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THE BREZHNEV SUCCESSION: PROSPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

INTRODUCTION

Death or retirement will, in the near future, certainly overtake Leonid I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. His death or removal from the scene will necessitate the naming of a successor for both posts. This forthcoming succession will have major consequences far beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.

As a world power on a par with the U.S., who will rule the Soviet Union is a question which should be studied every bit as diligently as the promises of our own presidential candidates. Although both systems seem to have certain built-in barriers which constrict the freedom of action of any one individual, the personality of a leader can have its own particular consequences.

Situational constraints and bureaucratic inertia aside, a man's outlook may go far in determining what sort of policies he will pursue in a position of authority. This factor takes on added importance in an era of negotiations over the limiting of strategic weaponry and in efforts to create a more stable super-power relationship. However, before going into possible succession contingencies, it would be useful to examine in brief the career of the current General Secretary.

BREZHNEV'S BACKGROUND

Born in 1906 in southern Russia, Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev entered the Communist Party at the age of 25. As a result of

Stalin's purges of the party during the mid-and late 1930s, and the subsequent need for fresh cadres, Brezhnev rose quickly, becoming a secretary of the Dnepropetrovsk obkom (provincial committee) in the Ukraine in 1939.

During the war years and thereafter he served as a political commissar in the army and in other military-related posts. He arrived on the national scene in 1950 upon his appointment as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Moldavia - in effect the ruler of that republic. Brezhnev was elected a member of the CPSU Central Committee and also became a secretary of that body at the 19th Party Congress in October 1952. However, his career went into temporary eclipse following Stalin's death in March 1953, when the old dictator's lieutenants successfully pushed aside younger men like Brezhnev. Nikita S. Khrushchev gave Brezhnev his ticket back into the limelight in 1955 when he appointed him First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan with special responsibility for the "Virgin Lands" program of increasing crop acreage. Khrushchev must have thought highly of Brezhnev at this time, for he was summoned back to Moscow in 1956, where he resumed his duties as a secretary of the Central Committee.

Brezhnev's loyalty was rewarded with a seat on the Central Committee Presidium (after 1966, the Politburo) in 1957. In June of that year Khrushchev had just defeated the "anti-party group" of Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov and others, and needed men he could rely on to take their place. However, Brezhnev's lucky star deserted him again in 1960, when he was relieved of his responsibilities on the Secretariat and "kicked upstairs" as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., a position of relatively little influence.

Brezhnev recovered in 1963 when his chief rival, Frol Kozlov, was incapacitated by a stroke. Brezhnev then resumed his duties as a Central Committee secretary. Finally, during the October 1964 plenum of the Central Committee, Khrushchev was stripped of all his posts and Brezhnev picked up the reins as First Secretary of the Central Committee. This title was upgraded to General Secretary (Stalin's old title) at the 23rd Party Congress in 1966 as a recognition of Brezhnev's increased influence.

After thirteen years in a purely party position, Brezhnev was named Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. in June of 1977, resuming the position he had vacated in 1964. This involved the removal from that post of Nikolai V. Podgorny, who had been relieved of his seat on the CPSU Politburo earlier that same year. But Brezhnev obviously is in poor health and each new illness seems to put him out of action for longer periods of time and makes the succession issue

all the more acute. The delicate condition of Brezhnev's health was underlined by his limited activities at the recent Vienna summit. Negotiating sessions were restricted in duration and intensity in an effort to reduce the strain on Brezhnev.

THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY AND THE PROBLEMS OF SUCCESSION

The position of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU is the most powerful post in the hierarchy of the Soviet party and, therefore, of the country. Through his leadership of the Central Committee Secretariat, the General Secretary disposes of vast patronage and appointive powers which he can use to promote his supporters and to sabotage the careers of his opponents.

In the entire history of the Soviet Union only three men have carried this title or its equivalent - First Secretary (which Khrushchev used). They are J. V. Stalin (1922-1953), N.S. Khrushchev (1953-1964), and the present General Secretary L. I. Brezhnev (1964-)*. In all three cases the fact that these men held the top party post was the decisive factor in their achieving some degree of dominance over their colleagues.

Any new General Secretary will have to meet certain basic criteria. The most important of these is that he be a Russian, a member of the Soviet Union's dominant nationality. In addition, any future General Secretary should be from 55 to 65 years of age. Stalin was 42 when he assumed the post, Khrushchev 58, and Brezhnev 57. A younger man would most likely assure a reign of at least ten years, thus avoiding the dislocations of too-frequent succession periods.

The new General Secretary will have to have a solid background in a number of fields such as industrial management, agriculture, foreign policy, defense and party administration. For example, by the time Khrushchev and Brezhnev acceded to the post, both had acquired several years of experience in regional and republic party administration, economic management, and had both developed extensive contacts within the military and related industries. Traditionally, the field of foreign affairs is the weak link in a successor's background and the area in which he is least likely to assert his authority early in his rule.

A new General Secretary will also be confronted with a number of problems which are becoming increasingly acute. Chief among these are the continuing slowdown in economic growth and a chaotic distribution network, stemming in part from an inefficient, highly-centralized economic system which is proving to be increasingly incapable of managing the complexities of a developed economy.

* (This excludes the two-week tenure of Georgii M. Malenkov as party boss in 1953, immediately following Stalin's death.)

Another worry is the matter of the Soviet Union's non-Russian nationalities, especially the non-Slavic ones of the trans-Caucasus and Central Asia, where the birth rate is increasing at a far higher rate than among Russians, or Slavs in general. As of today Great Russians make up only 50 percent of the population of the Soviet Union, although they continue to dominate all areas of national life. Given the great disparity in birth rates and the always present ethnic tensions within the U.S.S.R., this is a problem which can only get worse with time.

• The problem of nationalities ties in with another, less well-known dilemma - the loss of revolutionary fervor in the Soviet Union. By now the ideological rot among the people is nearly complete and with this loss of revolutionary zeal goes the very reason for which the Soviet state was ostensibly founded. Thus the temptation grows for the Soviet leadership to fall back on a more blatant Great Russian nationalism as the prime motivating and legitimizing force for its continued rule. However, this would only exacerbate national tensions within the country and speed up the day of reckoning. All of these problems demand radical solutions which the present leadership has until now managed to avoid. It is questionable whether or not the next generation of leaders will possess either the authority or the will to address them.

Related to the matter of authority is the question of how much power the new General Secretary will actually possess. During both the Stalin and Khrushchev successions the idea of "collective" leadership was stressed. Although the situation changed and both Khrushchev and Brezhnev were able to assert their dominance over the party, lip service continued and still continues to be paid to the idea of collectivity over one-man rule.

It is quite likely when Brezhnev leaves that the collective character of the leadership will be emphasized no matter who replaces him. As things stand now, no one man is in a position to exert the kind of control over the party and state that Stalin, or even Brezhnev, possessed. It is also extremely unlikely that the present or future Politburo members would countenance an unseemly grab for power by a future General Secretary. The lessons of the Stalin era of the inadvisability of allowing too much power to reside in one man's hands have evidently been learned.

It has been maintained by some that while the General Secretary does possess tremendous power, he is today more the captive of competing interest groups within the party and government. Given the growing complexity of Soviet society as a whole and the increasing dispersal of power among the lower party and government organs (and their resulting ability to frustrate central policy initiatives), the position of General Secretary may eventually evolve into that of a mediator or a "chairman of the board."

There has been much speculation over the years as to what role the secret police (KGB) and the military might play in picking Brezhnev's successor. As in most questions dealing with Soviet internal politics, it is impossible to forecast accurately what role these two organizations might play, although a few historical examples may shed some light. Immediately after Stalin's death the secret police were prevented from exerting any influence by the timely execution of their leader, L. P. Beria, who had planned to use the power he had accrued under Stalin to eliminate his own rivals. The army, in the form of the late Marshal G. K. Zhukov, played an important role by using military aircraft to transport Khrushchev's supporters on the Central Committee to the decisive June 1957 plenum of that body, leading to the expulsion of Khrushchev's enemies from the party Presidium. In October 1964, Khrushchev was met on his return to Moscow by V. E. Semichastny (KGB chief from 1961-67), who had been detailed to escort Khrushchev to the Central Committee plenum that decreed his deposition.

Thus it would seem that the role of the secret police and the military in these matters has actually decreased in comparison to the Stalin years, although the institutional influence of both these organizations seems to have increased over the years. For example, in April 1973, Y. V. Andropov, head of the KGB since 1967, was promoted from candidate to full member of the CPSU Politburo along with Defense Minister A. A. Grechko. When Grechko died three years later he was replaced as defense minister by D. F. Ustinov, also a Politburo member, who was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union in July 1976. In addition, the armed forces have always been well-represented on the Central Committee.

Barring unforeseen difficulties it is unlikely that either the KGB or the armed forces will have any significant role in the upcoming succession. Due to the close integration of both organizations with the party and government, and the multitude of restrictions and strict party supervision, there is little chance that either body would or could act independently either to press its own demands or as the vehicle for a particular candidate.

THE CPSU POLITBURO

The CPSU Politburo is the supreme decision-making body of the Communist Party and, therefore, of the entire Soviet Union, although in theory it derives its mandate from the party congresses which meet every five years. The Politburo is also the executive organ of the CPSU Central Committee, in which power is supposed to reside between party congresses. However, the large (and still increasing) size of the Central Committee, the geographic dispersal

of its membership, and the historic centralizing tendencies within the CPSU are all factors which have combined to weaken the Central Committee's role vis-a-vis the Politburo.

Under Stalin the Politburo (and the party in general) declined in importance due to the dictator's preference for carrying on business through the government apparatus. Since Stalin's death both Khrushchev and Brezhnev have worked successfully to restore the supremacy of the party over the government, until currently the party positions are recognized as the more desirable road to power and perquisites.

It should be emphasized, however, that the division between party and government is, in practice, a highly artificial one and thus is not so great as might appear from the foregoing analysis. Rather, the upper echelons of both party and government form an interlocking web of responsibility, as shown by the table on page 21.

FULL MEMBERS

The present CPSU Politburo consists of 13 full members, and nine candidate members who do not have a vote in party deliberations. Of the thirteen, ten are Russians, while the remaining three consist of a Ukrainian, a Latvian, and a Kazakh. The average age of the full members of the Politburo at the end of 1979 will be 69.3, the eldest being the Old Bolshevik Pel'she, who will be 80, and the youngest, Leningrad obkom First Secretary Grigori V. Romanov, who will be 56. The following is a list of the membership of the Politburo, their ages at the end of 1979, present position, and the dates when they attained the post.

CPSU POLITBURO - June 1979 FULL MEMBERS

BREZHNEV, Leonid I. (73)	First Secretary/General Secretary, CPSU Central Committee (10/64); Chairman, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. (6/77); Marshal of the Soviet Union (5/76); Chariman, U.S.S.R. Council of Defense (5/76).
ANDROPOV, Yuri V. (65)	Chairman, Committee of State Security (KGB), U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers (5/67); General of the Army (10/76).

GRISHIN, Viktor V. (65)	First Secretary, Moscow City Party Committee (6/67); Member, Presidium, U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet (1967).
GROMYKO, Andrei A. (70)	Minister of Foreign Affairs, U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers (2/57).
KIRILENKO, Andrei P. (73)	Secretary, CPSU Central Committee (4/66)
KOSYGIN, Aleksei N. (75)	Chairman, U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers (10/64).
KUNAEV, Dinmukhamed A. (67)	First Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of Kazakhstan (1960-1962) (12/64); Member, Presidium, U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet (1962).
PEL'SHE, Arvid Ya. (80)	Chairman, Party Control Committee, CPSU Central Committee (4/66).
ROMANOV, Grigori V. (56)	First Secretary, Leningrad obkom (9/70); Member, Presidium, U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet (1971).
SUSLOV, Mikhail A. (77)	Secretary, CPSU Central Committee (3/47).
USTINOV, Dmitri F. (71)	Minister of Defense, U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers (4/76); Marshal of the Soviet Union (7/76).
CHERNENKO, Konstantin U. (68)	Secretary, CPSU Central Committee (3/76).
SHCHERBITSKY, Vladimir V. (61)	First Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of the Ukraine (5/72); Member, Presidium, U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet (1972).

CANDIDATE MEMBERS

ALIEV, Geidar A. (56)	First Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of Azerbaidzhan (7/69).
DEMICHEV, Piotr N. (61)	Minister of Culture, U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers (11/74).

KUZNETSOV, Vasili V. (78)	First Deputy Chairman, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. (10/77); First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (2/55).
MASHEROV, Piotr M. (61)	First Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of Belorussia (3/65); Member, Presidium, U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet (1966).
PONOMARĚV, Boris N. (74)	Secretary, CPSU Central Committee (10/61).
RASHIDOV, Sharaf R. (62)	First Secretary, Central Committee, Communist Party of Uzbekistan (3/59); Member, Presidium, U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet (1966).
SOLOMENTSEV, Mikhail S. (66)	Chairman, R.S.F.S.R. Council of Ministers (7/71).
TIKHONOV, Nikolai A. (74)	First Deputy Chairman, U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers (1976).
SHEVARDNADZE, Eduard A. (51)	First Secretary, Central Committee Communist Party of Georgia (9/72).

A number of Kremlinologists contend that there is an "inner circle" within the Politburo made up of older men who share the same experiences and beliefs, and who exert a decisive influence on that body. Besides Brezhnev, the other members of this group include A. N. Kosygin, M. A. Suslov, and A. P. Kirilenko.

Kosygin was born in 1904 in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) and fought on the side of the Bolsheviks as a young man during the Civil War. He joined the party in 1927 and moved up rapidly in various industry-related government posts, becoming a deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (after 1946, the Council of Ministers) in 1940 after having been elected to the Central Committee in 1939. As a promising young technocrat under Stalin, Kosygin was made a member of the Politburo in 1948. Soon afterwards he went into a temporary decline, probably as a result of the "Leningrad Affair," and was removed from the Politburo in 1952, and regaining that position only in 1960, the same year in which he was appointed First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers - the position directly under Khrushchev.

He replaced his boss as Chairman of the Council of Ministers in October 1964, in the division of Khrushchev's posts which took place after his ouster. As head of the government Kosygin was the Soviet Union's chief spokesman in foreign affairs until about 1971, when Brezhnev became the dominant voice. Since then Kosygin's influence has diminished on all fronts. This factor, his advanced age, and his nearly exclusive career in the government apparatus make him an extremely unlikely candidate to succeed Brezhnev.

Suslov, long the "gray eminence" of Soviet politics, was born in 1902 and joined the Communist Party in 1921. His early career was spent chiefly as a student, then as an instructor in the party's ideological academies. From 1939 to 1941 he served as First Secretary of the Stavropol obkom, and as a political commissar on the Transcaucasian Front from 1941 to 1944, where he was responsible for carrying out the deportation of a number of Caucasian tribes suspected of pro-German sympathies.¹ He was also made a member of the CPSU Central Committee in 1941. Suslov evidently performed his Caucasian assignment so well that he was sent by Stalin to Lithuania in 1944 to crush the widespread anti-Soviet partisan movement there which lasted until 1947.

Suslov moved to Moscow in 1947 to take up duties as a secretary of the Central Committee, a position he has now held for over three decades. He was also chief editor of Pravda from 1949 to 1950. In 1955, during the maneuvering between Khrushchev and Malenkov, Suslov was made a member of the Politburo. However, in spite of his support of Khrushchev during these years, Suslov reportedly made the main speech against him at the secret Central Committee plenum in October 1964, during which Khrushchev was stripped of his party and government posts.

Since that time Suslov has been a charter member of the "inner circle" of the Politburo. However, his lack of experience in regional party and economic administration (outside the realm of ideology), combined with his advanced age and forbidding public visage make it doubtful that he would be in a position to succeed Brezhnev. It is quite likely, however, that when Brezhnev finally leaves the scene Suslov could play a major role as "kingmaker."

Kirilenko was born in 1906, the same year as Brezhnev, a man with whom he has been closely associated for over 30 years. Kirilenko entered the party in 1931 and also made rapid headway during Stalin's purges and the subsequent war years to become Second Secretary of the Zaporozh'e obkom (in the Ukrainian SSR) under Brezhnev during the latter's tenure there in the late 1940s. Their careers have been closely intertwined ever since. Afterwards,

1. George W. Simmonds, ed., Soviet Leaders (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1967), p. 111.

Kirilenko served in a number of other provincial party posts in the Ukrainian and Russian republics, finally becoming a member of the Central Committee in 1956. He was a candidate member of the Presidium from 1957 to 1961, was dropped, but managed to return as a full member in 1962. Kirilenko has been a secretary of the CPSU Central Committee since 1966.

Kirilenko has long been touted as an interim successor to Brezhnev. In spite of his Ukrainian-sounding name, Kirilenko is a Russian, an important factor in the ethnic-conscious Soviet Union. Although a few months older than Brezhnev, Kirilenko apparently is in good health and seems robust for a man of 73. However healthy Kirilenko may be, given his age, his tenure as General Secretary, if he should replace Brezhnev, could not be for more than a few years at the most.

Recent events, however, have put Kirilenko's political health more into doubt than his physical condition. At the recent (April) plenum of the Central Committee, Yakov P. Ryabov was removed from his post as Central Committee secretary in charge of the defense industry, a move presaged a month earlier by his appointment as a first deputy chairman of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) under N. I. Baibakov, a deputy chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers.

The significance of this move lies not so much in Ryabov's personal misfortune as how it reflects on Kirilenko's own position in the hierarchy. Ryabov is seen by some observers as a protege of Kirilenko due to their association in Sverdlovsk, when Kirilenko was First Secretary of the Sverdlovsk obkom and Ryabov was a party functionary in the city of Sverdlovsk itself. Ryabov's transfer to Moscow in October 1976 to replace D. F. Ustinov, who had become Minister of Defense after Marshal Grechko's death that April, was seen as a significant increment of Kirilenko's influence.

A common tactic in the Soviet political wars is to weaken and isolate a particular individual by removing his supporters from positions of power, as happened to Brezhnev and his cohorts in the early 1960s. This may or may not be the case with Kirilenko, and only time will tell whether Ryabov's recent demotion is related to Kirilenko's own fortunes and whether it augurs the beginning of the end of his own political career.

Besides the three men discussed above, there are two other candidates who may stand a reasonable chance of succeeding Brezhnev as General Secretary. They are Konstantin U. Chernenko, and Grigori V. Romanov. Their careers and prospects will be evaluated below.

Chernenko's meteoric rise to the very top of the leadership circle during the past few years has resulted in a considerable amount of speculation as to his chances of becoming General Secretary after Brezhnev leaves the scene. Chernenko, probably more than any other man among the ruling elite, can be said to owe his good fortune to Brezhnev's patronage. Chernenko joined the party the same year as Brezhnev (1931) and spent the early years of his career engaged in Komsomol (the Soviet youth organization) and other party work, which seems to have been chiefly in the propaganda field. Chernenko first became associated with Brezhnev in the early 1950s, when the latter was party boss in Moldavia and Chernenko worked in the Central Committee apparatus of the republican party organization. In 1956, perhaps with Brezhnev's help, Chernenko left the provinces for Moscow and work in the CPSU Central Committee. Except for a stint elsewhere in the early 1960s, Chernenko has been connected with the Central Committee ever since, gradually rising through the ranks until he became a secretary in 1976 at the 25th Party Congress, after having been elected to the Central Committee in 1971.

In October 1977 Chernenko was made a candidate member of the Politburo. After only one year in that position he became a full member at the November 1978 plenum of the Central Committee, replacing Kirill T. Mazurov, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, who was dropped from the Politburo at that time. All of this has caused observers to wonder whether or not Chernenko might succeed Brezhnev, or even Kirilenko, if the latter becomes General Secretary and retires within a short time.

However, certain factors militate against Chernenko's accession to the top post in the party. First Chernenko is 68, ten years older than Brezhnev when he became First Secretary. This and his attendant short tenure on the job might render him ineligible for the top position in the eyes of his colleagues. Also, due to Chernenko's rapid advancement and relatively short sojourn at the top, he has probably not had time to accumulate the necessary political IOU's and power base that would allow him to achieve the top position or to maintain it in the face of the ambitions of his younger colleagues. There is even considerable doubt as to whether or not Chernenko could hold his present position once his patron departs.

The most likely candidate to succeed Brezhnev, - after a Kirilenko "regency" or without - for a variety of reasons seems to be the Leningrad oblast' (province) party chief, G. V. Romanov. Romanov is relatively young (56), Russian, and a man who has advanced quickly to the top of the leadership circle since his promotion to First Secretary of the Leningrad obkom in 1970. A Central Committee member since 1966, Romanov became a candidate member of the Politburo in April 1973, during a major shakeup in the leadership. He finally achieved full membership at the 25th Party Congress in March 1976.

However, Romanov does have a number of career-related drawbacks, which could thwart his ambitions, not the least of which is his Leningrad background which has traditionally been a liability in the Muscovite political wars. His background is deficient in foreign affairs and military matters, and he has had relatively little experience in large-scale economic management. Perhaps most damaging to any hopes he may have is the fact that Romanov remains a provincial party chief and does not hold a position - preferably as a Central Committee secretary - in Moscow. If past history is any guide, this is a serious weakness which will have to be remedied if Romanov expects to advance. During the last two successions - Stalin's from 1953 to 1957; and Khrushchev's in 1964 - the eventual victors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, both held posts on the Politburo (Presidium from 1952 until 1966) and the Secretariat. A transfer of this sort under Brezhnev might well be an indication that Romanov is being groomed for greater things.

Romanov already seems to be getting lessons in foreign relations, although the fruits of these particular labors may hardly be the sort of thing that would assure Western leaders seeking a more "pragmatic" and less adventuresome man in charge. During a recent visit by a group of American senators to Moscow, Romanov asserted that President Carter could force the U.S. Senate to approve the proposed SALT II treaty by threatening to withhold their campaign funds.² If Romanov really does believe this (or if his opinion is shared by his colleagues) the future of U.S.-Soviet relations is not a bright one.

The other seven members of the Politburo can be discounted for a variety of reasons such as age (Pel'she, Ustinov, Grishin), the wrong ethnic background (Pel'she, Kunaev, Shcherbitsky), or because they are tainted or hobbled by their particular official associations (Andropov, Gromyko).

THE CANDIDATE MEMBERS

Another recruiting ground for a future General Secretary, although not an especially likely one, is from among the membership of the candidate members of the Politburo, i.e., those not having a vote in Politburo deliberations. Of the nine candidate members, two would seem capable of moving up to positions of greater authority. These two men are Piotr N. Demichev and Mikhail S. Solomentsev.

2. Robert G. Kaiser, "Soviet Talks Shook Visiting Senators," The Washington Post, December 24, 1978, p. D1.

Demichev, the current Minister of Culture, has been cooling his heels as a candidate member since 1964. After an initially rapid rise under Khrushchev, his upward mobility seems to have stalled under the Brezhnev regime. In 1961, the same year in which he became a member of the Central Committee, Demichev was made a secretary of the CPSU Central Committee in charge of cultural matters. In what would appear to be a demotion, Demichev lost his job as secretary in late 1974, but picked up his present government position, made vacant by the death of the Minister of Culture, Furtseva.

Any chance Demichev may have should come within the next few years when death or retirement overtakes a number of the full members of the Politburo. Although such a prolonged status as a candidate member does not augur well for his future, Demichev could conceivably move up into one of the vacant slots that will be created by the impending turnover. Although his background is weak in the areas of military and foreign affairs and economic management, he should not be ruled out altogether.

Another possible contender is Solomentsev, who was also a Central Committee secretary from 1966 to 1971, when he moved to the government as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the R.S.F.S.R. (in effect, Prime Minister of the Russian Republic), replacing the already politically moribund Gennadi I. Voronov. Solomentsev's background has been a balanced combination of both party and government work, which has given him a wealth of experience in economic management. His major career gaps are in the areas of military and foreign affairs, and his current position may qualify him more as Kosygin's replacement than as General Secretary.

The other seven candidate members can be ruled out for a variety of reasons. Age should almost certainly disqualify both Kuznetsov (78), Tikhonov (73), and Ponomarev (74), the old Comintern veteran. The other four members, Rashidov, Masherov, Aliev and Shevardnadze can probably be discounted on the basis of nationality. Both Aliev and Shevardnadze are Caucasians, while Rashidov is a Uzbek and Masherov a Belorussian, although this does not necessarily disqualify them from advancement into full member status in order to meet the CPSU's own requirements for token non-Russian representation.

THE CPSU SECRETARIAT

The only other likely body from which a future General Secretary could be drawn is the CPSU Central Committee Secretariat, in effect, the executive organ of the party. At this time, the Secretariat contains a number of men, any one of whom could con-

ceivably advance to the position of leader. The following is a list of the full CPSU Secretariat showing age, time of appointment and probable areas of responsibility.

SECRETARIAT OF THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE - June 1979

* - member of CPSU Politburo

*BREZHNEV, Leonid I. (73)	General Secretary (10/64)
GORBACHËV, Mikhail S. (48)	Agriculture (11/78)
DOLGIKH, Vladimir I. (55)	Heavy Industry (12/72)
ZIMYANIN, Mikhail V. (65)	Culture, propaganda (3/76)
KAPITONOV, Ivan V. (64)	Cadres (12/65)
*KIRILENKO, Andrei P. (73)	Organizational Affairs (4/66)
*PONOMARËV, Boris N. (74)	Non-ruling communist parties (10/61)
RUSAKOV, Konstantin V. (70)	Communist bloc relations (5/77)
*SUSLOV, Mikhail A. (77)	Ideology, International Communism (3/47)
*CHERNENKO, Konstantin U. (68)	General Department (3/76)

Of the ten current secretaries, five do not serve on the Politburo or as candidate members of that body. Of these, one, Rusakov, at age 70 is too old to be a serious contender for a higher position. The four remaining possibilities are Vladimir I. Dolgikh, Ivan V. Kapitonov, Mikhail V. Zimyanin, and Mikhail S. Gorbachëv. The position of secretary in charge of the defense industry is currently vacant due to the removal of Y. P. Ryabov on April 17th, 1979. No successor has yet been named.

Dolgikh is a Soviet technocrat par excellence who distinguished himself in the mining and metallurgical industry at Noril'sk in the far north of Siberia. After a brief apprenticeship as First Secretary of the Krasnoyarsk obkom from 1969 to 1972, he came to Moscow as Central Committee secretary for heavy industry. Both his youth (55) and his strong Siberian roots make Dolgikh an attractive candidate for a higher position within the party. He has been a member of the Central Committee since 1971.

However, Dolgikh's status as a relative newcomer and the fact that he does not have a seat on the Politburo make him a dark horse at this time. There was speculation recently that Dolgikh would be promoted to candidate status on the Politburo during the recent plenum of the Central Committee, but this did not happen.³ As noted earlier, the eventual winners in the last two successions held positions on both the Politburo (Presidium) and the Secretariat.

Ivan V. Kapitonov has been a secretary of the Central Committee since December 1965, having served longer in that position than anyone except Brezhnev, Suslov and Ponomarev. Kapitonov, a member of the Central Committee since 1952, heads the cadres branch of the Secretariat, where he probably works closely with Kirilenko in the selection and placement of cadres, an obviously important position with extensive powers of patronage.⁴ It is perhaps for this very reason that Kapitonov's upward mobility has been stalled for the past decade, perhaps by Brezhnev himself. Although he will soon be 64, there is still a possibility that the large turnover within the next few years will give Kapitonov at least an outside chance.

Mikhail V. Zimyanin, secretary for culture and propaganda since 1976, spent most of his early career in the apparatus of the Communist Party in his native Belorussia until 1953. During the mid-1950s, Zimyanin served in a number of diplomatic posts and was editor of Pravda from 1965 until 1976, when he was appointed to his present position. He was first elected to the Central Committee in 1952, was dropped in 1956, and re-elected in 1966. Both his nationality and his limited occupational background will probably work against his ever reaching the top position, although he may be due for a promotion of some sort within the next few years.

The only remaining secretary with any realistic hopes of moving upwards is Mikhail S. Gorbachev who, at 48, is the youngest member of the ruling elite. Gorbachev became the Central Committee secretary in charge of agriculture at the November 1978 plenum of that body, replacing Politburo member Fedor D. Kulakov, who had died the previous July. Little is known about Gorbachev except that he was First Secretary of the Stavropol Regional Committee (kraikom) from 1970 until his present appointment.

3. David K. Willis, "Kirilenko, Soviet heir apparent, gains," The Christian Science Monitor, April 17, 1979, p. 7.

4. Dimitri K. Simes, et al, Soviet Succession: Leadership in Transition (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1978), p. 37.

Gorbachëv is a graduate of Moscow State University (1955) and has worked in the Stavropol region most of his life, becoming First Secretary of the Stavropol gorkom in 1966. He was elected a member of the CPSU Central Committee in 1971. Gorbachëv may have ties with M. A. Suslov due to both men's association with the Stavropol area.

Although his specialization in agriculture is not necessarily the best avenue for advancement, if Gorbachëv carries out his present duties well, he should by no means be discounted. There are inherent dangers in his present position, however. The agricultural sector has been a traditional burial ground for promising apparatchiki, as the careers of D.S. Polyansky and V.V. Matskevich so well illustrate.

Although Central Committee secretaries occupy positions of immense power, their very prominence makes them vulnerable to demotions on the part of the older men on the Politburo, and especially by the General Secretary. Brezhnev, over the years, has shown a marked penchant for freezing the careers of a number of fast-rising young men on the Secretariat, whom he may have felt had concentrated too much power in their hands. The careers of K. F. Katushev and A.N. Shelepin may be especially instructive in this regard. Shelepin had long been considered a Brezhnev rival, and was gradually stripped of his various powers and was removed from the Politburo in April 1975. Katushev, appointed as a Central Committee secretary in April 1968 at the age of 41, was replaced by K. V. Rusakov (70) in 1977,

This overall unwillingness on the part of the "elder statesmen" on the Politburo to countenance the advancement of younger men makes the prospect of a post-Brezhnev succession an increasingly uncertain matter with each passing day. In the under-60 group only G. V. Romanov has been elevated to a position of authority on the Politburo, and he is still a provincial secretary based far from Moscow. Perhaps Brezhnev, recalling his own experience under Khrushchev, is reluctant to entrust Romanov with a more powerful position at the center.

Thus, as each year goes by the succession issue and the policies resulting therefrom become more difficult to predict. One thing is likely: with the passage of time and as more of the older rulers fall away, the chances for any sort of continuity in foreign policy grows slimmer as the likelihood of a new leader with less experience in foreign affairs, and less secure in his own position, increases.

Fully 15 of the 22 full and candidate members of the Politburo will be 65 years of age or older at the end of this year, while seven out of the ten Central Committee secretaries will be as old.

In the main, these are men who got their start under Stalin and who have held positions of authority for twenty years or more and are experienced in the use of power. Of the remaining handful of potential candidates, there are none who would seem to have the requisite experience in conducting foreign policy. An exclusive background in provincial and republic party affairs and Central Committee administration is not the best training ground for someone who will someday be directing Soviet policy world-wide.

THE POST-BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP AND THE U.S.

As the Soviet Union enters the 1980s the leadership, whatever its composition, will be faced with a number of critical choices in the realm of foreign policy. Outwardly, Soviet leaders are confident in their appraisals of the future. In their public statements the leadership maintains that the "historically inevitable" struggle between the capitalist and socialist systems will continue, but without a direct clash between the United States and the Soviet Union. The dangers of nuclear war have been significantly reduced, they aver, due to the growth in the authority and power of the Socialist bloc, led by the Soviet Union. Soviet spokesmen see the world "correlation of forces" - the sum total of moral, economic, political and military factors - as having shifted decisively in favor of the Soviet Union and its allies.

During his speech before the 25th Party Congress in February 1976, Brezhnev explicitly stated that "The passage from cold war... to detente was largely connected with changes in the correlation of world forces."⁵ Further on Brezhnev provided his audience with the Soviet version of detente.

It could not be clearer, after all, that detente and peaceful coexistence refer to interstate relations...detente does not in the slightest abolish and cannot abolish or alter, the laws of the class struggle....We make no secret of the fact that we see detente as the way to create more favourable conditions for peaceful socialist and Communist construction.⁶

Boris N. Ponomarev, candidate member of the Politburo and secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, characterized the international situation in a speech delivered in February of this year during the recent election campaign for the Supreme Soviet.

5. L. Brezhnev, "The World Situation: The International Activity of the CPSU," Vital Speeches of the Day, April 1, 1976, p. 363.

6. Ibid., p. 369.

...[T]he communist movement has today changed into a force which exerts an ever-growing influence on the course of world events. The entire course of events affirms the correctness of the conclusion that the world correlation of forces has changed in a cardinal way and, that the farther along the more it will change in favor of the forces of peace and socialism.⁷

The views expressed by other Kremlin leaders on foreign policy are almost uniformly the same. If one takes the available public statements as any kind of guide there would seem to be no discernible differences among the leadership with regard to the basic goals of Soviet foreign policy, although there are undoubtedly some disagreements regarding method.

Numerous observers in the United States have speculated on the existence of a "hawk-dove" split in the Kremlin in which both groups are battling for the control of Soviet foreign policy and whose fortunes are highly susceptible to the diplomatic signals emanating from Washington. This contention is quite similar to the arguments made during Stalin's later years and throughout the Khrushchev era, and which have gained a degree of respectability in the U.S. based more on constant repetition than on any solid evidence.

Whatever the case, there can certainly be no doubt that every U.S. administration during the past decade has to some extent taken into account the "hawk-dove" dichotomy as it seeks to fashion a policy toward the Soviet Union. This seems to be part of an overall tendency in the United States to see Soviet politics as basically a "mirror image" of ours, replete with "hawks," "doves" and other contending factions. The contention-Soviet statements to the contrary-that there is a "dovish" faction within the Politburo seems to be more a result of U.S. domestic political pressures than of an objective reading of the situation.

There has been much speculation over the years as to what policies a post-Brezhnev leadership would pursue in the area of foreign affairs, especially with regard to the policy of detente. The conjectures range from the mildly optimistic-that a new, more "pragmatic" leadership, with a vested interest in improving the East-West dialogue and eschewing foreign adventures, will come to the fore-to the darkly pessimistic -that a new and more openly nationalistic, anti-Western grouping will emerge in control and aggressively pursue avowedly Great Russian national goals.

7. "For the People's Happiness, for the Cause of Peace and Communism," Pravda, February 13, 1979, p. 2. (Translation by the author.)

There can be no doubt that foreign policy concerns have become increasingly important to the Soviet leadership since the beginning of the detente era. For example, in May 1972, B. N. Ponomarev was made a candidate member of the Politburo; and in April 1973, both Defense Minister A. A. Grechko and Foreign Minister A. A. Gromyko were made full members of that body without ever having to serve as candidates.

In the early stages of a post-Brezhnev transition Soviet policy would probably be relatively moderate and less prone to foreign entanglements. This has certainly been true in the past during both the Stalin and Khrushchev succession periods, as the ruling groups turned inward and devoted most of their energies to domestic problems and jockeying for power.

Although there have been only three succession periods during the entirety of Soviet history, one thing is unmistakable: in each period it has taken the eventual winner longer to assert his control over the party and government and to leave his imprint on a particular policy - especially foreign policy. Brezhnev, for example, did not achieve his dominant position as Soviet foreign policy spokesman until about 1971, nearly seven years after Khrushchev's ouster. The probability that any future General Secretary will have to share power with his colleagues on the Politburo and the inherent restrictions of collegial decision-making would probably make any bold new foreign policy initiatives unlikely, at least at the outset.

There is another possibility, however, that the Soviet Union might become even more adventuresome overseas under a new ruling group. The next leadership team will be the first to achieve power when the Soviet Union is not recognized as militarily inferior to the U.S. The new leadership will be able to thank the current regime for this new international authority; for the achievement of strategic parity with the U.S. has been the outstanding accomplishment of the Brezhnev years. This new sense of power might actually encourage expansionist tendencies within the new leadership. As one observer put it:

The new leaders might take the harder course if by then they have finally managed to shake the sense of historical inferiority resulting from the experiences of the 1930s and the war. And some of these people probably have not acquired the temperance and prudence that Brezhnev and Kosygin learned through experience. They might feel, for example, that the risks of the Ethiopian adventure undertaken by this very "old, tired" regime were really not all that great. They might well think that the pattern of extending influence, exploiting conflicts, and generally taking advantage of

opportunities rather boldly should be continued. This is not likely to become a permanent policy, but it is a warning signal that when the Brezhnev group retires from the scene, it may be succeeded by people who see interventionism as the norm, who believe that the Soviet Union can intervene in ways that earlier appeared quite risky indeed.⁸

Thus it is that the number of policy options available to a future leadership group is almost as great and unknown as the candidates themselves. However, unless Soviet policy takes an unprecedented turn within the next few years the odds are great that the U.S. will be forced to continue meeting Soviet thrusts in every part of the world, and that there is little likelihood of any significant lessening of tensions between the two powers deriving from a change in the top leadership of the Soviet Union.

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Research Associate

8. W. F. Nyland, "Soviet Succession: Leadership in Transition" in Simes, et. al., op. cit., p. 78.

CHIEF ORGANS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT

PARTY		GOVERNMENT	
POLITBURO	SECRETARIAT	COUNCIL OF MINISTERS	PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET
F 1.	Brezhnev.....	Brezhnev.....	Brezhnev.....
U 2.	Andropov.....	Andropov.....	Andropov.....
L 3.	Grishin.....	Grishin.....	Grishin.....
L 4.	Gromyko.....	Gromyko.....	Gromyko.....
5.	Kirilenko.....	Kirilenko.....	Kirilenko.....
6.	Kosygin.....	Kosygin.....	Kosygin.....
M 7.	Kunaev.....	Kunaev.....	Kunaev.....
E 8.	Pel'she.....	Pel'she.....	Pel'she.....
M 9.	Romanov.....	Romanov.....	Romanov.....
B 10.	Suslov.....	Suslov.....	Suslov.....
E 11.	Ustinov.....	Ustinov.....	Ustinov.....
F 12.	Chernenko.....	Chernenko.....	Chernenko.....
S 13.	Shcherbitsky.....	Shcherbitsky.....	Shcherbitsky.....
C			
A 14.	Aliev.....	Aliev.....	Aliev.....
N 15.	Demichev.....	Demichev.....	Demichev.....
D 16.	Kuznetsov.....	Kuznetsov.....	Kuznetsov.....
I 17.	Masherov.....	Masherov.....	Masherov.....
D 18.	Ponomarëv.....	Ponomarev.....	Ponomarev.....
A 19.	Rashidov.....	Rashidov.....	Rashidov.....
T 20.	Solomentsev.....	Solomentsev.....	Solomentsev.....
E 21.	Tikhonov.....	Tikhonov.....	Tikhonov.....
S 22.	Shevardnadze.....	Shevardnadze.....	Shevardnadze.....
23.	Gorbachëv.....	Gorbachëv.....	Gorbachëv.....
24.	Dolgikh.....	Dolgikh.....	Dolgikh.....
25.	Zimyanin.....	Zimyanin.....	Zimyanin.....
26.	Kapitonov.....	Kapitonov.....	Kapitonov.....
27.	Rusakov.....	Rusakov.....	Rusakov.....