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[redacted]**USSR: Politburo Candidate Member Dies**

The death on Monday of Uzbek First Secretary and Politburo candidate member Rashidov gives General Secretary Andropov another opportunity to fill an important republic post. [redacted]

Rashidov—a candidate member of the Politburo for 22 years and Uzbek Party First Secretary since 1959—will be the third republic first secretary to be replaced since Andropov assumed power. New first secretaries in Belorussia and Azerbaijan, who were appointed soon after Brezhnev's death, are not members of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee and thus were not eligible to assume the Politburo seats held by their predecessors. [redacted]

Comment: Rashidov's death enables Andropov to strengthen his power base at the republic level. Andropov lacks close ties to local party officials. Some republic leaders, including Rashidov, reportedly preferred Secretary Chernenko to succeed Brezhnev. [redacted]

Andropov may follow a precedent set by Brezhnev and seek to appoint an Uzbek who already occupies an important republic post, such as the Premier or the head of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet, both of whom are already full members of the national Central Committee. If the reports of Rashidov's support for Chernenko are correct, however, the General Secretary could choose someone outside the official republic establishment who would carry out Andropov's policy lines. The Azerbaijan and Belorussian examples indicate that Rashidov's replacement need not be a Central Committee member. [redacted]

It is unlikely in any case that the new Uzbek leader will be immediately brought into the Politburo as a candidate member. Under Andropov, key posts that formerly rated membership have been given to persons lacking the requisite political standing or support, suggesting a decision by the Politburo to limit its size for the present. Such a situation, however, creates a pool of incumbents who owe their loyalties largely to Andropov, and he can be expected eventually to promote them into the Politburo as he strengthens his position. [redacted]

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