that will exacerbate the economic squeeze. As a result, in the next few years it will be increasingly apparent to the Soviet leaders that they will have to choose among the conflicting goals of long-term growth, consumer satisfaction, and military power.

Heavy Industry Versus Consumer Goods. The slowing economic growth rate will sharpen the debate over both the level of capital investment and sectoral investment priorities. The decision, announced last November, to cut the capital investment goal for the current five-year plan means that sectors such as machine building, which some leaders believe are important for longer term growth, will suffer at the expense of near-term priorities. As the full dimensions of the economic predicament become clear, the demands of rival claimants for shrinking resources will intensify and reinforce the tendency of contenders to stake out independent positions designed to appeal to one or another interest represented in the leadership. Differences in investment priorities already have emerged between one group (represented by Kirilenko, Shcherbitskiy, and others) that has advocated the priority development of heavy industry, and another (represented by Chernenko) that has called for increasing the availability of consumer goods, and both will be marshaling support for their views

Kirilenko's commitment to the preferential development of heavy industry is long standing and probably stems from his experience as party leader in two centers of heavy industry and his current oversight responsibilities. He has continued to favor this sector even at times when the consumer sector has been receiving greater public attention and rhetorical support from the leadership. Recently, for example, he has said little about the decision, so heavily promoted by Brezhnev and Chernenko, to assign a priority growth rate to the production of consumer goods in the new five-year plan. Kirilenko also has been cool toward Brezhnev's much-publicized calls for a Soviet "food program" and in the past has resisted diversion of existing resources from the industrial sector to agriculture

Kirilenko's investment preferences, moreover, seem to be shared by Shcherbitskiy and may have substantial support among other leaders, such as Tikhonov, whose statements have indicated similar priorities. In the past there has been a working alliance between the military, the defense industries, and proponents of heavy industry such as Kirilenko. This suggests that Ustinov would support this faction. High-level differences over the current investment strategy were suggested in February 1982 by an unusual *Pravda* article that critized the five-year plan just adopted for providing inadequate resources to the machine-building industry—a sector Kirilenko has championed in the past.

Chernenko has emerged as the leadership's leading advocate of investment in consumer goods. In his Lenin Day speech in April 1981, in fact, he argued, perhaps with Polish developments in mind, that the priority growth rate assigned to consumer goods in the present five-year plan should be considered just a beginning. In what appeared to be a direct retort to warnings from Suslov about the excesses of "consumerism," he said that if popular needs were ignored for the sake of production, not only the people, but production too, would suffer.

Chernenko's attitude toward investment priorities is consistent with his effort to cultivate the image of a leader attuned to popular aspirations through calls for commissions to study public opinion, more intraparty "democracy," and greater attention to letters from the rank and file. Kirilenko, although not insensitive to popular needs, has shown little appreciation for Chernenko's approach and reportedly blocked his recent effort to set up a new institute for sociological research, arguing that the party already had adequate means for divining public opinion.

Although consumer advocates (such as Malenkov, Khrushchev's opponent in the post-Stalin succession) traditionally have not fared well politically, Chernenko could find common cause with such leaders as agriculture secretary Gorbachev and party leaders from republics not dominated by heavy industry, such as Kazakh party chief Kunayev. His "populist" approach also has drawn strong support from Georgian party leader Shevardnadze, who began promoting the idea of public opinion studies long before Chernenko.

Defense Spending. Concern about the domestic economy also could impel one or another leader to propose some reduction in the rate of growth of military spending, if not an absolute cut as Khrushchev did in the late 1950s. The argument could reasonably be made that the military budget of the past two decades has improved the Soviet position vis-a-vis the Western alliance to the point that the country can afford some redirection of resources to urgent internal needs without jeopardizing defense requirement.

[redacted]

Judging from their previous public statements, Chernenko would seem more inclined to push for a slower pace of military growth than Kirilenko or most other leaders. He has stressed, for example, the economic benefits to be derived from arms limitation. Kirilenko has more consistently used rhetoric that suggests he favors an undiminished defense effort. This, of course, would evoke military support for Kirilenko or someone with like views, especially if Chernenko were the alternative. Kirilenko's support for investment in nonmilitary heavy industry, however, conceivably might lead him to favor some redistribution of resources away from defense. In a succession environment, however, no new leader, unless he perceives an existing consensus, is likely to advocate cuts in the defense budget that would antagonize the military establishment.

Regional Competition. In addition to these sectoral clashes, the battle for resources is likely to heighten conflict between various regions of the country and their representatives in the Politburo. Succession politics has typically given regional leaders more influence on national policy, and contending factions will exploit this situation. The difficult political decisions regarding resource distribution will be complicated,

moreover, by an underlying economic dilemma: the European part of the Soviet Union has a well-developed infrastructure but is short on labor and natural resources; parts of Siberia, where the natural resources are located, are low on labor resources and lacking in infrastructure; and the Central Asian area has ample labor resources but a limited technical base

In the debate over regional investment priorities, some leaders will urge more attention to the economic interests of the Russian Republic (RSFSR)—a position already taken by Suslov and an assistant to Kirilenko. While there are "objective" reasons for following such a course (Soviet oil and gas reserves, for example, are concentrated there), these arguments also could be advanced as part of a larger appeal to Russian nationalism—a traditional refuge of Soviet leaders in difficult times. The new emphasis some leaders recently have placed on RSFSR economic projects, such as the program to develop central Russia's non-black-earth zone, could be viewed in this context. Several regime spokesmen also have advanced a solution to the country's manpower problem that involves migration of workers from the labor-rich Muslim republics to underpopulated areas of the Russian Republic. Such proposals would be strongly supported by local officials in the RSFSR, who are now heavily represented on the Central Committee.

Leaders of other republics, several of whom hold candidate or full membership on the Politburo, can be expected to argue for more investment in their own areas, where consumer and ethnic discontent seem most likely to converge and cause problems for the regime. Already the Central Asians are pressing hard for the construction of new industrial facilities and for the costly diversion of Siberian rivers to provide irrigation for the southern republics

Although party cadres in the non-Russian republics have less political influence than those in the RSFSR, their representation on the Politburo has grown in recent years, and they could play a significant role in the succession. Chernenko, who thus far has exhibited no strongly pro-Russian bias, already seems to be drawing support from some of these leaders

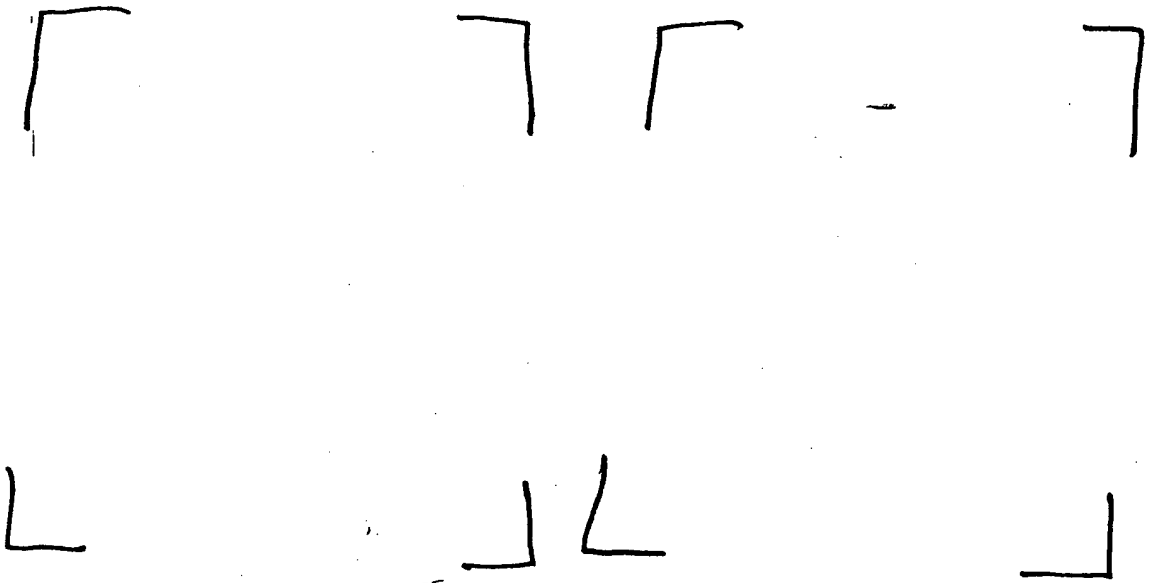
It would be difficult to devise an economic program that would appeal to all non-Russian cadres; however, since the interests of the various national republics are diverse and not entirely compatible. In any event, the strategy of wooing the non-Russians would be risky. Anyone attempting it would have to exercise care to avoid charges of such faults as "bourgeois nationalism," incurred by former KGB chief Beriya when he made overtures to the minorities after Stalin's death.

Efficiency and Productivity. The economic dilemma that Brezhnev's successor will inherit has been heightened by the regime's failure to deal effectively with such underlying problems as labor productivity and chronic inefficiencies in economic management. Concern over declining growth rates will prompt some debate in the post-Brezhnev Politburo over new approaches to these problems

Kirilenko has demonstrated more openness than Chernenko to new ideas in the area of economic management. He was one of the few Soviet leaders to associate himself with the establishment of the Soviet Union's first Western-style business management school and was the first Politburo member to endorse the concept of production associations—a mode of rationalizing industrial management that aroused some resistance from the ministerial bureaucracy. He also has gone further than other Soviet leaders in endorsing the Hungarian economic reform[1]

Chernenko, on the other hand, has tended to stress nonsystemic solutions to Soviet economic problems, calling for improvements in the quality of leadership at all echelons of the party and state bureaucracies. He also has attacked excessive party interference in economic management—an apparent criticism of Kirilenko's interventionist approach.

[1] Hungary's New Economic Mechanism (NEM) is the only experiment in economic decentralization being carried out in the Soviet Bloc. As in the other Communist countries, Hungarian central authorities formulate state plans and set macroeconomic goals. Under the NEM, however, the Hungarians rely heavily on indirect economic regulators and market forces rather than on binding plan targets and administrative controls to guide microlevel economic processe



On the issue of labor productivity, Kirilenko seems to favor a combination of exhortation, as exemplified by the annual "socialist competition" campaigns, and wage bonuses. Chernenko, on the other hand, has rarely addressed the issue, hinting only that an improvement in the availability of consumer goods would make wage incentives more meaningful

Foreign Policy Issues

Foreign policy issues also could become a bone of contention in the post-Brezhnev Politburo. Although these issues will be determined largely by the international situation at the time, a successor regime today would face a number of serious foreign challenges, including the US effort to bolster its military capabilities; improved relations between China and the United States; a situation in Afghanistan that is proving more troublesome than the leadership expected; and a crisis in Poland, a pivotal country in the Soviet empire. Political trends in such areas as Central America, the Middle East, and Europe, nonetheless, will continue to give the Soviet leadership opportunities to pursue policies hostile to US interests.

Soviet-US Relations. Brezhnev has made detente a cornerstone of his foreign policy, even against the opposition of some powerful members of the Politburo, and his departure undoubtedly will bring further review of its relative merits. Indeed, enthusiasm about the pursuit of improved Soviet-US relations has been on the wane in the Politburo since 1974, when the US Congress passed the Jackson-Vanik Amendment linking trade to an increase in Jewish emigration, and US policy has been actively debated in Moscow since Washington's unexpectedly severe reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Unlike Chernenko, Kirilenko always has been equivocal in his support of Brezhnev's overtures to the United States, coupling even his most positive statements on detente with warnings about the unchanging nature of US "imperialism." From Kirilenko's perspective, the chief justification for pursuing detente probably has been its potential economic benefit. The Soviet-US relationship almost certainly has been a disappointment in that regard, however, and his recent statements suggest he believes Moscow should be shifting its focus to Western Europe. In a 1980 speech he said that detente still had some support among "sober politicians" in the United States and "especially in Europe, where by no means everyone is disposed to take the path of Washington-imposed adventure."

Chernenko has been far more enthusiastic than Kirilenko and most other leaders in his support of improved relations with the West, particularly the United States, and of arms limitation. In his Supreme Soviet election speech in 1979, for example, he went further than any leader other than Brezhnev in stressing the importance of what would have been the next step in strategic arms limitation talks (SALT III). Kirilenko, by contrast, coupled his endorsement of the SALT II treaty with calls for "vigilance and more vigilance" against Western intrigues. In another round of leadership speeches in 1980, Chernenko seemed to be the leader most concerned about the freeze in relations with the West following the invasion of Afghanistan. He also has been well ahead of his Politburo colleagues in warnings about the consequences of nuclear war, noting in his April 1981 Lenin Day speech that it posed a threat to "all civilization."

Although various shades of opinion are still discernible among Soviet leaders, many, judging by their statements, seem to believe the prospects for improved Soviet-US relations are remote—an assessment that could lead them to endorse efforts to counter, distract, or embroil US policy [redacted] claims the KGB has concluded that the United States will pursue a policy of confrontation for the foreseeable future, and Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov, chief of the Soviet General Staff, openly said as much in a book published last month. Brezhnev also adopted a pessimistic tone in his speech to the Party Congress last year

Chernenko's views on arms limitation and relations with the United States thus seem outside the current mainstream of Politburo opinion and may require some modification if he is to gain the support he needs once Brezhnev goes. As economic growth declines and resources become increasingly scarce, other members of the leadership, possibly even Kirilenko, may become more amenable to US proposals for arms control, however, seeing them as a way of avoiding the cost of arms they may perceive as necessary to counter the emergence of new US weapons

Soviet-East European Relations. Economic considerations will be increasingly important in leadership debate over policy toward Eastern Europe as well. The leadership remains committed to maintaining control over its East European empire. The Politburo, however, faces a dilemma. Subsidization of Eastern Europe may now be too costly for the Soviets, but allowing Eastern Europe to become economically dependent on the West—as in the case of Poland—is politically dangerous. Continued economic shortages in Eastern Europe, however, could increase popular discontent there to perilously high levels. The Politburo, therefore, is likely to vacillate between courses designed to counter whichever danger seems more pressing at a given time. Its basic inclination, however, will be to require the East Europeans to place more emphasis on discipline and control to fill the void left by declining Soviet and Western economic support

Triangular Politics? Those leaders who believe there is virtually no prospect for US-Soviet cooperation, especially on arms control issues, might favor playing the China card and normalizing relations with Beijing. That option appears to have been left open, at least by recent leadership statements. After Premier Tikhonov told a Japanese newspaper in February that he saw no favorable signs in US-Soviet relations and alluded to possible "concrete steps" that might be taken to improve Sino-Soviet relations, Brezhnev opened the door even wider last month, offering to resume border talks and establish new economic, scientific, and cultural ties

Full normalization of relations would be difficult to achieve, however, because those Soviet leaders who have been most suspicious of US motives appear to be equally suspicious of the Chinese. Kirilenko, in particular, has shown his pique toward the Chinese on several occasions. Exasperated by what he considered Chinese intransigence in the Sino-Soviet border negotiations, he reportedly once told a delegation of foreign Communists that the talks were likely to continue for ten thousand years. [redacted]

Other Options. Soviet leaders have other options, however, for keeping the United States engaged while gaining a respite during which they could realign their policies. Some of these already are being implemented and seem unlikely to be affected by the succession:

- They are giving more attention to the Caribbean and Central America as sensitive areas for US policy and as a distraction from their own actions in Poland and Afghanistan. Soviet support for Nicaragua has expanded in recent months, and arms and additional MIG-23s have been sent to Cuba.
- They could focus more effort on Sudan, Pakistan, Zaire, and Greece, with the aim of generating regional pressures on them and causing discontent with US aid and security commitments.
- They are seeking to promote unrest in southern Africa by opposing Western efforts to reach a solution to the Namibian problem.

Increased domestic problems and a desire to impose greater discipline at home could reinforce arguments of leaders who might urge a more aggressive stance in these areas. Other leaders, however, might be more sensitive to the effect such actions could have on relations with the West. Even those who have been least supportive of Brezhnev's overtures to the United States must be aware of the need for Western technology and credit arrangements and probably would be reluctant to put relations with Western Europe at risk.

Policy Implications

If Brezhnev leaves the scene soon, conflict over these issues, heightened by political jockeying in the post-Brezhnev period and the complexity of the country's problems, could lead to significant policy shifts. The most immediate changes are likely to be made in economic policy, where the current investment strategy already seems to have aroused opposition within the leadership.

Economic Policy

Some reallocation of resources almost certainly will be undertaken after Brezhnev goes, with agriculture—in the absence of its principal patron—becoming a likely target for cuts. A persuasive case can be made that agriculture has not productively used the massive infusions of capital that Brezhnev insisted upon and that other sectors, such as heavy industry, can provide a greater return on each ruble invested. These other sectors also will be affected by the fortunes of their sponsors, however, making the beneficiaries largely unpredictable. Nonmilitary heavy industry, for example, probably would fare better in a Kirilenko or Shcherbitskiy regime than it would under Chernenko.

Under the current economic constraints, even the defense budget, virtually sacrosanct since the early 1960s, probably will come under some attack. A number of factors make it unlikely however that in the near term any new leadership will make even symbolic reductions in the growth of the defense budget. These include:

- The poor state of US-Soviet relations.
- The political commitment of most Soviet leaders to a strong defense.

- The challenge of planned US defense programs.
- The increased influence of the defense establishment in a succession environment.
- The momentum of weapon development and production programs that are under way.

Indeed, the military could come away from a power struggle with an even higher rate of growth of defense spending

Over the long term, as the post-Brezhnev leadership struggles to prepare its 12th Five-Year Plan (1986-90), there may be greater pressure to reduce the growth in military spending in order to free up the labor and capital resources urgently needed in key civilian sectors. In this connection, the cost-avoidance benefits of arms control agreements could assume greater importance. Even in the mid-to-late 1980s, however, we consider absolute reductions in the defense effort to be unlikely.

Concern over declining growth rates will intensify efforts to improve efficiency and could be sufficient to overcome bureaucratic opposition to changes in the economic management structure. Although no new ideas can be expected from the government bureaucracy, which has been even less innovative than the party in dealing with economic problems, changes may be enacted along lines previously proposed by Brezhnev and other party leaders. At the center, the multitude of functionally related and overlapping ministries might be placed under more centralized management and direction. This effort could also be accompanied by some decentralization of operational authority—especially in the agricultural sector, where the importance of local conditions is becoming increasingly recognized. (It is in this area that the Hungarian model is being most closely studied and emulated on an experimental basis

Foreign Policy

Although foreign policy issues also will come under review, international conditions make departures in this area seem less imminent than in the domestic arena. Soviet foreign policy strategy already has shifted to reflect a more pessimistic consensus about the prospects for improved relations with the United States, and this new direction appears unlikely to change, barring major US initiatives, in the immediate post-Brezhnev period

Soviet leaders probably will wish to continue the arms limitation talks with the United States while at the same time focusing most of their attention on relations with Western Europe. A new arms control agreement would enable the Soviets to regulate or slow US weapons programs, thereby facilitating Soviet planning, reducing weapons costs, and, in significant areas, minimizing the possibility of technological surprise. In an effort to improve economic relations with Western Europe and further split the Western alliance, they probably will take a harder position against the United States on matters of less concern to the Europeans, while displaying a carrot-and-stick attitude on European questions. The need for trade with Western Europe and Moscow's own economic stringencies also will continue to be the primary constraints on Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe. Although full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations does not seem at hand, the Soviets are already trying to exploit US-Chinese difficulties and will leave the door open to improved relations with Beijing. It still seems doubtful, however, that a new Soviet leadership would offer terms the Chinese would find attractive.

As the pessimism about Soviet-US relations becomes increasingly self-fulfilling, Soviet leaders may become even more inclined to pursue policies in the Third World that the United States would find disturbing and perhaps threatening to its interests. They could increase the level of their political and military commitment, within the limits of their own economic constraints, to clients such as Angola, Ethiopia, and Vietnam and demonstrate greater willingness to involve themselves directly in areas that risk confrontation with the United States. They might, for example, abandon their current counseling of caution to their Syrian and Palestinian clients and support greater risk-taking by the Palestinians in Lebanon—a move that could provoke an Israeli military attack, threaten Syria's position, and bring in Soviet forces. The Soviets could also adopt a more direct role in Central Americ

Limitations on the Successor

Although the dimensions of Soviet economic problems increase the probability of shifts in that area, no leader likely to succeed Brezhnev will initially have the power to push through a comprehensive package of domestic and foreign policy programs. The new General Secretary's colleagues, acting in their own political interests, will attempt to restrict his power and probably prevent him from becoming Chief of State—a post Brezhnev acquired only after 13 years as party leader. As in the early days of the Brezhnev era, the General Secretary is likely to be sharing the spotlight, particularly in foreign affairs, with the President and Premier. His national security role also could be diminished, with the chairmanship of the Defense Council—a military planning group of top political, military, and defense industry officials—possibly going to another leader.

In the past, it usually has taken a new General Secretary about five years to consolidate his power. Brezhnev's reluctance to give broad national authority to any other party secretary, however, may mean that his successor will need more time to accomplish this than previous party chiefs. Both Chernenko and Kirilenko, moreover, are in their 70s—considerably older than former leaders have been at the time they assumed office (Stalin was 42, Khrushchev was 59, and Brezhnev was 57)—and even the perception that a party chief's tenure could be short must make the consolidation of power more difficult.

Longer Range Uncertainties

The conventional wisdom has been that the man who replaces Brezhnev is likely to be only an interim successor and that by the mid-1980s he and other top officials probably will be replaced by a somewhat younger group already in the Politburo—regional party leaders Grishin (67), Shcherbitskiy (63), and Romanov (59). On the other hand, with former power-broker Suslov dead, Kirilenko possibly incapacitated, and Brezhnev physically weakened, such a scenario could be dramatically foreshortened. The rest of the senior leadership, led by Ustinov, Andropov, Tikhonov, and others, all too aware of the costs of continued drift—especially for the economy—could agree to elevate one of its own or one of the younger generation directly without an interim phase "to get the country moving again."

Under either scenario, the policy preferences of the younger Politburo members are more difficult to predict. The more parochial concerns of these younger leaders color their pronouncements on domestic issues as well as their foreign policy statements, which often contain tougher language, more assertiveness, and greater hostility toward the West than those of their more senior colleagues.

These leaders have not been members of the Politburo's inner circle. They have not been heavily involved in developing national security options (they are not, for example, members of the Defense Council) or, for that matter, in formulating five-year plans. As Politburo members, they have been participants in the policymaking process for some time, a factor that may lessen the likelihood of radical policy shifts when they assume more responsible posts, but their future policy preferences undoubtedly will be strongly influenced by the environment at the time of their promotion.

We are even less able to gauge the likely policy inclinations of the generation of Soviet leaders who will come to the fore in the late 1980s. Their current positions in the Central Committee apparatus and regional party organizations provide for little involvement in foreign policy. While they have some discretionary authority in implementing the Politburo's domestic policies in their areas, their influence on this policy is minima.

Although these younger leaders are better educated and less tainted with the Stalinist past, they are not likely to hold views much different from their elders. The selection process that has placed them on the fringe of the Politburo is controlled by the current leadership and discourages the development of heretical or deviant political opinions. While it is possible that some officials might, nonetheless, come to power who favor moderate change, most are likely to be predisposed to pursue a mixture of authoritarian and moderate policies similar to that now followed by Brezhnev and company.

Domestic and international conditions, of course, could force these new leaders to seek new policy directions. Economic problems will probably become

Interlocking Directorate of the Soviet Leadership

Party					Government	
Politburo	Date of Birth	Date of Election	Other Party Position	Secretariat	Council of Ministers	Presidium of Supreme Soviet
Full member						
Brezhnev	12/19/06	6/29/57		Brezhnev-General Secretary		Brezhnev-Chairman
Andropov	6/15/14	4/27/73			Andropov-KGB	
Chernenko	9/24/11	11/28/78		Chernenko-Politburo Administration		
Gorbachev	3/2/31	10/21/80		Gorbachev-Agriculture		
Grishin	9/18/14	4/09/71	Moscow party boss			Grishin
Gromyko	7/18/09	4/27/73			Gromyko-Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
Kirilenko	9/08/06	4/25/62		Kirilenko-Industry		
Kunayev	1/12/12	4/09/71	Kazakhstan party boss			Kunayev
Pelshe	2/07/99	4/08/66	Party Control Committee			
Romanov	2/07/23	3/06/76	Leningrad party boss			Romanov
Shcherbitskiy	2/17/18	4/09/71	Ukraine party boss			Shcherbitskiy
Tikhonov	5/14/05	11/28/78			Tikhonov-Chairman	
Ustinov	10/30/08	3/06/76			Ustinov-Ministry of Defense	
Candidate member						
Aliyev	5/10/23	3/06/76	Azerbaydzhan party boss			
Demichev	1/03/18	11/01/64			Demichev-Ministry of Culture	
Kiselev	8/12/17	10/21/80	Belorussian party boss			Kiselev
Kuznetsov	2/13/01	10/03/77				Kuznetsov-1st Deputy Chairman
Ponomarev	1/17/05	5/19/72		Ponomarev-Non-ruling Communist parties		
Rashidov	11/06/17	10/31/61	Uzbek party boss			Rashidov
Shevardnadze	01/25/28	11/28/78	Georgian party boss			
Solomentsev	11/07/13	11/23/71			Solomentsev-RSFSR Premier	
				Kapitonov-Cadres		
				Dolgikh-Industry		
				Zimyanin-Propaganda, Ideology		
				Rusakov-Ruling Communist parties		

more severe and the international environment perhaps more dangerous. Conceivably, some officials might respond to such pressures by attempting to liberalize the Soviet system, although it is difficult to imagine that any Soviet leadership would go as far in this direction as, for example, the Yugoslavs.

A more likely response probably would be a return to some form of neo-Stalinist orthodoxy. Such an approach would require more internal repression. Discipline, order, and self-sacrifice would be required. Economic self-sufficiency (autarky) might be adopted, with trade and commerce with the West reduced to a minimum. Nationalism, generally Slavic and particularly Russian, would be used to heighten patriotism and legitimize this effort. Abroad, Soviet leaders might be more willing to use military power in areas where they believe the USSR holds an advantage over the West.

Such a course would inherently carry considerable domestic risk. Some in the leadership might not readily accept it and there might be significant, if passive, popular resistance. A turn in this direction, nevertheless, is more consistent with the Russian and Leninist tradition than genuine reform and might be easier for the regime to pursue.