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DOC	TYPE	DATE	PAGES	CLASS.
1	Paper	08-09-1985	5	
	Subject: The Soviet Political Police (Paper VI)			
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	From:			
	Restriction : FOIA(b)1			
2	Paper	07-18-1985	4	
	Subject: Nomenklatura: The USSR's Patronage System (Paper IV)			
	To: <i>R " " # 12</i>			
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3	Paper	08-09-1985	5	
	Subject: The USSR: Civil-Military Relations (Paper V)			
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4	Paper	07-08-1985	4	
	Subject: Role of the CPSU (Paper I-II-Ib)			
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5	Paper		9	
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THE SOVIET POLITICAL POLICE

Lenin created the "Sword and Shield of the Revolution"--the Cheka--to crush domestic opposition and to protect the Bolshevik party from its enemies, using any and all means, including terror. By any standard, the Cheka succeeded brilliantly and bloodily. Its present-day incarnation, the KGB, has become one of the three pillars of the Soviet regime, the other two being the party and the military.

There is no American analog for the KGB: apart from a political role which would be unthinkable in a democracy, it has the functions of the CIA, the FBI, the Secret Service, the Coast Guard, the NSA, the EPS, and it has two divisions of heavily-armed troops. The KGB also controls resources and uses tactics which in the US could only be likened to those of organized crime. Because of strict Soviet secrecy, no accurate figure on personnel strength is available for the secret police or even for the regular police.

Historical Background

The Cheka has strong roots in Russian history. Stalin in his heyday gave favorable publicity to Tsar Ivan The Terrible's equivalent institution, the Oprichnina which ruthlessly and bloodily suppressed the Tsar's enemies. Although much subdued compared to its 16th century predecessor, the Tsarist Okhrana was the main persecutor of the Bolsheviks prior to the 1917 Revolution.

Soviet propaganda on the glamor and romance of the Cheka goes back to its early period under Felix Dzerzhinskiy when it launched "Red Terror" against the Bolsheviks' domestic and foreign enemies. This was the time when Operation Trust snared the feared British agent Sidney Reilly and when "Iron Felix" and his underlings were hailed as the "knights of the Revolution."

Its image worsened in the 1930s when the secret police participated in Stalin's assaults against the peasantry and destroyed the Old Bolsheviks and the Red Army's officer corps. Led by such men as Yagoda and Yezhov, it doomed millions to forced labor in the GULAG forced labor camps under inhuman conditions and with appalling casualty rates. During World War II it conducted a successful espionage effort against the Nazis and created a special wartime disciplinary unit known as SMERSH (Death to Spies). The GULAG population was at a peak--an estimated 15 million--in the postwar reconstruction period, swollen by captured Axis prisoners and Soviet victims of Stalin's harsh policies.

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The KGB's Political Role After Stalin

Following the execution of Lavrentiy Beriya after Stalin's death in 1953, the KGB gradually became intertwined with leadership politics and has at key moments played a role in leadership successions.

As the agency which provides the leadership with bodyguards and secure communications, the KGB could also isolate the top leader at a critical moment. When the Politburo members in October 1964 chose to oust Khrushchev, the conspirators took care to prevent Khrushchev from mobilizing his allies (as he had done in June 1957). The party secretary for security, Alexander Shelepin called upon his protege, the KGB chief at that time, to cut off Khrushchev's communications from his vacation dacha to Moscow. After the coup Khrushchev was flown back to Moscow and expelled from the Politburo.

The KGB's resources were used in 1982 by Yuriy Andropov (who gained the political police job after Brezhnev's successful power play against Shelepin in 1967) to mount a campaign aimed at capturing the succession from Brezhnev's putative heir Chernenko. Andropov undertook in March 1982 a widely leaked investigation of corruption on the part of Brezhnev's political supporters and even Brezhnev's daughter Galina. Andropov's goal was to taint Brezhnev's associates and to demonstrate that Brezhnev could no longer protect his followers. The most publicized target was Galina Brezhneva's association with the colorful Boris the Gypsy, a shady figure involved in underworld jewel dealings. The campaign was successful, Andropov left the KGB when he acquired the party secretaryship in May. Memories of the 1930's are still strong enough that he could not move directly from the KGB into Brezhnev's shoes.

The Gorbachev-KGB Link

As his health declined, Andropov pushed Gorbachev as his successor but could not determine the succession. During Chernenko's reign, the KGB's disappointment and vexation over having lost its moment of glory with the death of Andropov was widely bruited. It was equally clear that the KGB as an institution sided with Gorbachev, viewing him as Andropov's heir. Its loyalties were repaid upon Gorbachev's accession in March of this year. Chebrikov, brought into the KGB with Andropov in 1967 and named by him as KGB chief in 1982, was promoted to full member of the Politburo this April, obviously as a member of Gorbachev's ruling coterie.

Two members of the Politburo--Chebrikov and Aliyev, who was the Azerbaydzhan KGB chief until he became the republic party

chief--have had professional experience in the KGB. Obviously, KGB prestige and influence is now high and its relations with Gorbachev are demonstrably supportive.

The Public's View of the KGB

Not surprisingly, the Soviet public's attitude toward the KGB is quite unlike that of western public opinion which is uniformly hostile to it as a repressive agency with an extraordinarily bloody past. With the exception of hardened Soviet dissidents who have dealt with low-level KGB operatives, the Soviet public tends to accept the high status and glamor accorded the KGB in the media. There is an entire school of literature, films, and TV glorifying the espionage and counter-intelligence role of the KGB. But the public's respect for the KGB rests largely on fear.

The KGB's Domestic Security Role

Like the party, the KGB is virtually everywhere in Soviet society. There are KGB units on every level of government. Every major factory and institution has its "first department" which handles security matters, including employee clearances and access to classified information. The KGB official who sits on every party committee probably has the last word on security issues, and even a republic first secretary is bound to respect the KGB representative on the republic party bureau.

As a true political police, KGB local units have a widespread net of informers who report on their fellow workers and neighbors. Citizens are encouraged to report deviant speech and behaviour to the authorities. Unauthorized assemblies and publications are searched out and terminated, sometimes with significant criminal penalties for the participants.

The KGB has organized special units to monitor religious organizations and nationalist activities. A voluminous literature exists abroad on these activities in addition to the documentation of the KGB suppression of political dissent and control over emigration.

The political police function extends to the armed forces in which a net of secret informants reports on moods and attitudes among the troops. Any security incident draws the attention of KGB investigators.

In addition to their security responsibilities, the KGB has special police jurisdiction over cases involving large amounts of foreign currency, gold, and jewels. This conveniently permitted Andropov in 1982 to investigate the scandals involving Brezhnev's daughter Galina. Otherwise, the regular police, headed by Brezhnev's crony Shchelokov, could have whitewashed the affair.

KGB Influence Over The Civilian Police

The KGB under Andropov began an extensive purge of the regular police following the ouster of MVD minister Shchelokov in December 1982. (Shchelokov was disgraced and reportedly committed suicide in December 1984 to avoid a trial for corruption.) The regular police or MVD is now headed by a former KGB official and several other KGB officials were transferred to the MVD's top leadership. In addition, a new political administration was created in the MVD and a large number of party members were detailed to police work in an effort to purge and upgrade the police which is now playing a larger role in Gorbachev's anti-corruption and anti-alcohol campaigns. There is no question about the superior status of the KGB compared to the MVD and its ability to intervene in the jurisdiction and processes of the MVD and the courts, but there is also a strong history of bad relations between the two police agencies which occasionally erupts in ugly incidents.

Foreign Intelligence and Counter Intelligence

Abroad, the KGB is especially active in intelligence collection--political, military, technical--under diplomatic, journalistic, and business cover. It is without doubt the world's largest and most active intelligence service, and it also draws upon the resources of its Warsaw Pact allies to complement its intelligence effort abroad.

KGB foreign reporting goes independently of foreign ministry reporting to Moscow where it is coordinated and submitted to the Politburo. KGB activities and reporting partly parallel and duplicate those of the Defense Ministry's Main Intelligence Administration (GRU) and inevitably there is rivalry between the two.

The KGB also engages in covert action "active measures" agent-of-influence operations, clandestine support of foreign political parties, and forgeries and bribery to get press placement of Soviet materials.

KGB counterintelligence work most often shows up in public accounts of agent arrests and the declaration of foreign diplomats persona non grata, but some of the counter-intelligence materials published in the Soviet press must be put into the prophylactic propaganda category, aimed primarily at Soviet citizens. However, Western diplomats in Moscow and Leningrad are primary, but not sole, targets of KGB counterintelligence efforts. Heavy surveillance, active attempts to penetrate the staff and buildings, and the creation of effective obstacles between Soviet citizens and foreigners are permanent elements in the KGB's operations.

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Soviet Views of the KGB

Soviet dissidents who have faced KGB harassment see it as the regime's arm of repression--often arbitrary in its actions.

Most Soviet citizens regard the KGB as a necessary part of a well-ordered state. While Soviet citizens regard the media with some of the skepticism that Americans have for advertising, the flood of books, films and TV glorifying the KGB's exploits in counter-intelligence and intelligence leaves its impression. But the public's respect for the KGB still rests mostly on fear.

Careerists look upon the secret police as an avenue for upward mobility. The KGB successfully recruits the cream of university graduates for careers in overseas intelligence work, careers often under diplomatic and journalistic guise which are regarded as more rewarding and interesting than most.

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NOMENKLATURA: THE USSR'S PATRONAGE SYSTEM

Structure

The Soviet institution of nomenklatura amounts to an encyclopedia of "plum books." Its rules dictate that all key jobs throughout the USSR--in the party bureaucracy, government, economy, cultural life, military or academic establishments, even agriculture--be reserved for candidates picked and approved by the supervisory party organ. Stalin developed this system of personnel patronage as a vehicle for gaining control of both party and society. His successors have enlarged on it to such an extent that it has no real parallel in the noncommunist world: the Soviet party machine has greater power in co-opting, blackballing and ejecting personnel than does the most exclusive club in the west. Inside, one is entitled to a lifestyle befitting the position; outside, one is relegated to the "masses," to scramble as the average Soviet for an existence. Ousted from the system, one is excluded from even marginal benefits available to the masses.

The so-called nomenklatura are the elite of the USSR, the most prominent and best rewarded people in each professional group, all the decision and policymakers. They fall into various categories:

- a) The political elite, consisting of the leaders of the party and government, along with the top party apparatchiki.
- b) The managerial elite, who actually operate the government, the economy, the armed forces, the police apparatus, and other parts of the Soviet system.
- c) The cultural and scientific elite, the artists, scientists, writers, performers, and scholars.

These groups differ in political influence, social status, prominence, and rewards. The political elite are those in the Communist hierarchy who enjoy decisive influence. The managerial elite, though not without political power, essentially occupies nonpolitical career tracks. Although the cultural and scientific elite wields relatively little political influence; it enjoys greater prominence: members of this group are often more visible and better paid than are the managers or political leaders.

The political and managerial elites are known in Soviet parlance as "leadership cadres". All in all they are estimated to number around 4 million. About 500,000 are top-level

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bureaucrats, half of them in the party apparatus itself. Another 500,000 hold government positions. Some 2 million are the economic managers who are regarded as the cream of the economic and technical intelligentsia. The rest occupy management or supervisory positions ranging from shop stewards to kolkhoz chairmen.

Getting Ahead

Ability and expertise are only one element in getting to the top in Soviet society. Conformity with the current party line and mastery of the techniques of maneuvering within the system on the one hand, plus personal patronage from within the nomenklatura itself on the other, are the aids on which the ambitious rely.

The leaders of the USSR have long viewed economic efficiency and consumer satisfaction as matters of secondary importance. Their primary objective has always been a maximization of the national power of the USSR. And the consolidation, expansion and preservation of their own power is justified as a means to that end. That in turn justifies the higher income and perquisites of the ruling class.

Life Style

The nomenklatura by and large enjoy a life style well above the drab level of reality faced by the average Soviet citizen. The upper crust has its cars and special access to goods and services. Its members move in a tight, private universe of suburban dachas, downtown co-operative apartments, exclusive clubs and vacation resorts. Its sons and daughters have preferred access to the better schools and often intermarry. Those further down the pecking order have similar special stores, housing, resorts and benefits befitting their rank.

Money income is the least important advantage of making it in the USSR. The real boons derive from a compendium of tangible and intangible privileges: greater freedom, better medical care, the opportunity to travel abroad and read access to domestic and imported goods unavailable to the average citizen at any time.

Many in the ruling class experience such a sheltered existence they have not the faintest idea how the rest of the country really lives. Others--the kolkhoz chairmen for example--are more directly exposed but still are far better off than their non-nomenklatura associates. Gorbachev has spearheaded a drive against the isolation of the apparatchiki from the masses, but the privileges of the Gorbachevs will unquestionably remain palatial by Soviet standards. Nor is there any real popular resentment of the advantages enjoyed by

Raisa and the other "wives of." since their life style is not flaunted before the public. The gap between the elite and the masses is studiously ignored by the media.

Other Side of the Coin

The material advantages enjoyed by the power elite would be reduced if a larger share of the national product were to be allocated to economic investment and mass consumption. As a result, the economic managers' advocacy of greater recognition of economic factors and for greater professional autonomy constantly runs into built-in opposition from the political decisionmakers.

Even deeper is the tension between the ruling elite and the prestigious intellectuals who advocate greater individual freedom and more personal property. Although many cultural figures are conformists and as jealous of their perks as the power elite, some have advocated an easing of the internal control system under the rubric of "de-Stalinization." One of their targets is the party apparatus and its total domination of the elite structure. The party ideologists for their part are determined to keep a tight rein on the social sciences and the arts; they see their mission as the preservation of doctrinal purity which in turn justifies the rule of the party, and of course, their own privileged existence.

- A generational conflict has also been developing within the nomenklatura itself given the marked age difference between the CPSU leadership and its rank and file. While about 40 percent of the party's 18 million members are under 40 years of age (6.9 million), there is no one under 50 in the top leadership at all. And while men and women are represented about equally within the educated strata of Soviet society, only 9 women are full members of the Central Committee. (Women make up 27 percent of the party membership.) Nor is any woman now included in the party's supreme leadership.

United We Stand

The interests of the nomenklatura are diverse: there are orthodox and pragmatic conservatives as well as moderate reformers within the policymaking bodies of the regime. They are frequently at odds among themselves, usually over questions which affect the status of different groupings within the nomenklatura itself. But there is no open opposition at any level or within any group to the system per se. After all, careers, lifestyle, future, and family well-being are all dependent on and a function of that system.

For the sake of efficiency, Gorbachev apparently is prepared to make certain concessions to dissatisfied elements of the elite. He has urged more operational autonomy for lower managerial personnel, and encouraged creative artists to be more realistic in their portrayals of life. The younger generation and women have been promised a larger role in the conduct of political affairs. In the field of domestic policy, the pressure is on for less cronyism and nepotism and more specialized knowledge and expertise as the major criterion for advancement. But the Gorbachev-led political elite is still part of the nomenklatura, and any basic reform of the system would threaten its power and its perks. Whatever changes Gorbachev might introduce-and even the smallest will run into opposition from some quarter-the nomenklatura as a whole will insist on retaining control of the social processes in the USSR. It cannot do otherwise and still preserve communist rule in the country.

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The USSR: Civil-Military Relations

Civil-military relations in the Soviet Union are replete with paradox. The military as an institution is a dominant force in national security decision-making, yet it is also under party control.

Civilian authority sets the broad outlines of defense policy but relies almost exclusively on military expertise to elaborate the military-technical side of strategy and doctrine. On military planning and technical assessments, there is no civilian counterweight to the General Staff.

Despite its internal bureaucratic politics, interservice rivalries, and long history of alliances and intrigues between individual military and civilian leaders, there is no evidence that the military has ever plotted to take power. The military as an institution has not aspired to rule. Nevertheless, it has sought to protect its own interests and professionalism.

In recent years, military figures have been much in the limelight. It has been primarily the arms control process and the civilian leadership's need for expert opinion which has put them there.

Anti-Bonapartist Tradition

There is a longstanding tradition of the importance of military power in Soviet life. Externally, Russian and now Soviet security and position in the world have rested primarily on military strength. Domestically, both Tsars and General Secretaries have played up military values and, when possible, their own military careers in order to buttress personal and regime authority.

Yet the military establishment itself is subject to more rigorous political controls than any other institution in the Soviet system. In both pre- and post- revolutionary societies, the military has been subservient to political authority.

This seeming inconsistency -- on the one hand, the Soviets emulate military values and, on the other, distrust the military as an institution -- reflects an anti-Bonapartist tradition in Soviet and Russian history. Indeed, the Bolsheviks who took power in 1917 frequently used

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analogies to the French revolution to discuss political developments in Russia, including the danger of a man on horseback taking over the revolution.

This wariness of the military stems in part from traditional revolutionary distrust of standing professional armies. Marx and Engels viewed standing armies as the tools of the 19th century monarchic-bourgeois states. Although their doctrine eventually evolved to strongly supporting the idea of a class-based revolutionary force, they left undefined the role of the armed forces in a post-revolutionary socialist society.

Lenin did not reconcile himself to the need for a standing army until after the 1917 revolution, and even then the Bolsheviks' first order of business was to destroy the old army. The early Bolsheviks moved cautiously in building the new Red Army, emphasizing the principles of voluntary recruitment and elected commanders -- thus nullifying efforts to turn the new army into an effective fighting force. When War Commissar Trotsky, with Lenin's approval, finally undertook to transform the Red Army into a centralized, efficient professional force, he also incorporated the idea of political officers at every rank who could check the actions of their military counterparts.

Checks and Balances

Today, a set of extensive institutional arrangements is in place intended to ensure civilian control over the military.

--The Main Political Administration (MPA) is the party's political watchdog in the armed forces. As Trotsky envisaged, political officers are assigned to every level down to battalion and in general act as representatives of the party. Although the MPA reports to the Ministry of Defense, it also functions as a distinct department of the CPSU Central Committee and is ultimately accountable to the Politburo for the military's political reliability.

--In addition to the MPA network, party and Komsomol membership is encouraged and widespread -- over ninety percent of officers and enlisted men belong to one or the other of these bodies.

--On top of all this, the KGB maintains its own secret agents throughout the military establishment.

These arrangements underscore the continuing importance for Soviet leaders of political loyalty over military interests. The gravest charge made against Marshal Zhukov before his fall from grace in 1957 was that he had sought to eliminate party control. More recently, Marshal Ogarkov's demotion from Chief of Staff a year ago was accompanied by intimations that he harbored "unpartylike tendencies."

Civil-Military Interaction at the Top

Even though it is under Party control, the military is one of the most highly organized and influential interest groups in the USSR. It has effectively used this influence to protect its own general interests (with regard to resource allocation, for instance) and professionalism.

Nevertheless, the military has only played an ancillary role in Soviet leadership consideration of broader policy questions. This is partly attributable to the fact that in upper levels of the party, the military carries relatively little weight. Only two professional military leaders have been full Politburo members: Zhukov (1956-57) and Grechko (1967-76). Ustinov, who succeeded Grechko as Defense Minister in 1976, was a civilian Politburo member who had spent his entire career dealing with defense production and was only given the military rank of Marshal when he became Defense Minister. The present Defense Minister, Marshal Sokolov, is a long-time career military officer. He was promoted to candidate member of the Politburo in April 1985, but is widely regarded as a transitional figure with little political clout.

Likewise, the military's representation on the Central Committee is minimal. In 1981, only 30 professional military officers were candidate or full members, about six percent of total Central Committee membership.

The party's predominance over the military has allowed civilian leaders to meddle in military affairs at times. Stalin, of course, decimated the high command in the purges of the late 1930s, and after WWII moved quickly to reduce Marshal Zhukov's stature.

Zhukov later regained his influence under Khrushchev. In 1957, Zhukov as Defense Minister was instrumental in helping the First Secretary put down a challenge from the "anti-party group." Khrushchev, however, soon ousted his erstwhile ally and undertook to overturn measures instituted under Zhukov to bolster professional autonomy within the armed forces. Khrushchev even sought to intervene personally in the formulation of military strategy, though he did not attempt to create an institutional rival to the General Staff.

Gorbachev Continues the Tradition

Gorbachev presumably assumed the function of chairman of the Defense Council (where actual decision-making on national security issues -- including arms control -- appears to be centered) and, in effect, supreme commander-in-chief when he became General Secretary. Events over the past year do not

suggest that the military has enjoyed greater-than-usual influence as a result of the civilian leadership transition.

Although Gorbachev has pushed for increased industrial investment as the number one priority in the next five-year plan (1986-90), he has also spoken out against cutting defense programs. At a June Central Committee meeting, he reaffirmed that "requisite funds" for the country's defense would be maintained. In his V-E Day address, Gorbachev stated that the importance of a "military-political" upbringing for Soviet citizens was growing.

Following the July 1 removal of Grigoriy Romanov as the CPSU Secretary responsible for military affairs, Gorbachev has moved vigorously to assert his leadership in this sphere. On July 10 he delivered an address to an unusual meeting of top military officers in Minsk and immediately afterward a number of key changes in military personnel began surfacing. Following the pattern of his personnel appointments in the civilian sphere, he replaced several older military leaders with younger -- in some cases relatively junior -- people.

--Army General Yepishev, 77, was replaced as head of the MPA by 57-year-old Colonel General Lizichev. Lizichev was promoted over several more senior officers in the MPA.

--Army General Maksimov, age 61, has apparently replaced 70-year-old Tolubko as head of the Strategic Rocket Forces. Together with Yepishev, Tolubko has been put out to pasture at the Main Inspectorate of the MOD.

--Army General Lushev, previously commander of the Moscow military district, replaced army general Zaytsev as head of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany.

--The replacement of 74-year-old Makeyev, the editor of the military paper Krasnaya Zvezda since 1955, removed another pillar of the military establishment.

There have also been reports that 74-year-old Defense Minister Sokolov is sick and perhaps on the way out. Whatever the case, the Soviet press reported that Sokolov was present at Gorbachev's meeting with the high command of the Belorussian military district on July 10.

The Soviet Military: Coming of Age

The military has gradually assumed a more important role in national security decision-making over the past two decades and, in the process, has assumed a higher public profile. This has largely been due to the arms control process and

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increasingly sophisticated weaponry which have generated the civilian leadership's need for more military expertise and advice. The military has consequently also become more involved in decision-making on arms control itself. Because of the General Staff's technical expertise and its function, in effect, as executive secretariat to the Defense Council, the military is well positioned to argue its views and try to shape the internal debate in this area.

In the early days, the role of the military in the arms control process appeared to be limited to exercising a veto option over any given proposal, after which it stepped back. In the first SALT negotiations, sensitive information on the Soviet side appeared to be strictly compartmented and there was little interaction between military and civilian elements. When Ogarkov was a member of the Soviet delegation in the early 1970s, he once appealed to an American negotiator not to discuss Soviet classified information in front of Soviet civilian team members.

In recent years, however, the Soviets seem to have adopted more of an American style in the internal arms control process. Now the military is much more involved in interacting on an ongoing basis with other components of the Soviet national security structure both in Moscow and on the various negotiating teams in Geneva, Vienna, and Stockholm. The MFA has its own stable of arms control experts, and the major Soviet negotiating teams are all led by diplomats with many years of negotiating experience.

The military has also assumed a more prominent role in explaining and advancing Soviet positions on military matters, particularly with regard to the arms control process. By the beginning of the INF period, it was Defense Minister Ustinov who in October 1979 in Pravda began to lay out the public argument that an INF balance already existed. Much of the Soviet INF argument since then has been framed around the assertion that the American deployment would upset this balance, with Defense Ministry officials taking the lead in its public formulation.

Both former Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov and now his successor Akhromeyev, as well as Col. Gen. N.F. Chervov, head of the Defense Ministry's arms control directorate, have been active public spokesmen for Soviet positions. Far from staying in the background, as would have been traditionally expected, they have been at the cutting edge of publicly developing and explicating Soviet positions.

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Role of the CPSU

The Communist party is the core institution of the Soviet political system, locus of the levers of power and prestige in the USSR. Every branch of the bureaucracy--state, economic, military and police--is subordinated to its control. At the same time, the party is the guardian and interpreter of the Marxist ideology and responsible for indoctrinating the population with the ideas and values of Soviet-style communism.

The CPSU now numbers over 18 million members (including 700,000 candidates, i.e., probationers), encompassing about 6 percent of the adult population. The party does not solicit adherents; it chooses its members. Prospective candidates are carefully screened. Each must be recommended by three persons who have already been party members for at least five years. White-collar workers are prime targets for recruitment. They made up close to half of the membership in 1983, even though accounting for only a quarter of the general population.

Of about 426,000 primary party organizations, 110,000 are in factories, transportation, and the like, while 48,000 are on farms. The remainder are in various institutions, administrative offices, and military formations. Each CPSU member is expected to stimulate production within his own primary organization; these units in turn provide the central authorities with a vehicle for constant pressure on lower echelon officials.

Every member has the duty to "master Marxist-Leninist theory, raise his ideological level, and contribute to the molding and rearing of the man of communist society." The political training of communists ranges from short-term evening and correspondence courses to the university-level Higher Party School in Moscow which has a regular four-year curriculum. Training at fulltime party schools is regarded as so important that middle-aged officials holding responsibilities as great as those of the governor of an American state are sent to the schools before being given new assignments.

Mass Organizations

Several mass organizations exist outside the party framework, but operate under its close and direct supervision. The Communist Youth League, the Komsomol, is the most important of these. Its 41-million membership includes a majority of the country's adolescents (aged 14-18) and a substantial minority of the 19-26 age group. The Komsomol not only serves to indoctrinate the youth but it is also a testing and screening agency for prospective CPSU members. Furthermore, the Youth League exercises tutelage over the Pioneers, the organization to which all children of primary school age (10-15) belong.

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The Soviet trade unions, with some 130 million members, serve the party by stimulating production and prompting "socialist emulation," competitive campaigns aimed at raising productivity. They also administer social insurance funds, and to a limited extent defend worker rights. Other mass organizations effectively run by the party include the Knowledge Society (Znaniye), an adult-education body with over 1 million members, and DOSAAF (Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force, and Navy), which fosters military-type sports for civilians and school children.

Party Structure

Theoretically, the CPSU's sovereign organ is the party congress which, by statute, meets every five years. It is a gathering of some 5000 delegates which, among other functions, elects the party's Central Committee, the body nominally responsible for policymaking in the interim between congresses. The Central Committee (470 members - 319 full and 151 alternates) in turn formally elects the members of smaller executive bodies to handle the day-to-day work--in particular the Politburo for policy decisions, and the Secretariat to oversee and control party and government operations.

In practice, however, these two latter bodies are in reality the decisionmaking organs of the party, the peak of the CPSU's nearly perfect bureaucratic pyramid. The Politburo and Secretariat control the appointment of the regional secretaries throughout the country and, through them, the lesser secretaries down to the lowest echelons. The Secretariat sends binding "recommendations" for major personnel changes to the non-Russian republics or regional-level party offices, and often has its executives monitor the electoral plenums at those levels which implement its "recommendations."

The whole process of electing the party committees that choose the secretaries at each level is actually controlled by the very secretaries who are supposed to be elected by those same subordinates. Each non-Russian republic or regional party headquarters has an Organizational Party Work Department to manage the process. And the top leadership in Moscow controls the election of delegates to the sovereign party congress, which, through the Central Committee it elects, technically elects the General Secretary.

In the 5-year intervals between congresses, supreme authority in the CPSU is formally delegated to the Central Committee to which most of the important officials of the USSR belong. They are drawn from all segments of the bureaucracy, but most come from the party apparatus itself. (The party

apparatus is the body of fulltime officials that arranges implementation of decisions, manipulates elections and controls discussions in party meetings.)

The Central Committee's brief and infrequent plenary meetings (two-three per year) rule out its management of day-to-day decision-making. Consequently, the real locus of Soviet power is the Politburo. It is now composed of 13 voting members and 5 alternates, and meets weekly (usually on Thursday afternoons) to discuss and decide on major issues. The General Secretary (Gorbachev) is de facto chairman of the Politburo, which in recent years has seemed to reach most of its decisions by consensus.

The Party Secretariat--a sort of NSC staff estimated to have as high as 10,000 employees--sets the Politburo agenda, provides the requisite documentation and oversees implementation of Politburo decisions. Of the 11 Secretaries, Gorbachev, Ligachev and Ryzhkov are full Politburo members; 2 of the 5 Politburo alternates are also central party Secretaries. (Six Party Secretaries hold no status in the Politburo).

With the exception of the General Secretary, each of the Secretaries exercises supervision over a specific sphere of operations. He does so via departments of the Secretariat which run parallel to all major state bodies and administer key areas of Soviet society and foreign affairs. A crucial function of the Secretariat's Organizational Party Work Department, for example, is controlling the assignments of the high- and medium-level personnel to party and Komsomol organizations, as well as to state and trade union agencies.

Equally close to the heart of party operations are the Secretariat departments for ideology and indoctrination. These include the Propaganda, Culture, and Science and Educational Institutions Departments. Their function is to assure that every medium for conveying of ideas is actively and properly promoting the objectives of the regime.

Personal rivalries and frictions permeate the CPSU. Corruption is known to be rife from top to bottom. And there has been an increasing tendency among the youth to regard the Komsomol as a boring and restrictive institution. Nevertheless, the CPSU has succeeded in creating a strong amalgam of self-interest and pride in achievement which binds many to the Soviet system. Gorbachev is clearly eager to overhaul the party apparatus to make it more responsive to economic management, committed to reform and to rejuvenate its ranks. But neither he nor the apparatchiki have any intent of introducing changes that threaten to loosen their present grip on every facet of Soviet life.

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The Soviet Military:

Status, Role and Relationship to the Party

The Military Tradition

Since the beginning of the 18th century the military has maintained a more pervasive role in Russian society than in most other modern European states. That tradition, to which Gorbachev is heir, is continued by the Soviet military establishment and contributes to a confluence of views and goals between the military and the Party in the USSR.

The military in Russian history has played a signal role in state construction and expansion in addition to its traditional role of state defense. Peter the Great literally rebuilt a modern Russian state around the military. The military continued to be the primary instrument of Russian state growth even after 1917, becoming an important tool in forging the new Soviet state under the Communist Party. In recent years the military has continued to play this role through the use of military aid to support the expansion of state influence and status in the post-WW II world.

The military in Russian history also has performed the role of defender of the ideological interests of the dominant political group within the state. In the post-1917 era it has functioned as an instrument of the Communist Party, initially in the struggle to suppress armed opposition at home, and subsequently to spread Marxist-Leninist influence abroad.

The military has been an administrative and organizational model for all spheres of state activity throughout the history of imperial Russia and the USSR.

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- o Military district boundaries have been congruent with the primary geo-administrative subdivisions of the state before and after 1917, and the governing organs of each have interlocked.
- o Lenin adopted a military structure for the Party in 1905, and even today it is not unusual to see the CPSU Secretariat described as the "General Staff" of the Party.
- o The Five-Year State Economic Plan was originally based upon and modeled after the Red Army's national mobilization plan, and military economists from the Red Army Staff (later the General Staff) taught courses in economic planning at the State Planning Committee throughout the 1930s.
- o Many of the national infrastructure ministries, such as the communications, railways, roadbuilding and maritime ministries and Aeroflot have an internal structure closely resembling the military; their heads are flag rank military officers; and they are merged with or transformed into military formations in wartime.

Political Control Over the Military

The Communist Party from the inception of the Soviet state has concerned itself with the question of control over the military. In addition to fostering loyalty to the state and its principles among the military, the Party has pursued two other approaches. First, it has created both Party and police control mechanisms within the military. Second, it has attempted to recruit the best part of the officer corps into the Party.

In order to secure control over the military in the early years of the regime, the Party created a so-called "nomenklatura" system for the officer

corps, as it did for all other institutions throughout society. This system identifies key ranks and assignments that can only be filled with Party members, and for which candidates must receive prior Party approval. The nomenklatura system for the military and police is administered by the Administrative Organs Department of the Party's Central Committee Secretariat. Before an officer can be promoted to flag rank, for example, the Administrative Organs Department must approve his promotion. In addition, if an officer is selected for the General Staff Service, regardless of rank, he must receive prior approval from the Administrative Organs Department and have been a Party member in good standing for at least two years.

The Main Political Administration (MPA) of the armed forces and its corps of political officers constitute a key element of the control mechanism. The head of the MPA simultaneously holds the status of a Central Committee department head and a First Deputy Minister of Defense. He reports to the Minister of Defense on military matters and to the CPSU Central Committee Secretariat on political matters. Political officers, formerly known as political commissars, serve at all echelons of the armed forces from the General Staff to the company level. They have the same dual chain of command as the head of the MPA. Originally tasked with ensuring the loyalty of the officer corps, today the political officer is more concerned with the political performance and orthodoxy of party members in the military, questions of morale and morality among the forces, and political training and education. The political officer writes "political fitness reports" on the officer corps which are forwarded to the Administrative Organs Department of the Central Committee. Gorbachev's recent appointment of General Lizichev to

replace General Yepishev as head of the MPA may signal party concern that the morale and readiness of the armed forces were not being energetically cared for by the aging Yepishev, who had headed the MPA since 1962.

Party control of the military was also enhanced by the establishment within the military of special departments of the secret police, known today as the DOKGB. These officers serve at each echelon of the military and are known only to a limited number of trusted military officers, their own KGB chief, and the appropriate section of the Administrative Organs Department of the Central Committee. They provide security reports on the officer corps as part of the nomenklatura system. Ironically, these DOKGB officers are themselves included in the nomenklatura system which they help to enforce.

The military council of each military district includes the Party First Secretary from the political subdivision or republic with which that district conforms geographically. Thus, the Party apparatus most equivalent to state governments in the US interjects itself into deliberations of the military district command. In this way, up and coming military commanders come to the attention of rising Party leaders, and personal networks are formed that transcend the formal organizations each represents. It is probable that Gorbachev established his first working relationships with the military when he was in the Party Secretariat of the Stavropol Region in southern Russia.

While building an extensive network of control mechanisms, the Party also has pursued a policy of coopting the officer corps into its ranks. By 1930 over 50 percent of the officer corps were Party members. By the onset of the military purges in 1938 the number was 79 percent, and had risen to about 85 percent at the end of World War II. For the past quarter century about 90

percent of the officer corps have been Party members. In effect, these officers' individual careers are tied in large part to the Party. They hold the same basic values and goals as other Party members, and the senior military leadership constitutes an element of the state and Party leadership.

This meshing of the officer corps within the Party body politic has dramatically shaped the course of Party-military relations. In the early years of the Soviet Republic, when Party membership in the officer corps was low and a significant number of the officers were ex-Tsarist military, the Party--through the commissars and secret police--played a watchdog role. By 1930 this relationship had begun to change as the Party membership lists claimed a majority of the officer corps and the number of ex-Tsarist officers declined significantly. The role of commissars and police became one of enforcers of orthodoxy within the Party. This condition gave the purge of the officer corps in 1938 more the cast of an internecine struggle within the Party than a Party-military conflict.

Although World War II is often viewed as a major force in building loyalty to the Party within the military, it might better be seen as proof that the policies of the Party toward the military before 1941 had succeeded. The overwhelmingly Communist officer corps led the military to victory, and in the process identified the Communist Party with the patriotic traditions of Russian society. Most of the political leadership in post-World War II USSR served as military officers in some capacity in World War II, and this service, as in the case of Brezhnev, became a positive factor in their political lives. General Secretary Gorbachev represents the first generation

of Soviet political leaders which has not served in the military. As this new generation of political leaders comes to the fore, the lack of personal military experience is likely to make more important the institutional mechanisms through which the military influences policymaking.

Another important aspect of the interweaving of Party and military is the place of military leaders in Soviet society. Since the officer corps is part of the dominant political group, plays a significant role in all the Party's voluntary and elected organizations, and has privileged access to scarce consumer goods, it has little incentive to be disloyal to either Party or state. This is not to suggest that an individual may not become active in politics, representing the parochial interests of one or another subset of the military. Marshal Zhukov, who achieved Politburo membership as a Khrushchev supporter, threatened to use the military to resolve the issue of internal Party leadership, causing Khrushchev to remove him. The military remained loyal to Khrushchev, contributing to Zhukov's downfall. More recently, the September 1984 transfer of General Staff Chief Marshal Ogarkov to the less important and powerful post of head of the Western Theater of Military Operations may have signaled differences between Ogarkov and the Chernenko leadership, possibly over matters of defense and foreign policy. If so, then his recent rumored restoration to the central military apparatus would signal that he has gained the support of the new leadership. In each of these cases it would be a mistake to see a conflict between the "Party" and the "military." Rather, it appears that personal relationships, the policy agreement or differences these reflect, and individual competence are the determining factors in the rise or fall of military personalities from high

office in the USSR, not a mythical Party-military conflict.

Military Influence on Policymaking

The military affects policymaking in the USSR through a wide range of informal and formal mechanisms. It exercises a passive influence because of its identification with the patriotic traditions of Russian history, the legitimate defense concerns of the state, and the interests of the Party. Party leaders, therefore, cannot afford to appear unconcerned with the military's needs. In addition, so long as the military is viewed as an administrative and organizational model, the importance of various policy positions supported by the military will be reinforced in the minds of Party leaders and bureaucrats alike.

By virtue of its sheer enormity as a consumer of resources, the Soviet military establishment exercises a strong influence on policymaking at every level. Military economists review every aspect of the five-year and annual economic plans to assure that the military's minimal needs are met. It is likely that policymakers seeking to shift resources to other sectors will be forced to develop doctrinal justifications to support their views, as did Khrushchev in the late 1950s, when he shifted resources away from conventional forces into the new Strategic Rocket Forces and the civilian sector. Given the current problems with the Soviet economy, Gorbachev is likely to be faced with similar difficulties if he tries to reallocate resources away from growth to military spending.

The General Staff system provides the military with its most important institutional influence on policymaking. All branches of the armed forces and elements of the central military apparatus are subordinate to the General

Staff in its role as the personal staff of the Defense Minister and executive organ of the Supreme High Command. The General Staff not only centralizes decisionmaking within the military, it also centralizes and controls the flow of military information to the outside. The Minister, when participating in Politburo deliberations, draws on the General Staff for support on all matters. Also, the General Staff provides the Secretariat for the Defense Council--a body roughly equivalent to the National Security Council-- comprising key Party, military, and economic leaders. In addition, because all senior command and staff positions in the armed forces must be filled by officers of the General Staff Service, this system mutes interservice rivalries that might otherwise dilute the military's influence.

The military also influences the development of policy through the corps of military advisers to the Council of Ministers. These officers from the General Staff Service serve on the various state committees and commissions attached to the Council of Ministers, which oversee such diverse functions as economic planning, state material reserves, foreign economic relations, and defense and heavy industries. In each case there is a military department staffed by the military advisers, which has access to all plans and data of the committee or commission. Through this system the senior military leadership has access to a constant flow of state economic data and a conduit into the levels of the state apparatus where policy initiatives are staffed.

The military's influence in Soviet industry is legion. Many of the defense industrial ministries and their subcomponents are or have been headed by military officers. Movement back and forth between the military and these establishments is not uncommon. For example, the current Deputy Minister of

Defense for Armaments served for years in various industrial posts including that of Deputy Minister of the Radio Industry. The late Defense Minister, Marshal Ustinov, served as Minister of Armaments during and after World War II, before becoming the senior Party Secretary for military and defense industrial matters.

In addition to occupying management positions in industry, the military exerts its influence through the system of military representatives. This body of technical officers, estimated at about 30,000, serves in plants, laboratories, and design bureaus throughout the USSR. Their role is to assure that the military's standards are being met wherever goods are being produced for the armed forces, from gun tubes to ice cream. Organized in a territorial network, these officers constitute yet another pipeline of the central military leadership into Soviet society.

Any review of Party-military relations in the USSR today makes two conditions apparent. First, the military--in the form of its officer corps--is a completely subservient component of the Party. Second, the military exercises a profound influence on policymaking, formally and informally, at every level. Given these conditions, it is difficult to conceive of a situation where the military would perceive of and pursue its interests separate from or to the detriment of the Party.

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By GH, NARA, Date 6/21/06

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Leadership Politics and the Role of the Communist Party

The CPSU as a Mass Institution

Having started out as a conspiratorial group of revolutionaries under Lenin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) has become a mass organization. Currently there are over 18 million party members; about one in twelve Soviet citizens and about one in five adult males belong to the party. Among the political, economic, and intellectual elite membership is virtually one hundred percent. [REDACTED]

While the party prides itself on the number of workers and collective farmers in the party, its real core is the so-called nomenklatura, the group of officials holding positions requiring party confirmation. Roughly speaking, they can be divided into two broad categories: full-time party workers--mainly party secretaries--and other important bureaucrats in organizations such as the soviets, the trade unions, the ministries, the military and the diplomatic corps. [REDACTED]

The Decisionmaking Hub

The key decisionmakers in the party are the General Secretary and the members of the Politburo and Secretariat. These officials are nominally elected by the Central Committee which, under party rules, is the CPSU's supreme decisionmaking body in the periods between its quinquennial congresses. In fact, however, the General Secretary, Politburo, and Secretariat are able to control the

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selection of the Central Committee that theoretically oversees them. [Redacted]

The General Secretary: The General Secretary is de facto head of the party, and as such is the most important man in the USSR.

- o The General Secretary chairs Politburo and Secretariat meetings, giving him considerable power over both the formulation and the implementation of policy.
- o Although rarely identified as such in the Soviet media, the General Secretary is Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Gorbachev has presumably had this post from the time of his election. As General Secretary, he also chairs the Defense Council, the body that formulates military-economic and defense policy.

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During Brezhnev's final years and under Andropov and Chernenko, the General Secretary was also President--giving him a formal government position to go with his actual power. While Gorbachev has passed up the Presidency for now, he may eventually assume this post, or perhaps even assume the Premiership--the head of the government bureaucracy--as Khrushchev did during his tenure. [Redacted]

A General Secretary's power is in some ways greater than that of the US President. He does not have to deal with an assertive Congress or face criticism from the media. There are, however,

limits on his powers and he serves at the sufferance of the Politburo and the Central Committee which elected him. As Khrushchev found in 1964, a party leader who alienates both his Politburo colleagues and the Central Committee can be ousted from office by a determined group of conspirators. [REDACTED]

Building a Powerbase

As Khrushchev's experience indicates, the General Secretary cannot work alone or against his Politburo colleagues. An effective General Secretary must, therefore, be responsive to the views of other Politburo members or he must promote his allies and proteges into the leadership to establish a working majority:

- o As Brezhnev became ensconced in power, he grew more confident of his ability to act independently. However, he always took pains to cultivate good relations with key bureaucratic groups by guaranteeing them political security and being sympathetic to expansion of their bureaucratic empires.
- o Andropov attempted to break with Brezhnev's approach, realizing that it had led to economic stagnation and widespread corruption. The continuing presence of influential Brezhnevites, like then "second secretary" Chernenko and Premier Tikhonov forced him to move cautiously, however, and to concentrate on bringing in personnel loyal to him.
- o Chernenko returned to the Brezhnev model, attempting to cement loyalty by slowing up the pace of personnel change, and allowing policymaking initiative to pass to other

Politburo members like Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defense Minister Ustinov, and Secretary Gorbachev.

- o Gorbachev has picked up where Andropov left off. Building on his mentor's early personnel moves, he has engineered the ouster of his chief rival, Secretary Romanov, and the addition of several of his allies and proteges to the leadership in record time. His earliest moves show a willingness to push controversial policies, even at the risk of alienating his Politburo colleagues and important bureaucracies. [REDACTED]

The Politburo: Gorbachev's most powerful colleagues are his fellow Politburo members. Currently, there are 13 full members and five candidate members of this body. In addition to the General Secretary, the Premier and the President, the Politburo now includes four other party secretaries--two full and two candidate members--one First Deputy Premier, the heads of three of the largest republic or regional party organizations, the Foreign and Defense Ministers, the head of the KGB, and the Minister of Culture. The six party secretaries who are not Politburo members evidently also participate in Politburo meetings on a regular basis. [REDACTED]

In a system where caution is the watchword and centralization is almost a religious belief, nearly all problems get bucked up to the Politburo. As a result, the two dozen or so men who attend its sessions run the Soviet Union in a real sense. They are not politicians in the Western sense, who are adept at public speaking and communicating with constituencies on whom they rely for

election. While some leaders like Gorbachev possess such skills, it has traditionally been bureaucratic skills that have contributed to their rise. The ability to make an institution work despite the inertia and over-regulation of the system has been crucial to their advancement. [REDACTED]

From a variety of sources, we know that the the Politburo usually meets once a week on Thursday morning to deal with a wide range of issues from the most mundane to the most dramatic.

- o Published agendas indicate that the Politburo's business ranges from approval of its members' meetings with foreign leaders to the endorsement of the production of a new model color television or the increased production of storage sheds for agriculture.
- o In discussing Politburo procedure with Western reporters in the 1970s, Brezhnev said that an attempt is made to come to consensus and few votes are ever taken. Items that prove contentious are apparently remanded for additional staff work. It is possible, however, that Gorbachev, who appears more determined to press through controversial changes, could have a major impact on traditional procedure.
- o Despite the urgency of decisionmaking during foreign policy crises, the "collective leadership" has been actively involved. In 1968, for instance, Politburo members were brought in from outside Moscow to take a decision on the crisis in Czechoslovakia, [REDACTED]
- o The Politburo also plays a pivotal role in routine [REDACTED]

diplomacy. It regularly sets policy for upcoming negotiating sessions, like the Geneva arms talks, and will certainly discuss the upcoming summit. [REDACTED]

The Secretariat: The Secretariat is the second key institution at the pinnacle of power. Chaired by the General Secretary, it deals with day-to-day operations of the party bureaucracy and touches on all aspects of political life. The Secretariat does most of the staff work for the Politburo, preparing the Politburo's agenda, processing its decisions, and seeing to their implementation. Many of the decisions bucked to the top, but not quite important enough for Politburo consideration, are decided in the Secretariat. Personnel appointments and other important policy decisions are in practice hammered out at this level and only forwarded to the Politburo for formal approval. [REDACTED]

Currently, there are three so-called "senior secretaries"-- that is secretaries who are also full Politburo members. They oversee the eight other party secretaries and a bureaucracy which includes 24 departments. These departments conduct the party's day to day operations falling into the following broad categories: national security and foreign affairs; ideology; industry; agriculture; and internal party affairs. They act as the party's eyes and ears. Although Andropov reportedly wanted to curtail the party involvement in the minutiae of running the country, no efforts have yet been made to pare back this bureaucracy. [REDACTED]

The Central Committee: The party Central Committee in theory has the most power--it elects the Politburo and Secretariat and

chooses the General Secretary. The reality is quite different and only in very rare cases--for example in 1957 when it overrode the Politburo's decision to oust Khrushchev--has it exercised its formal powers. [REDACTED]

The Central Committee includes the five hundred or so most important members of the political elite. Although some Western scholars have compared it to the US Congress or a Western parliament, the comparison is misleading. The Central Committee meets only briefly, usually twice a year, and normally rubberstamps the decision of the Politburo and Secretariat. A better comparison might be to the assemblies of the nobility in medieval Europe--this modern Soviet elite, however, is composed of government ministers, regional party leaders, key military officers and diplomats, with a handful of token workers. The Central Committee acts as a soundingboard for policies made in the Kremlin. The leadership has a strong interest in keeping it informed and sympathetic because, in most cases, its members are the bureaucrats who will carry out the Politburo's policies. [REDACTED]

The Lower Rungs of the Party Apparatus

While the party apparatus below the top has little input in policymaking, it plays the critical role in implementing Politburo and Secretariat policies. At the outset of the revolution, Lenin outlined a theory of "transmission belts" whereby the party would control the actions of the mass institutions, the government, trade unions, and the economy. It is in this capacity that the lower party committees, which include the leaders of these other bureaucracies, play their crucial role. In essence, the lower

committees and their first secretaries act like miniature Politburos and Secretariats in their own right:

- o [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] nearly every local problem eventually ends up on the desk of the party first secretary.
- o Despite criticism of overinvolvement of the party committees in state affairs, the party is still being enjoined to play the leading role in modernizing Soviet society. [REDACTED]

So long as policy is made in the party and handed down from on high, representatives of all other institutions will remain subordinate to party bureaucrats and dependent on their clout to solve the myriad of problems stemming from the complexity of the planned economy and the over-centralization of the system. [REDACTED]

Whither the Party?

Gorbachev is clearly intent on keeping the party in its dominant position, although he apparently envisions the party less as a ideological watchdog and more as a motor of economic change.

- o There is general agreement among Soviets and East European who know him that he takes a pragmatic approach to issues rather than referring to Marxist dogma. He reportedly intends to promote likeminded party officials.
- o He has called on the party to do the strategic planning for the modernization of the economic system, acting as a driving force in the S&T revolution. He is bringing capable managers and economic experts, such as Secretary Ryzhkov, into key party positions despite their lack of extensive background in party affairs.

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o While calling for a "revolutionary" approach to modernizing the Soviet economy, he has made it clear that he does not intend to dismantle central planning or or take other steps which would threaten the primacy of the party bureaucracy.

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The Soviet Ruling Class: Nomenklatura

The ruling class in the Soviet Union today--the hundreds of thousands of Party-appointed bureaucrats who control the lives of all Soviet citizens and organizations--has reigned more or less without interruption since the late 1930s. The beginnings of this class, rising from the ashes of Stalin's mass terror and constant purges, were difficult to discern at that time. This was when Winston Churchill made his famous remark about Russia being a "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." And in fact it was not possible then to second-guess the motives and designs of the unpredictable dictator, who seemed determined to put his domestic opponents off-balance by keeping his political establishment in a state of permanent instability. Yet, the gathering clouds of a world war forced Stalin to prepare the country against the anticipated storming by Nazi Germany, and in the process was born the ruling class that survives to this day.

Studies by Western scholars and government analysts typically describe today's ruling class in the USSR as "Stalinist." Analysis of the backgrounds and careers of the Soviet elite establishment has shown conclusively that the most senior leaders over the past four decades gained their positions either by accommodating to the political goals of Stalin himself (e.g., Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Kosygin) or by attaching themselves

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to the "tail" of factions or groupings headed by Stalinist leaders (e.g., Chernenko, Tikhonov, Gorbachev). Entrance into the elite has invariably resulted from such accommodation, and not from challenging the status quo.

Understanding the unique political instrument known as the nomenklatura helps to explain why the Soviet regime has produced a ruling class that has been so consistently Stalinist over a period of more than four decades. This instrument is the key to the Soviet Communist Party's unified personnel system. Like all instruments, its application and effectiveness depend a great deal on how it is wielded.

The nomenklatura is relatively simple in concept but, as is shown below, complex in its ramifications. According to one Soviet administrative handbook, it is "a list of persons whose ranks are confirmed by higher authorities." Another Soviet textbook for Communist Party members elaborates on this politically sensitive subject as follows:

"The nomenklatura is a list of the highest positions. Candidates for these positions are examined by various party committees, recommended, and confirmed. These nomenklatura party committee members can be relieved of their positions only by authorization of their committees. Persons elevated to the nomenklatura are those in key positions."

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This theoretical definition of the nomenklatura omits several crucial points. For example, if it is a list of the "highest" positions, which is the highest approving authority? The answer, of course, lies in the hierarchical nature of the political establishment, best viewed as a pyramid at the top of which sits the General Secretary. As head of the Politburo, he has the ultimate authority in political appointments. Thus, positions in the Communist Party and state that rate membership in the party's putatively highest committee, the Central Committee, are approved by the next higher authority--the Politburo, which the Central Committee "elects" to conduct the party's day-to-day business. An official could not become a Central Committee member, however, without the ultimate approval of the General Secretary, whom the Central Committee "elects" to direct the work of the Politburo as well as the Party Secretariat.

6. This bureaucratic, legalistic facet of the Soviet hierarchical system helps to throw light on how Stalin and his successors in the top party post have managed to place their personal stamp on the ruling elite over the years. It is reinforced by the statutory mandate of the Secretariat (not the Politburo) to "select, place, and train" the party's cadres. This answers another question not addressed in the theoretical definition: who ultimately forwards the names of candidates to the "various party committees" to be "examined, recommended, and confirmed?" It is the party secretariats at all levels,

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beginning at the top with the Central Committee Secretariat, headed by the General Secretary.

Considering the vagueness of the theoretical definitions about the "highest" and "key" positions of the nomenklatura "list," an outsider might estimate that it comprises the approximately 500 jobs that rate Central Committee status, or at most the roughly 5,000 positions held by delegates elected to a typical party congress every 5 years. In fact, however, the nomenklatura is much larger. One published Soviet account indicated that in October 1947 (i.e., soon after the political system had assumed its present general structure) the nomenklatura of the Central Committee--posts to be filled over which the Central Committee, including the Politburo and Secretariat, had authority--comprised about 40,000 positions. This number presumably has increased as Communist Party membership and the bureaucracy have grown since then.

In fact, the nomenklatura extends down to the lowest levels of the political establishment, so that virtually any position of any importance is controlled by the next echelon, right up to the very top. One former Soviet insider who recently completed a comprehensive study of the nomenklatura system estimates the total number of controlled positions at three quarters of a million. In his view, it is the existence of the nomenklatura that has resulted in the emergence of a privileged "new class" of rulers, to borrow from the phrase used decades ago by the

disenchanted Yugoslav Communist, Milovan Djilas.

As the above discussion implies, the nomenklatura is actually an officially sanctioned system of political patronage. Using it carefully, a General Secretary can gradually appoint his followers and allies to key positions and, over time, create a Central Committee that largely consists of officials beholden to him for their positions. Brezhnev skillfully employed this tool to advance former associates from the Ukraine and Moldavia, and even his relatives, to some of the "highest" positions, including those conferring Central Committee status and privilege.

Besides encouraging cronyism and even nepotism, the nomenklatura system strongly promotes a certain sameness in the political and social traits of the appointers and the appointees. This tendency is reflected in the backgrounds of leading Soviet officials appointed since Stalin's time, the vast majority of whom have had an engineering or technical education. This has been carried to such an extreme that even one of Brezhnev's foreign policy assistants was a graduate of a railway engineering school. (Perhaps equally significant was the school's location--in the Brezhnev bailiwick of Dnepropetrovsk.) The system is designed, it appears, to discourage diversity of views and to exclude broad-minded persons with far-reaching ideas.

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In short, there are no philosopher-kings waiting in the wings to advance to the highest positions of leadership. Even the legally trained Gorbachev, a rare exception among the engineers who populate the Stalinist ruling elite, had to accommodate to the demands of the nomenklatura in order to make a political career, attending an agricultural institute and advancing through a long train of positions in agriculture before becoming General Secretary. Such is the power of the nomenklatura, which puts overwhelming value on bureaucratic conformity rather than intellectual breadth.