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26th Congress of the CPSU in Current Political Perspective

Robert F. Miller
& T.H. Rigby

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Occasional Paper no. 16
Department of Political Science
Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University
Canberra, 1982

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CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	<i>LIST OF TABLES</i>	v
	<i>PREFACE</i>	vii
ONE	<i>THE CONGRESS AS EVENT</i>	1
TWO	<i>THE ECONOMY AND ITS PROBLEMS</i>	13
THREE	<i>CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY PERCEPTIONS</i>	43
FOUR	<i>THE PARTY AND ITS LEADERSHIP</i>	65

TABLES

		Page
1.1	<i>CPSU Congress Delegates 1961-1981 Basic Occupational Affiliation</i>	7
1.2	<i>CPSU Congress Delegates 1961-1981 Age Structure</i>	9
1.3	<i>CPSU Congress Delegates 1961-1981 Period of Admission to Party</i>	10
4.1	<i>Changes in Party Growth Levels 1961-1981</i>	65
4.2	<i>Age Structure of Party Membership</i>	67
4.3	<i>'Social Position' of Recruits and Current Membership</i>	68
4.4	<i>Changes in CC-CAC 1976-1981</i>	73
4.5	<i>Age Distribution of CC Membership</i>	74
4.6	<i>National Composition of CC Membership</i>	75
4.7	<i>Posts Held by Voting Members of Central Committee CPSU</i>	77
4.8	<i>Posts held by Politburo Members 1981</i>	81
4.9	<i>Composition of the Inner Circles as at 26th Congress</i>	84
4.10	<i>Changes in Full Membership of Politburo 1971-1981</i>	85

PREFACE

At the end of 1980, when we decided to organize a series of seminars in the Department of Political Science, RSSS on the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which was scheduled for late February 1981, it seemed to us, as to many others, that the problems facing the aging Soviet leadership at the end of the seventies were so insistent that major decisions could be expected to be announced at the Congress. Since Party Congresses are now scheduled to coincide with the beginning of a new Five-Year Plan, it seemed likely, in particular, that important economic departures would be proclaimed. Most outside observers were in agreement that the marked slowdown in Soviet economic growth called for vigorous remedial measures and even major structural reforms if the express commitments of the party leadership for 'butter' as well as 'guns' had any chance of fulfilment. Some renovation of the party's leadership also seemed called for if the regime was to prepare for the impending 'succession crisis'. Our idea was, therefore, to publish the papers presented at the seminars as quickly as possible to serve as a focus for wider discussion, since many of the issues presumably to be raised by the Congress would be of relevance to Western policy and interests. The Occasional Paper format suggested itself as the quickest way to achieve this aim, and we had originally intended to bring out the paper in May or June.

However, the Congress turned out to be not quite what most of us had expected. At first glance it was remarkable only for how little it seemed to accomplish. There were no significant changes in the cast of main political actors, despite their advanced age and obvious signs of fatigue. The foreign policy pronouncements were cautious and rather tentative. And the recipes for economic change were notably bland and timid. Thus, there seemed to be little reason for rushing into print. Further reflection on the Congress proceedings and the background of the decisions taken confirmed the wisdom of delaying publication. In the process of preparing and presenting the seminar papers we concluded that the patterns of decision-making reflected in the speeches at the Congress and the 11th Five-Year Plan documents fully corresponded to the dilemmas and political preferences of the Brezhnev regime's style of leadership. The Congress, therefore, had to be looked upon as a point on a continuum of problems and decisions. The approach adopted in the papers included below was to place the Congress discussions in the appropriate location on this continuum - Rigby's on internal Party developments and Miller's on the foreign policy and economic tendencies of the Brezhnev era in its waning years.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the contribution of our research assistants, Olga Prokopovich and Russell McCaskie, for the always able and efficient secretarial backup by Mrs Kath Bourke, the Departmental Secretary, and the for the valuable discussions and suggestions by our colleagues in the Department, especially Dr Stephen Fortescue, and by others who attended the seminars. Naturally, the responsibility for the papers themselves in their final form is entirely our own.

Canberra, February 1982

THE CONGRESS AS EVENT

At ten a.m. on Monday 23 February 1981 some five thousand communists from all parts of the USSR rose to their feet and thunderously applauded as Leonid Brezhnev led his Politburo colleagues, followed by several score leaders of foreign delegations, into the spacious hall of the Palace of Congresses inside the Moscow Kremlin. The 26th Congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had begun, and with a break of one day on the following Sunday it was to go on till the morning of Tuesday 3 March, reportage on its activities filling the Soviet press, radio and television throughout and for several days thereafter.

What's in a Congress?

The five-yearly CPSU congresses of the Brezhnev era are a far cry from the annual affairs of Lenin's day, at which great issues of policy were resolved after intense debate and the leadership was forced to defend its record against the open and vigorous attacks of party 'oppositionists'. Even before the great founder of Bolshevism died, the focus of policy-making was shifting from the open forums of the party to the secret conclaves of the dominant clique, and the first steps were taken to outlaw internal party opposition. In the middle and later 1920s party congresses became one of the instruments through which the Stalin machine consolidated its dominance and humiliated its rivals, and thereafter they degenerated into rituals of 'monolithic unity' and of loyalty to the great *vozhd*'. Convened at ever wider intervals - the 18th was held in 1939 and the 19th in 1952 - the congress as an institution was now clearly in a condition of advanced decay.

In the wake of Stalin's death regular congresses were revived by his successors, along with other outward forms of 'intra-party democracy', in order to help bolster up the dubious legitimacy of their rule. At the same time the congresses of 'mature socialism' have preserved and developed the basic functions which they assumed under Stalin. The first of these is the ritual, symbolic function: the party congress is the supreme celebration of the unity of the party and the nation, of the achievements and might of the USSR, and of the loyalty of the various divisions of the Soviet elite and of the population at large to the party, the state, and the leadership (1). This function is constantly manifest in the staging of the congress and its accompanying ceremonies, in the content of the speeches, and in the surrounding propaganda and media coverage. At the same time it is the regime's supreme legitimacy ritual. It comes as the culmination of a cycle of meetings, conferences and congresses at successively higher echelons at which local committees are elected along with conference delegates for the next level up. The fact, manifest to all but the politically most naive, that the form of election is devoid of content since the 'candidates' are unopposed and are chosen behind the scenes by those party officials whose job it is to do so, does not vitiate but rather reinforces the effect of this ritual: for the millions participating in these fictions are thereby bound together by shared complicity in a system which also legitimizes their personal privileges, while the monolithic front they present to the

rest of society demonstrates to some of the latter, no doubt, the rightness, and to all at least the inevitability, of the established order of things. It is legitimation of this kind that the congress affords when it unanimously and unreservedly endorses the policies of the leadership and 'elects' the Central Committee members picked out by the Politburo and Secretariat, the latter then being confirmed in office by the Central Committee they have chosen.

The other main function of the party congress is to provide a maximally authoritative setting for periodic national stocktaking and national goal-setting. As such it does not so much make policy, although some new policy developments in various areas of national life may be adumbrated, but rather reviews achievements in the implementation of established policies and programs and prescribes objectives, priorities and approaches for the period ahead. The main vehicles for this stocktaking and goal-setting function are the two chief 'reports', the 'accountability report' (otchetnyi doklad) presented by the General Secretary and the report on economic plan guidelines delivered by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Since no debate in the sense of canvassing alternative viewpoints or proposals takes place, the congress is scarcely a political occasion as this term is usually understood (2). There is nevertheless a sense in which it is fraught with great political significance, for the particular formulations employed largely set the parameters within which each organization, locality, social group etc. must function in the ensuing period, prescribing the distribution of both resources and obligations, and tilting the balance one way or the other on various contentious issues. Since, moreover, there is scarcely an interest, large or small, that will not be furthered or hindered by some section or other of the congress reports, sometimes vitally so, it is reasonable to hypothesize an intense and prolonged pre-congress political process as various sections are drafted, discussed, minuted on, and amended within and between the Central Committee apparatus and multifarious specialized organizations. It is, however, impossible to confirm the existence, let alone trace the course, of such a process, since all forms of 'bureaucratic politics' in the Soviet Union are well shielded from public scrutiny, although its probability is enhanced by the evidence of continuing policy disagreement and conflicting interests which can be discerned by a careful study of the party and specialized press.

The 26th: a Standard Congress

Predictably, given the highly conservative character of the present regime, the 26th Congress made no substantial departures from the hallowed forms of CPSU congresses as handed down since the 1930s, either in their ritual or their stocktaking and goal-setting aspects. As always, the central act was the 'accountability report' (filling eighty pages in the published protocols) in which the General Secretary ranged over all major areas of policy and national life: foreign relations and international communism, the economy, social questions, the nationalities, welfare, the arts, sport, the courts, the police, the armed forces, the Komsomol (Young Communist League), the party machine, party membership, party education. As always, this was preceded by the unopposed election of the 'official' nominees for the Congress Presidium, Secretariat, Editorial Commission and Delegates' Credentials Commission (a primarily symbolic procedure

registering the relative standing of those so 'elected'); and followed by a brief report by the Central Auditing Commission (CAC) Chairman, of no practical significance whatsoever but necessary for ritual purposes and to justify having a CAC, whose real significance is to identify publicly those members of the elite immediately junior in status to the members and candidates of the Central Committee (on which more below).

Then began the 'discussion' of the accountability and auditing commission reports (the latter is never mentioned) interrupted, as tradition prescribed, by various symbolic acts, a brief report by the Delegates' Credentials Commission, and the election of a commission (123 strong) with the ostensible task of drafting a resolution on the General Secretary's report. The latter was duly presented and unanimously passed on the evening of the fourth day.

The Congress now entered its second main phase with the presentation of the Central Committee's economic guidelines by Brezhnev's new Council of Ministers Chairman, Nikolai Tikhonov, followed by three days of 'discussion', interrupted by the rest day on Sunday 1 March. The evening session on 2 March was devoted to the 'elections' of the CC and CAC, the results of which were solemnly announced the following morning, and the Congress closed with the standard brief speech by Brezhnev, in which he announced that the newly-elected CC had meanwhile met and chosen its General Secretary, Politburo and Secretariat, the membership of which he read out, each name being greeted with applause, and in the case of the General Secretary with 'prolonged applause'.

There were, then, precious few innovations at the 26th Congress to offend devotees of the traditional congress liturgy. Perhaps the most significant lay in the scope of the economic guidelines report. At earlier congresses this had usually been specifically based on the 'directives' of the new five year plan. At the 25th Congress this became 'the basic directions of economic development in 1976-1980' and at the 26th was further broadened to 'the basic directions of economic and social development for 1981-1985 and for the period to 1990'. We shall have something to say about this later. Otherwise aggiornamento was virtually limited to the nuances of political symbolism, and served primarily to reinforce Brezhnev's personal authority. For example the wording of the resolution approving the General Secretary's report included for the first time a reference to the 'Leninist course' of the Central Committee, a phrase that has been specifically linked with Brezhnev's leadership, as well as following the 25th Congress in enjoining 'all party organizations to be guided in their work by the propositions and tasks in the field of domestic and foreign policy put forward in Comrade L.I. Brezhnev's report', a formula used for several years now with respect to the General Secretary's speeches at Central Committee plenums, and which has the effect of giving binding force to his expressed recommendations and judgments, even where these are not embodied in formal decisions. The Congress also passed a specific resolution on one proposal contained in Brezhnev's report, namely to have an amended version of the CPSU Program prepared for submission to the next congress: a task necessitated by certain embarrassing provisions of the existing (1961) Program, which inter alia states that the whole Soviet population would acquire 'an abundance of material and cultural values' by 1980, by which time 'a communist society [would] be basically built.'

A close conformity to conventional practices was also apparent in the speeches from the floor. Thus there was no departure from the convention that Politburo members take turns in chairing the sessions but, apart from those heading (and therefore representing) regional or republican party committees, do not participate in discussion of the reports. As tradition required, the great majority speaking to Brezhnev's report were regional or republic leaders (the party first secretaries of the 14 non-Russian republics, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Republic (RSFSR), the first Secretary of the Moscow City Committee, the first secretaries of 11 major regions in the Russian Republic and one in the Ukraine), and the rest were 'spokesmen' of various segments of the workforce and population (a worker apiece from the steel industry, engineering, light industry, construction and mining, a collective farm chairman, a school teacher, the top officials respectively of the Komsomol (Young Communist League), the writers' and composers' unions, and the Academy of Sciences, and one government 'representative' in the person of the Minister of the Electronics Industry). Those speaking to Tikhonov's report, fittingly only a third as numerous, offered (as was also usual) more of a balance between central and regional spokesmen (on the one hand four ministers and the Chairman of the Trade Union Council and on the other four regional first secretaries from the RSFSR and the Chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers, along with a district party secretary, a factory director and a doctor).

The standard pattern was also observed in the content of the speeches: first a statement of unreserved approval of the reports; next an expression of loyalty and gratitude to the leadership and specifically to the General Secretary; then the most substantial section, the samootchet - the report on their region or organization's own performance and current objectives - emphasizing the positive but confessing they could have done better, and sometimes including a shy suggestion of something the centre might do for them or a muted complaint that Gosplan or some other agency had let them down on some matter (odd hints of 'interest group' politics there, eagerly seized on by the foreign Sovietologist); spokesmen from non-Russian republics might throw in a sentence or two about the sterling qualities of the Great Russian people or their nation's good fortune in having been incorporated in the Russian Empire; and often ending up with a few remarks about the iniquities of the Western powers or (especially in the case of Central Asian speakers) of the Chinese. This standard pattern was most closely followed in the speeches of republic and regional party leaders, but there were few substantial departures from it, and it served for speakers on both reports, although those on the economic report tended to give somewhat more substance to their samootchet and omitted references to foreign affairs.

To judge by the speeches at the 26th Congress, sentiments of admiration, love and gratitude towards Leonid Brezhnev have now reached new heights in the USSR. The expression of such sentiments seemed to be de rigueur for all speakers, who vied in showering new epithets and rhapsodic turns of phrase upon their boss: thus he was not only 'our acknowledged leader' (rukovoditel') and 'the most authoritative political leader and statesman of our epoch', but also a 'wise theoretician' and an 'outstanding revolutionary of the type of Lenin'; and reference was made to his 'brilliant organisational qualities', his 'titanic labours', his 'warm heart and mighty mind', and his 'exceptional generosity of spirit'. A new

note was struck by several speakers who cited instances of how, in the words of the Bashkir party leader Shakirov, 'Leonid Ilyich is constantly in touch with [regional] party committees, and in personal chats and telephone calls he enquires deeply into the state of affairs in industry and in agriculture, in capital construction and the development of science and culture. His advice and directions and his highly exacting expectations [vysokaia trebovatel'nost'] help us to ensure the fulfilment of state tasks, improve our organisational and political work', etc., etc.. Evidently the President-General Secretary suffers no embarrassment in being attributed with such a profound, universal, stern but unfailingly helpful concern, the like of which past generations have usually imputed only to their gods.

No Soviet party congress would be complete without what can best be described as its 'fealty ceremonies'. The first of these occurred on the morning of the second day when, as related in the official protocols, 'a delegation of the Armed Forces of the USSR entered, to the accompaniment of a military march and bearing the battle flags of the Soviet Army and Navy. The [Congress] delegates rose to their feet ...' and after prolonged applause motorised guards division commander Major-General Kuz'min greeted the Congress on behalf of the Armed forces, speaking of their boundless loyalty and 'filial gratitude' to the party and its leaders and constant readiness to serve them. The ceremony closed with chants of 'glory! glory! glory!' and with more band music and thunderous applause as the military 'delegation' marched out.

Then on the evening of the fifth day in marched a 'delegation' of the Komsomol and 'Young Pioneers', also accompanied by a military band, and a dozen or so of them came forward in turn to make brief speeches or recite little verses expressing their gratitude and loyalty to the party and its leaders, and first and foremost to 'dear father' Leonid Ilyich. More chants of 'glory!', flowers presented to the party's leaders, and out they marched to the beat of the band.

Finally, a word about the '123 delegations of communist, workers', national-democratic and other parties and organisations from 109 countries in all continents of our planet', as Mikhail Suslov put it. Their presence, and the addresses of their leaders, which were interspersed with the regular business of the congress, should ideally have served as a complement to the 'fealty ceremonies' just described, witnessing to and celebrating the leading role of the CPSU vis-à-vis the 'authentic' representatives of communism, the international proletariat, and 'progressive forces' around the world. Of course they can no longer do so as unambiguously as in years gone by, as we later show, but the majority of the more than 100 performances by foreign communist and quasi-communist leaders adequately fitted the desired pattern, at least insofar as the domestic legitimating needs of the Soviet regime were concerned. For, while only a small, politically sophisticated minority of Soviet communists would grasp the significance of those words of foreign leaders implying a divergence from CPSU positions, few would be entirely immune to the general glow of self-righteousness and pride at being told 'you have been from the first days of the Great October the standard-bearers of socialism, of progress, the freedom of peoples and of peace' (Poland's Kania), that 'the Soviet people can take proper pride in its glorious Communist Party, which carries high the banner of socialism, the party under whose leadership the

USSR has become the true bulwark of peace, and embodied in reality the noble ideals of brotherhood and solidarity among peoples' (dos Santos of Angola), or that the Soviet regimes's success in constantly raising the people's living standards 'implants hopes for a better future in the hearts of millions of unemployed, oppressed and exploited people in all latitudes [of the world], and by the force of its example inspires all revolutionaries' (Faria of Venezuela). For this reason, the traditional role of foreign comrades is likely to be retained at subsequent CPSU congresses, despite the occasional awkwardness it now entails, although some adjustments in staging may be required. (3)

The Delegates

It was under Nikita Khrushchev, who had a liking for large audiences, that CPSU congresses assumed the proportions of a mass meeting, and since no existing hall in the Kremlin would seat many over 2000, Khrushchev had a new 'Palace of Congresses' built, with capacity for a good 5000. A rather fine modern building and a fitting expression of Soviet gigantomania, the Palace of Congresses stands incongruously amid the Kremlin's Muscovite cathedrals and neo-classical halls and offices. (4)

Congress delegates are chosen by republic congresses and regional conferences on the basis of a set ratio of delegates to party members. (5) While it can be assumed that the Central Committee gives some guidelines on the composition of delegates, the job of selecting them is probably in the hands mainly of senior officials at the regional and republic levels. Clearly the delegates will include the core of the political elite, but it would scarcely fit the purposes to which CPSU congresses are put if they were to be limited to senior officials. Accordingly even in Stalin's day they included communists working in diverse fields and at various hierarchical levels with a view to rendering the congress in some degree representative of the party at large and through it of the Soviet population generally. With three times the number of delegates, present-day congresses can obviously be made to look far more representative in this sense than those of Stalin's time, and this was no doubt one of the major considerations in building the Palace of Congresses.

Given the conservative if not traditionalist style and atmosphere of the Brezhnev regime, it will come as little surprise that the composition of CPSU congress delegates has changed in no major respect since the 1960s. This continuity and the gradualness (and mostly unilinear character) of change can be appreciated if we consider the make-up of 26th Congress delegates in comparison with those attending the 22nd (1961), 23rd (1966), 24th (1971) and 25th (1976) Congresses (6). It is very apparent with respect to the most significant variable, the occupational affiliation of delegates (see Table 1.1). Perhaps the most striking feature here is that full-time party officials form a relatively small minority of all delegates, and their representation has slightly declined (from 24 per cent to 21.5 per cent) since the 1960s. (7) Most other categories have shown little change, the exception being industry (including construction, transport and other non-agricultural branches of 'material production') which progressively increased its share of delegates from 29 per cent in 1961 to over 35 per cent in 1981.

Table 1.1

CPSU CONGRESS DELEGATES 1961-1981
BASIC OCCUPATIONAL AFFILIATION

	Congress				
	<u>22nd</u> <u>1961</u>	<u>23rd</u> <u>1966</u>	<u>24th</u> <u>1971</u>	<u>25th</u> <u>1976</u>	<u>26th</u> <u>1981</u>
Total delegates	4813	4943	4963	4998	5002
Party apparatus	1158	1204	1205	1114	1077
Trade Unions/Komsomol	104	126	126}	693	691
Government apparatus	465	539	556}		
Industry (a)	1391	1577	1565+	1703	1728+
Agriculture	784	874	870	887	877
Education, arts, 'culture' (b)	?	147	120}	272	269
Science (b)	?	?	138}		
Armed forces (c)	350	352	300+	314	300+

Sources Delegates' credentials commission reports. In no case were figures complete, the most complete being those for the 25th Congress, which accounted for all but 15 delegates.

(a) Figures for 1971 and 1981 near-complete.

(b) Borderlines between these two categories not strictly consistent

(c) Figures for 1971 and 1981 estimates from residuals.

All categories comprise a core of high-level office holders, who attend virtually ex officio, and a large penumbra of more junior personnel, including many working at or near the 'grass roots'. For instance, while the delegates in full-time party jobs include all or most key officials at the central, republic and regional levels, these are accompanied by numerous district and city party secretaries, to the number of 589 at the 26th Congress. Likewise, only a quarter of the delegates from industry at the 26th Congress were senior administrators, the remainder being blue-collar workers and floor level supervisory personnel. It is, incidentally, the increased numbers of blue collar workers, motivated no doubt by the regime's concern to strengthen its symbolic links with the working class, that account for most of the growth in the industry category since the 1960s. For many delegates in this 'penumbra', attendance at a CPSU Congress would be a supremely memorable, once-in-a-lifetime experience (71 per cent of 26th Congress delegates had not attended a congress before), a reward from their local leadership for exemplary labours or other services rendered, and an experience to be intensively exploited for propaganda purposes on their return to base. At the same time we should note that many of these humbler delegates serve also as part-time party workers in their work-place: at the 26th Congress 550 of them were secretaries of primary party organizations or party group organizers. Those working as local party or government officials would see their selection as congress delegates as an important breakthrough in their official careers (as no doubt the young district party secretary Nikita Khrushchev did when he attended his first CPSU congress in 1925).

Women formed 26.6 per cent of delegates to the 26th Congress, a percentage which corresponds almost exactly with that in the party at large - a coincidence which is unlikely to be fortuitous. The percentage has crept up from 22.3 per cent over the last two decades. No ethnic breakdown of CPSU congress delegates has been revealed since 1930. Inequalities in the relative representation of different nationalities are probably broadly comparable with those in the party at large, which are discussed below (pp. 77-78). Exactly 60 per cent of those attending the 26th Congress were delegated from the Russian Republic, 18 per cent from the Ukraine, 3.7 per cent from Belorussia, 2.7 per cent from the Baltic republics, 1.0 per cent from Moldavia, 5.0 per cent from the Transcaucasian republics, and 9.7 per cent from Kazakhstan and Central Asia. In all cases, however, delegations included many persons not drawn from the titular nationality of the republic concerned.

Given the post-Khrushchev regime's policy of 'stability of cadres' and its heightened respect for seniority, it is not surprising that the age profile of CPSU congress delegates has grown steadily older since the 1960s (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2
CPSU CONGRESS DELEGATES 1961-1981
AGE STRUCTURE

Per cent of congress delegates					
	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th
	<u>1961</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1981</u>
Age					
Up to 30	}	8.0	5.1	}	}
	}22.0			}12.5	}12.2
31-35	}		12.8	}	}
		}32.2			
36-40	16.6	}	13.9	}	}
				}58.0	}50.4
41-50	37.9	34.3	41.6	}	}
51-60	}	21.7	20.7	19.7	25.7
	}23.5				
Over 60	}	3.8	5.9	9.8	11.7

Sources Delegates' credentials commission reports. Percentages for the 22nd Congress available for voting delegates only. Inclusion of non-voting delegates would produce a slightly older age profile.

If we compare the age distribution of participants in the 26th Congress with that of delegates to the last congress held under Khrushchev, we see that the proportion aged up to 35 has sunk from 22 per cent to 12.2 per cent, while the proportion aged over 50 has risen from 23.5 per cent to 37.4 per cent. Particularly striking is the rate of increase in those aged over 60, especially when one considers the large (and increasing) number of delegates whose low-level positions do not require lengthy work experience. Nevertheless the age profile of congress delegates now contrasts sharply with that in the higher reaches of the party and state bureaucracy, and to the phalanx of septuagenarians seated in the 'Presidium' of the 26th Congress the mass of faces before them must have presented a most youthful spectacle.

Despite the steady increase in average age levels, the attendance at CPSU congresses of communists who joined the party in the earlier phases of the regime has declined apace, as can be seen in Table 1.3. The drop from one in three to one in twenty in the proportion of delegates whose party membership dated to before World War II has obvious implications for the collective political memory accumulated in the congress hall.

Table 1.3

CPSU CONGRESS DELEGATES 1961-1981
PERIOD OF ADMISSION TO PARTY

	Per cent of congress delegates				
	22nd <u>1961</u>	23rd <u>1966</u>	24th <u>1971</u>	25th <u>1976</u>	26th <u>1981</u>
Before World War II	31.9	20.7	13.5	7.6	5.4
During World War II	26.6	24.7	19.5	14.5	9.2
1946-55	23.1	24.2	25.0	}55.3	52.7
1956-65	18.4	30.4	33.4		
1966 or later			8.7	22.6	32.7

Sources Delegates' credential commission reports. Percentages of 22nd Congress delegates apply to voting delegates only. Percentages for 22nd to 24th congresses include those admitted in the first half of 1941 with war-time admissions, while those for 25th-26th congress evidently do not: numbers involved are very small.

The point becomes even clearer if we consider the pre-1941 members more closely. At the 22nd Congress there were 42 delegates who had joined the party before the October Revolution; at the 26th Congress there were only nine. Ten per cent of the 22nd Congress delegates were already party members in the 1920s, before Stalin had consolidated his power; at the 26th such members were a negligible quantity. Most striking of all, perhaps, was the dwindling of those who joined the party during the 1930s, for this is the 'generation' which now dominates the upper echelons of party and government. They made up over a fifth of the delegates in 1961, and about four per cent in 1981. The great majority of the present Soviet leadership achieved more or less high office in the service of Stalin; most of those they now assemble to endorse their policies were not even party members when the dictator died. While the degree of continuity in values, habits and skills between different 'generations' of the Soviet elite may be greater than we sometimes think, it is hard to believe that when a new leadership assumes office, one whose political and life experience contrasts less sharply with that of the bulk of their followers, this will fail to have a significant effect on the style and operation of the Soviet system. (8)

Notes

1. The political rituals and symbols of the USSR still await serious analysis. Christel Lane's admirable The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society - The Soviet Case (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) does not concern itself with the specifically political sphere. Nevertheless her theoretical analysis appears very pertinent to the matters discussed here. Soviet political rituals, including those embodied in CPSU congresses, may be seen (in Clifford Geertz's terms) as a 'model for' rather than a 'model of' social relations in the USSR, that is they help to impose perceptions of Soviet social and political realities as the regime would have them perceived rather than as they really are. They serve, inter alia, as 'one important means of glossing over conflictual social relationships' (Lane, p. 33).

2. Some writers would consider that this formulation calls for some qualification. For instance Thane Gustafson has recently suggested that the arguments of two provincial party secretaries may have brought the Politburo to change its position on certain water-diversion projects at the 25th Congress (see his Reform in Soviet Politics. Lessons of recent policies on land and water, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 77-8). It is true that the implicit perceptions and priorities of all speakers are not totally identical and, as mentioned below, locally-based officials in particular may insert some specific complaint or request into their speeches. It seems reasonable to see signs here of competing views on the allocation of material and organizational resources, but it seems highly doubtful that participants envisage what happens on the floor of the congress as more than marginally influencing policy or allocational outcomes. We may detect some minor eruptions on the bland face of unanimity, but it is the unanimity, not the conflicts that may lie beneath it, that the congress is all about.

3. There was, indeed, already a departure from established practice at the 26th Congress, the listing and applauding of the foreign leaders which normally occupies a good half hour at the opening session being omitted. As Elizabeth Teague has pointed out, 'on previous occasions the litany has been a moment of some ceremonial and triumphal significance and it therefore seems unlikely that it was omitted from the proceedings lightly. The purpose may have been to save the aging Soviet leadership the ordeal of sitting through the long list of names, but another reason for the omission may have been the fact that the "Eurocommunist" French, Italian, and Spanish Parties are not represented at the Twenty-Sixth Congress by their leaders' (Elizabeth Teague, 'Two Departures from Tradition at Opening of Twenty-Sixth Congress', Radio Liberty Research, RL81/81, February 23, 1981). An alternative explanation suggested by Boris Meissner is that reading of the names was omitted on grounds of security, since several of the leaders concerned were operating illegally. See his 'Die KPdSU zwischen Stillstand und Wandel', Osteuropa, no. 9-10 (September-October) 1981, p. 706.

4. The Palace of Congresses also met the need for a more spacious hall for opera and ballet performances than that provided by the Bolshoi Theatre, and its extensive use for this purpose and for other large-audience entertainment in addition to major political gatherings was evidently intended to symbolize that symbiosis between regime and people which the post-Stalin leadership, and especially Khrushchev, were concerned to foster.
5. Delegates from the RSFSR (which lacks republic-level party bodies), and from other republics with regional divisions (the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Belorussia) are chosen at regional (oblast or krai) party conferences, and those from the other ten republics at republic party congresses. Up to the 24th Congress they were divided into voting and non-voting delegates elected in proportion respectively to the number of full members and of 'candidates' (probationers) in the local membership. Delegates from military and militarised police formations are included in the civilian delegations from the region or republic where they are located, with the exception of those stationed abroad. In Lenin's day the number of delegates (including those not entitled to vote) never exceeded 1000. In the late 1920s and 1930s Stalin pushed the number up to over 2000, thus facilitating manipulation of the congress by the party machine run by his henchmen. At his last congress, however, the 19th in 1952, delegate numbers were limited to 1359. The first post-Stalin congress, the famous 20th (1956), was attended by 1355 voting and 81 non-voting delegates, 1436 in all. Attendance was slightly less at the 'Extraordinary' 22nd Congress (1959) which was convened solely to consider a new seven-year plan.
6. Data on the delegates is provided in the report of the Delegates' Credentials Commission, in XXVI s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow: Politizdat, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 215-20. For corresponding data on earlier congresses, see XXII s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow: Politizdat, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 421-31, XXIII s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow: Politizdat, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 278-85, XXIV s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 330-36, and XXV s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 293-99.
7. This decline continues a secular trend: party officials formed 66% of delegates attending the 15th Congress (1927), 42% at the 18th Congress (1939) and 37% at the 20th (1956). It was of course the trebling of the number of delegates that accounted for the big drop to 24% at the 23rd Congress.
8. For two valuable discussions of this question see Jerry F. Hough, Soviet Leadership in Transition (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1980), and Severyn Bialer, Stalin's Successors. Leadership, Stability and Change in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Parts I and II.

As in the cases of Soviet domestic politics and foreign policy, the 26th Party Congress was not the major turning point in economic policy initiatives that it was advertised to be. Rather, it was an occasion for the aging conservative party leadership to sum up recent experience in certain problem areas and to indicate where the appropriate solutions might be found. Whether these solutions are really appropriate remains to be seen. Western observers were almost unanimous in criticizing the absence of radical departures in the Congress resolutions in view of the evident difficulties of the Soviet economy, no longer only in agriculture, but also to a growing extent in industry as well, where the Soviet system had always managed to register impressive growth rates. In short, unlike some earlier party congresses, such as the 20th, the 22nd, and even the 24th, where major policy and institutional change were initiated, the 26th Congress represented something of a way station in a continuing process of adaptation to uncomfortably altered circumstances. An optimist, with a rosier perception of the viability of the Soviet economic system than seems warranted - say, a high-level party apparatchik - might call it 'fine tuning' and be satisfied that this is all the system requires. But a more objective analyst would probably agree that substantially more than fine tuning is necessary.

Indeed, a careful reading of General Secretary Brezhnev's and Premier Tikhonov's major reports and some of the other speakers' comments suggests a general recognition of the need for more substantial changes. But the nature of the changes recommended suggests equally a determination to limit them to a minimum appropriate for the maintenance of customary forms of party dominance. The painful memory of Khrushchev's mania for structural reorganization and personnel shifts evidently remains prominent in their thinking whenever the subject of unavoidable institutional reform intrudes upon their accustomed bureaucratic tranquility.

In order to place the discussions at the Congress in proper perspective we must look at developments of the recent past, when the need for substantial change first became evident. For our purposes the two-year period before the 26th Congress will probably suffice. The ramifications and impact of the world energy crisis of 1973/74 were not fully felt in the USSR for a number of years - actually until the late 1970s, when some of the negative implications of increased Soviet and East European involvement in the Western market system became apparent.

Soviet leaders have long regarded the opportunities for technological transfer from the main Western economies as one of the primary attractions of detente. It was hoped that importation of advanced production processes, machines, and techniques would permit the Soviet economy to overcome serious developmental lags in certain key fields, primarily state-of-the-art areas such as the data-processing and process control systems, machine-tool production, and chemical and biotechnical processes.

Needless to say, the Soviet leaders have not been willing, like, say, their Yugoslav counterparts, to place virtually total reliance on imported technologies to provide the innovative impulse for revived economic growth. The Soviet economy is too highly developed to require such a degree of dependence. Its scientific and technological base is at least potentially capable of generating the requisite innovative impulses on its own. Besides, dependence on Western technological imports is strategically dangerous, as the US-led embargo following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan clearly demonstrated. Nevertheless, carefully chosen imports have been considered highly useful as a short-cut to modernization and rapid development in key sectors. And it is felt that experience with the engineering associated with the adaptation of new technologies will spur Soviet R & D personnel to upgrade their skills and develop their own, improved variants. Indeed, the basic message of the slogan 'combining the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution with the advantages of socialism' (1) is that the Soviet system of economic planning and management is inherently superior to the Western capitalist systems in its ability to use and further develop scientific and technological discoveries.

Be that as it may, the Soviet economy has not been performing very well recently in a number of crucial areas, especially those associated with technological progress in the modern post-industrial era. Economic performance in 1980, (2) the last year of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (FYP), was clearly disappointing, albeit more in relative (to plans) than in absolute terms. Realized national income (utilized in consumption and investment) increased by 3.8% over 1979 (against a planned increase of 4.0%). Agricultural production was down by 3% (against a more than 8% planned increase). Labour productivity in industry increased by 2.6% (3.8% planned). At the same time per capita real income and the national wage fund increased by more than the planned increment - 3.5% (vs. 2.9% planned) and 5.1% (vs. 3.7 % planned), respectively, indicating an unusual buildup of inflationary pressures.

Although certain important sectors registered above-plan growth rates - eg. natural gas, technical instruments, automation equipment, computer technology, agricultural machinery, certain finished sewn articles, china, and furniture - the list of lagging sectors was perhaps more serious for the overall economy. Among the laggards were coal production, rolled ferrous metal products, mineral fertilizers, metal-working machinery, freight cars, timber, cement, and certain textiles. Ministries whose enterprises were singled out for poor work in plan fulfilment and contract performance included petroleum refineries, petro-chemicals, coal mining, ferrous metallurgy, chemicals, machine-tool building and tool-making, forestry, paper products and cellulose, wood-working, building materials, and light industry. (3)

The overall picture was one of a general slowdown in growth, even in many areas where Soviet achievements had traditionally been impressive. Clearly, as incremental labour supplies became more limited and the readily accessible sources of raw materials and energy approached exhaustion, the possibilities of continued growth by the old, extensive methods of expansion were a thing of the past. The managerial techniques associated with those methods were also increasingly recognized as unsuitable for the relatively complex modern economy which had evolved. What we propose to do

in the body of this chapter is to present a brief overview of the accumulated difficulties in certain recognized problem areas and then to examine some of the solutions proposed at the 26th Party Congress in the context of the self-imposed constraints of the regime's style and methods of leadership: namely, the determination to avoid basic tampering with the system of centralized party and state control over decision-making and operational management. The dominant view is apparently that what is needed are systems-engineering solutions rather than the partially de-centralized decision-making procedures envisaged by the so-called Liberman reforms of the middle and late 1960s. There is still a debate going on over the extent to which 'economic levers' should be used to encourage desired managerial behaviour. But it is clear that the terms of reference have shifted markedly back to the centralizers, who favour a maximum of constraints on the freedom of management to respond to economic signals. Managerial responses to the earlier timid efforts of liberalization *à la* Liberman were evidently considered too dangerously anarchic and opportunistic for the conservative, power-oriented tastes of the Brezhnev Politburo. Although there is little direct evidence, owing to the secrecy surrounding Politburo deliberations, one cannot help but surmise that military considerations were an important factor here. With resources under increasing pressure, the preoccupation of the regime with the maximization of Soviet military power strengthened the determination not to relax its control over major components of the economy in order to insure that military priorities would continue to be fully observed.

Lagging Sectors

The lagging sectors which had often been specifically cited in progress reports on the Tenth Five-Year Plan and drew the special attention of many speakers at the 26th Congress were energy, machine-building, agriculture, transportation and consumer goods.

Energy

On the face of it, the assignment of energy to the list of lagging sectors seems rather odd. The Soviet Union is the world's largest petroleum producer (over 12 million barrels per day - vs. Saudi Arabia's 8.5 - 9.5 million). It has oil reserves estimated at 31% of total world reserves; of natural gas - more than one-third of world reserves; of coal - estimates vary from 15% to more than one-half of total world reserves (4). Until quite recently economical use of energy resources was perhaps even less important a consideration for Soviet planners and managers than it was for their Western capitalist counterparts. Given the USSR's almost total self-sufficiency in energy, it would not be accurate to attribute the sudden awakening of the Soviet leaders in the late seventies to their own energy problems directly to the OPEC squeeze, although the latter undoubtedly raised their consciousness of the issues involved. Rather, just at this time a number of parallel events had been taking place in the Soviet sphere of influence, which produced a similar pattern of reaction to that in the West. Namely, the previously rapidly expanding production of energy - particularly fossil fuels and especially petroleum - suddenly levelled off and extraction costs began to soar, while domestic and Soviet Bloc consumption continued to grow.

The drastic OPEC oil price rises suddenly made petroleum exports a major hard-currency earner for the Soviet Union. Thus, wasteful consumption at home and low-price shipments to Bloc trade partners (which account for about two-thirds of Soviet oil exports) came to involve substantial opportunity costs at a time when the Soviet economy had particular need for hard currencies - to pay for Western grain and technology imports.

Much of the Soviet domestic oil consumption had been used for electric power generation, where, following Western patterns, petroleum came to account for some 42% of electricity generation by the late 1970s. (5) However, the possibilities of a relatively rapid shift back to coal were seriously limited by a marked decline in output and productivity in the traditional main coal mining regions of the Donets and Kuznets Basins. Efforts to take up the slack by additional hydroelectric and nuclear power generating capacity could offer little payoff in the short run. Construction of both types of alternatives involve long lead times. And even without the environmentalist pressures encountered in the West, Soviet nuclear power installers have been no more successful in meeting deadlines than their Western counterparts. (6) By 1980 electric power generated by that source had reached only about 81% of the planned level. And at the time of the 26th Congress nuclear and hydroelectric power represented only 5% and 15% respectively of the total electricity output produced, the remainder being accounted for by fossil-fuel thermal power plants (7). The one bright spot on the horizon for the near and medium-term future is natural gas. Reserves are concentrated in a small number of huge fields, and production performance has been above plan in the past couple of years. This success has important implications as a substitute for petroleum in domestic power and petrochemical production and for exports to hard-currency areas, such as Western Europe. Nevertheless, here, too, further development will require large investments and imports of equipment, and further expansion will encounter problems of accessibility and severe climatic conditions similar to those hindering the expansion of petroleum and coal development.

In the meantime, shortages of fossil fuels for routine production operations have led to a characteristic battle of wits between central authorities and local managers. Efforts to devise a system of formal rewards and penalties for fuel conservation have foundered on the seemingly unshatterable rock of physical output performance as the ultimate criterion of managerial success. In the words of a satirical article in the authoritative party daily Sotsialisticheskaya industriya, fuel has become something of a 'universal equivalent' in the ubiquitous but officially frowned upon barter dealings among plant executives for the acquisition of deficit production inputs (8). Paradoxically, this new-found 'exchange value' for fuel has provided a stimulus to economize on its use in normal production - not a bad outcome, one would think. But the fact that these savings are commonly achieved against purposely inflated fuel input norms and that the savings are often used as a currency in 'unplanned' material transactions can hardly be expected to win official endorsement or approbation for their perpetrators.

Machine-building

As in the case of energy, Soviet machinery output is quantitatively very impressive. The USSR is the world's leading producer of machine-tools. For a time in the early sixties some Western observers became concerned that the flood of cheap, mass-produced Soviet industrial lathes and milling machines would actually capture the world market for such equipment, especially in the developing countries. These fears soon proved groundless as the trend of progressive development in production machinery was toward specialized high-precision models, eventually with numerically controlled and flexibly programmable modes of operation(9). Soviet models soon fell behind advanced Western equipment in these areas. Even in the captive markets of Eastern Europe, planners by the early seventies were expressing a clear preference for Western production processes. Where, as was increasingly the case, the demand was for close tolerances and high durability. Soviet products failed to make the running. Soviet machinery was heavy, inflexible in operation, and inferior in unit productivity. Soviet metallurgy did not produce the full range of alloys required for lighter weight, more accurate, and more durable machines. As a result, the long hoped-for shift in exports from raw materials to more profitable finished manufactures to the hard-currency areas did not take place (although a limited number of particular items were more competitive - for example synthetic diamonds, electric welding processes, and equipment for metal-casting in electromagnetic fields) (10).

By the mid-1970s Soviet economic planners had become fully aware of the shortcomings of their machine-building industry and began to take steps to decrease the growing technological lag behind the West. One of the main avenues of approach was to import state-of-the-art equipment and whole production processes from the West, not only to copy it directly (the process of 'reverse engineering' is notoriously time-consuming and risky, although it is apparently widespread in Soviet military industry), but also to accustom Soviet engineers and workers to operating with the imported high-precision equipment. It was always hoped that Soviet designers would gradually be able to improve upon Western models and close the R & D and production gap.

So far this has yet to happen. Nevertheless, certain developments have compelled the Soviet leaders to redouble their efforts to modernize the domestic machine-building industry. Besides the continuing desire to export in order to pay for imports, the Soviet labour force has basically ceased to expand. Some crucial regions of the country earmarked for rapid industrial development are experiencing serious labour shortages. Hence the emphasis since the mid-seventies has been on increasing worker productivity and the quality of output, largely through more productive and more accurate machinery. 'Robotization' had become the catch-word by the end of the Tenth Five-Year Plan. In August 1980 the CPSU Central Committee issued a decree 'On Measures for Increasing the Production and Broad-scale Application of Automatic Manipulators in Branches of the National Economy in Light of the Instructions of the 25th Congress of the CPSU'. (11) Its purpose was to bring some form of central organization and coordination to the introduction of industrial robots, which had been proceeding on a rather disorganized, almost cottage-industry basis for the past several years. As is usual in such cases, until the central authorities have expressed a clear statement of priorities and assigned concrete

responsibilities for implementation, local officials are reluctant to accept the administrative burden and financial risk of disrupting routine production schedules and finding the necessary additional material resources for innovation. (12)

In and of itself the automation and robotization of machine-building, if it is carried out systematically, cannot help but improve the quality and efficiency of Soviet production. Whether it will even then be able to match the competition on the world market remains to be seen.

Agriculture

The repeated failures of Soviet agriculture, especially in grain, meat, dairy products, sugar-beet, and oil-seed production, have become a source of nagging embarrassment for the Brezhnev regime - all the more so since one of its initial claims to legitimacy rested on the promise to eliminate the erratic, 'hare-brained' policy shifts of the Khrushchev era. After some early successes, Brezhnev's agricultural policies have lately looked not very much better than his predecessor's. To be sure, climatic difficulties could be blamed for a significant part of recent production shortfalls. But other, endogenous, factors have been acknowledged as well - factors of both an administrative and a technical character.

Despite the high level of industrial development of the country, agriculture continues to exert a tremendous impact on the overall performance of the economy, especially in the vital consumer goods sector. The example of neighboring Poland constitutes an ever-present warning of the political dangers inherent in insecure food supplies. The regime has responded with an unprecedented concentration of resources in the agricultural sector. In contrast to past Soviet development practices, agriculture as a whole has been receiving considerably more investments over the past decade than its share of gross domestic product. (13) Nevertheless, results continue to be disappointing, and the effect has been a cumulative deterioration of morale in the countryside. An important indicator of this deterioration is the steady exodus of able-bodied personnel from the farms, particularly among younger, skilled male farm-machinery operators.

The prevailing response of the regime to the chronic ailments of Soviet agriculture has been organizational. Since the early seventies the emphasis has been on industrializing agricultural production and horizontal and vertical integration of production and processing operations. Efforts continue on converting collective farms to the ideologically more favoured and allegedly technically more progressive state farms, where the labour force is supposedly more highly disciplined and socially conscious as true proletarians. By the end of the Tenth FYP more than half the arable land was already in sovkhozy.

None of the organizational or technical measures appears to be having the desired effect. In spite of impressive annual production figures, the pool of farm machinery available for work at any given time is increasing very slowly and is said by Soviet agricultural specialists themselves to be inadequate for production needs. (14) Part of the problem is the inferior quality, durability, and productivity of Soviet equipment. But an even

greater share of the blame lies in the indifferent labour discipline and irresponsibility of the machinery operators. A correspondent in Sverdlovsk Oblast noted in Izvestiia in August 1981, after describing the low yields and productivity in certain sovkhozy:

And all this can be explained by the fact that the responsibility of workers for their assigned jobs has been reduced to nil. Say, for example, at a time when all efforts of the collective should be concentrated on fodder procurement, harvesting, or preparing the farms for winter, a combine operator, tractor driver, or mechanic thinks nothing of abandoning his machine and going off to the city for a week's binge. In the central farmstead or a field camp one can take advantage of the carelessness of the watchman to remove the engine or carburettor of an unguarded combine. Last year alone fourteen combines in the raion were written off as 'damaged'. And how many other machines 'expired' without having worked their designed service life no-one knows.
(15)

The author complains that such happenings are by no means an isolated occurrence.

For a number of years the regime attempted to introduce more flexible small work teams (bezmariadnye zven'ia) as the basic operational unit in agriculture in an effort to stimulate initiative and a greater sense of responsibility. For ideological and perhaps political reasons this attempt has apparently now been abandoned in favour of larger units and tighter central control, as in the rest of the economy. A joint party and government decree of 14 November 1980 sought to prescribe a more precise system of production and procurement norms for the agricultural sector, (16) evidently hoping to remedy by central command and control the anarchic and often illegal procedures that had been developing in the countryside during the past decade. Individual farms, sovkhozy as well as kolkhozy, have found themselves increasingly exploited by the horde of governmental agencies nominally charged with providing them with technical and administrative services. (17) Whether the new approach will be any more successful than its predecessors appears more dubious in the case of agriculture than in perhaps any other sector of the economy.

Transportation

Despite the extensive and fairly well exploited river system in the USSR, by far the bulk of goods shipments is carried by rail. The railroads still carry over two-thirds of Soviet domestic freight and will likely continue to dominate even after the planned expansion of the highway system in line with the current fascination with over-the-road truck haulage as a symbol of Western-type progress. Increasing concern for the conservation of liquid hydrocarbons will undoubtedly reinforce this preference for the railroads.

Yet the Soviet railroad system is presently in another one of its periodic crises, perhaps the most serious to date. In January 1979 major breakdowns occurred on several of the most heavily trafficked lines in the Urals and Western Siberia, impeding fuel shipment to the major cities of

European Russia during what turned out to be a very harsh winter. (18) As usual, the main source of difficulty was the overloading and congestion of the rail network. Soviet economic decision-makers, particularly those in the transport sector of Gosplan, have always been reluctant to make the necessary investments to upgrade the railroad system, either in trackage or in rolling stock. Earlier experience before and during the war had revealed a good deal of inefficiency and unreported capacity. Ever since, the presumption has been that more concentrated utilization of available capacity, namely through the use of heavier loads and tighter shipping schedules, would overcome apparent insufficiencies. By the end of the seventies, however, this approach was becoming increasingly untenable. The crisis of January 1979 was a clear warning. Nevertheless, the main reliance apparently continues to be placed on intensified utilization of existing equipment, (19) although the huge project to construct a second main line across Siberia (the Baikal-Amur Main Road - or 'BAM') suggested some recognition of the need for additional trackage, if only for strategic purposes.

The mediocre quality of Soviet rolling stock is an important element of the problem. The USSR is one of the world leaders in railroad electrification, which is particularly effective for high-density freight haulage. Although rather unsophisticated by Western standards, Soviet electric locomotives are reasonably reliable. But they account for substantially less than 50 per cent of available capacity. Diesel locomotives, which account for the rest, are decidedly inferior to Western models in power and dependability. The development of improved models has been slow and sporadic, even by Soviet standards, and satisfactory systems for the use of multiple engines on long and heavy loads have yet to appear.

Finally, the organization of freight shipments seems to suffer inordinately from the characteristic administrative system. The complex of rewards and penalties for timely freight handling is fraught with contradictions. Plan targets are set in tonne-kilometres, which places a premium on longer-distance haulage, even where shorter routes would obviously be more efficient. In the words of one recent article, 'Transport officials bear practically no material responsibility for breakdowns and stoppages in what is essentially a unified technological conveyor'. (20)

In the past, extraordinarily long hauls and cross-shipments have often been justifiable as 'exceptions' for specific industrial requirements. Now, with the impending crisis of the transportation system and a tight fuel supply, there is growing recognition that such practices are no longer acceptable. (21) The railroad system desperately needs expansion, but the laying of the required additional trackage is costly and time-consuming, as Western railwaymen certainly know, too. As in the USA, the requisite investment in railroads has been delayed too long. But unlike the USA, Australia, and most other advanced economies, the USSR has no readily available alternatives.

Consumer Goods

For the two decades following Stalin's death Western observers, commenting on the continued shortcomings of the Soviet economy, were forced to admit that popular living standards had nevertheless steadily risen. People were better dressed and a greater variety of foods was generally available. In the last five years such improvement is no longer visible. Commentators now regularly report a deterioration in living standards and a general disappointment of popular expectations.

Agricultural shortfalls have, of course, been a major contributing factor to this decline, but manufactured consumer goods production has also been experiencing serious difficulties. Price rises for nominally improved consumer items have hit the average wage earner hard (see below). Thus, except for certain basic items, such as bread and flat rentals, inflationary pressures have steadily accumulated.

As Mervyn Matthews has demonstrated, one of the main devices of the regime for maintaining the loyalties of key personnel has been a special system of non-market distribution of deficit consumer goods, mainly through places of employment. It was not so much one's nominal wages which determined how well one lived, but one's position in the system - where one worked. (22). During the 1970s increasing opportunities for semi-legal or illegal earnings (together with an improvement in the availability of expensive consumer goods, such as household furniture and private automobiles) made cash holdings a much more important factor in living standards. The possibilities of a more affluent life style were opened to much broader strata of the population and raised popular expectations accordingly.

The failure of consumer goods production and housing construction targets to be met during the 10th Five-Year Plan period was thus more serious than in the past. (23) Nominal wage increase targets for blue collar and white collar employees were unfulfilled, and the shortfalls in production of foodstuffs, clothing, and household items tended to raise blackmarket prices and create a cash crisis for large numbers of Soviet families. Consumer services in the tertiary sector have remained woefully underdeveloped, causing dissatisfaction even among those who have the necessary cash holdings.

And as in the other lagging sectors described, the standard organizational format of consumer goods production has contributed to the inadequacies of the system. Given the ubiquity of shortages, consumer goods producers enjoy an extreme seller's market. The system of centralized state price fixing, with little consideration for market demand, encourages enterprises to resort to various subterfuges either to discontinue unprofitable, even if much demanded, product lines (24) or to substitute nominally 'improved' models which qualify for higher wholesale and retail prices. Heavy industry and defense enterprises continue to be assigned consumer goods production as a sideline, and they remain an important factor in the manufacture of household implements and other consumer items. Naturally, in view of their already tight production schedules and resource allocations for their main output lines, they often tend to regard consumer products as a residual concern.

The events in neighboring Poland have undoubtedly suggested to the Soviet leaders that they can no longer continue to trifle with the patience of the long-suffering Soviet consumer and ignore his demands for an improved standard of living. Short of a major shift to some sort of free market system for consumer goods and services - of which there have been some very faint and timid whispers in recent years, sometimes with favorable descriptive references to the Hungarian model - it is difficult to see how the regime can expect substantial improvements in this sector in the near future.

General Organizational Problems

The Soviet planning and management system emerged in the course of the rapid development of the economy against a background of seemingly inexhaustible supplies of labour, energy, and raw materials. Given Stalin's preoccupation with military security and a corresponding heavy industrial base, the strategy he imposed for achieving them was to concentrate efforts on a relatively small number of crucial sectors. This approach involved the quasi-military mobilization of all available forces to assault a list of strategic targets more or less sequentially. 'Secondary' problems, such as consumer supplies, social overhead capital, and agricultural development were essentially left to work themselves out with a minimum of state investment. The results were certainly impressive in the areas targeted for conquest, but the pattern of administration which crystalized was more suited to extensive and rather wasteful development objectives than to the management of a complex modern economy, where optimal choices among alternative paths and resource mixes were becoming increasingly critical. Moreover, the centralizing biases of command planning and fixed incentives and penalties to insure compliance produced types of managerial behaviour which often contradicted official preferences. Some of these patterns we have touched upon in the discussion of the main lagging sectors.

Now that the regime is explicitly committed to a shift from extensive to intensive forms of development and to a stress on qualitative improvements in the supply of goods and services, some of these generic problems need to be confronted in earnest. This need has been generally recognized at least since the early seventies, but the self-imposed political and administrative constraints within which the Soviet leaders choose to operate have decidedly limited the range of acceptable alternatives. These limits can be seen in the most recent approaches to the problems of planning and performance criteria.

The joint decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 12 July 1979, 'On the Improvement of Planning and Strengthening of the Influence of the Economic Mechanism on Increasing the Effectiveness of Production and the Quality of Work' (25) represents a major development in the system for managing the Soviet economy, but its provisions were hardly the radical departure from past practices that some Western economists professed to see in it. The decree was mainly an eclectic recasting and further elaboration of measures tried previously with mixed results. Like most other Soviet economic reforms, most recently, for example, the 'Liberman reforms' advanced by Premier Kosygin in 1965, its actual impact will depend upon the thoroughness and consistency with which

it is carried out. The main thrust of the 1965 reforms had been to introduce certain quasi-market elements and profitability considerations to influence managerial behaviour. Theoretically production decisions were de-centralized and tied more closely to consumer demand. In place of the traditional performance indicator of gross output the 1965 reforms introduced the criterion of 'realized production', or sales, and attempted to stimulate efficiency by defining enterprise 'profitability' in terms of sales as a percentage of the value of plant and materials used, including inventories. Enterprise managers were entitled to retain a significant share of profits for bonuses, investment, and 'social development' (housing, recreation, child-care facilities, etc). One of the negative effects of this system was to encourage managers to concentrate on only the most profitable product lines, to the exclusion of other items equally necessary to the economy (the centrally determined price structure did not permit the necessary adjustments to insure that the latter items would also be produced). Within a few years the regime was forced to reintroduce mandatory production quotas for a growing number of such deficit articles. Thus, the main elements of the reform were gradually swamped by a wholesale ad hoc return to traditional planning and administrative routines.

The July 1979 system has officially buried the 1965 reforms, although it does retain some of their incentive features associated with the use of retained enterprise profits. As noted earlier, the regime has turned once again to methods of strong, centralized control and maximum regulation of managerial behaviour by means of elaborately prescribed performance criteria and the strict specification of product assortment. (26) The increasing availability of computerized data processing, mathematical economic modelling techniques, and a generally higher technical level of managerial personnel evidently convinced the regime that centralized control over the economy - always considered politically safer - was now practically possible.

The list of prescribed indicators and operational standards ('normatives') in the new legislation is daunting in the extreme: 'growth of net output (normative), and, in certain branches, goods production (tovarnaia produktsiia) in comparable prices; production of basic types of output expressed in natural terms (natural'noe vyrazhenie); growth of labour productivity; standard wages per ruble of output; limits of employed workers and employees and specified decrease in the use of manual labour; total sum of profits, and in individual branches - decrease in costs of production; commissioning of basic capital equipment, production capacity and installations; limits on state capital investments and on construction and installation work; assignments for the introduction of new technology and the economic effect of scientific and technical measures; the volume of deliveries of major forms of material and technical resources.' (27)

One of the most important of the new indicators is the first, 'standard net output', a highly complicated measure of value calculated in terms of labour content and profits, and expressly excluding the value of raw materials and semi-finished products used and depreciation of equipment. The standard net output must be calculated for each type of item produced. It has been introduced to prevent the hitherto common practice of jacking up the price of an item by using unnecessarily costly material inputs. Experiments with this indicator began as far back as

1973, with mixed results. The fact that it is now being reinforced with a number of other criteria, including, most importantly, the volume of deliveries (on the basis of specific contracts between producer and customer), suggests a reluctance to rely too heavily upon it as a measure of performance in view of the demonstrated ingenuity of Soviet managers in manipulating formal criteria for their own best advantage. (The Sisyphean efforts by most Western Governments to crack down on the tax avoidance 'industry' is perhaps a useful analogy).

The overall conclusion which emerges from an inspection of the 1979 legislation, with its various injunctions to planning, supply, and production agencies to improve the accuracy and thoroughness of their work is that, for the moment at least, the centralizers are in the ascendancy once again, even if the proponents of greater flexibility are still able to state their case. (28) The dominance of the centralizers is reflected in the essentially 'engineering' approach to decision-making at all levels of the system, below the party Politburo, that is. The same orientation is visible in other major economic problems areas, such as labour utilization, scientific research and its industrial applications, and regional development. The apparent intention is to prescribe goals and establish performance criteria for all possible contingencies, leaving the executive only sufficient freedom and initiative to make the 'right' operational decisions. This mechanistic tendency would seem to reduce the activities of the network of party organizations to essentially a monitoring role - were it not for the historical fact that no indices can ever be perfect and are less likely to be operationally effective in the Soviet economy than in most other advanced industrial systems. Recent practice has shown that the local party organs are still required to play an important mobilizational role in making the various components of what the Soviets now like to call their 'unified national economic complex' perform with some semblance of harmony. By the time of the 26th Party Congress in February 1981, substantial experience had already been acquired with the new approaches to the general and specific problems of shifting from quantitative to qualitative factors in the struggle to sustain economic growth.

The 26th Party Congress and the Current Economic Outlook

The reports and debates at the Congress thus reflected a substantial amount of recent experience with changes already introduced to improve the management and overall performance of the economic system. The main reports by party leader Brezhnev and Premier N.A. Tikhonov were noteworthy not so much for their innovative policy recommendations as for their frankness in confronting the problems facing the economy and the difficulties still being encountered in solving them. No radically new solutions were offered and no grandiose promise, à la Khrushchev, of shortcuts to affluence. Rather, their appeal was to hard work and greater discipline at all levels, from central bureaucrats to rank-and-file workers in the nation's factories and farms.

Some external assistance was anticipated by Brezhnev through greater economic integration and joint ventures within the COMECON framework. But the virtual dropping out of Poland, with its important role as a supplier of coal and certain types of machinery, must have given such expectations a somewhat hollow ring. Hopes for continued injections of Western technology

to help speed up the modernization of key sectors persisted, (29) but the intensification of East-West tensions following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the accession of the tougher Reagan Administration to power in the White House obviously had a dampening effect on expectations of assistance from that quarter. So the prospect was for greater reliance on internal Soviet capabilities than at any previous time in the past decade.

At the outset it is worth pointing out that the Brezhnev and Tikhonov reports, although sober and critical of recent performance were far from pessimistic. Both men made a point of contrasting present Soviet developmental performance, however sluggish, with that of the presently crisis-ridden economies of the West. From the standpoint of popular welfare and consumer satisfaction such a comparison would hardly show the Soviet achievement to advantage. But for the speakers at the Congress and the great majority of delegates in the audience, at least, food and consumer goods shortages are hardly likely to be much of a problem, and the aggregate data on national economic performance still show a basically positive tendency. Few observers, East or West, expect the basic growth indicators to turn negative, even if the effort to sustain economic growth becomes increasingly arduous. (30)

Nevertheless, the critical orientation of the two reports was most prominent. Calls for a shift from extensive to intensive modes of further development had been sounded as far back as the 24th Party Congress in 1971. Now the regime was fully aware of the complexities and obstacles involved in making that slogan a reality. In his report Brezhnev warned:

'A number of factors that tend to make economic development more complicated will, as you know, operate in the eighties. One of them is a decline in the growth of manpower resources. Another is the growth of expenditures due to developing the East and the North, and also the inevitable increase in spending on environmental protection. To this it must be added that there are quite a few old enterprises in need of cardinal reconstruction. Then, too, roads, transport, and communications are lagging behind the growing needs of the economy. Consequently, here too earnest efforts and big outlays are needed.' (31)

One of the most serious problems of the economy as a whole is a declining output/capital ratio. This negative tendency is an important symptom of the current difficulties and a matter of especially grave concern for Soviet leaders. Shrinking labour supplies and rising material procurement and transportation costs place a premium on more efficient labour-saving technologies. Brezhnev stated the problem in his usual didactic fashion:

'Intensification of the economy and increasing its effectiveness - if one translates this formula into the language of practical business - consists first of all in making the results of production grow faster than expenditures upon them, so that injecting into production comparatively fewer resources, more can be obtained. Planning, scientific and technical, and structural policy should be subordinated to the solution of this problem. Management methods and policies in the administrative area should also work for effectiveness.' (32)

Yet in recent years labour productivity and the growth of total output have consistently lagged behind the rate of capital investment. Tikhonov emphasised that a turnabout in this negative pattern is one of the primary objectives of the 11th FYP. Capital investment is to grow by only 12-15% during the period (against 29% during the 10th FYP), while labour productivity is to increase at a substantially greater rate (in industry, 23-25% against 17% in the 10th FYP; in agriculture, 22-24% versus 15% in the 10th; in rail transportation, 10-12% against 0.5% in the 10th). (33) Indeed, at least 85-90% of growth in national income over the 1981-1985 quinquennium is scheduled to be obtained through productivity increases (rather than the traditional method of simply expanding the labour force and adding to capacity).

How is this ambitious and probably fanciful goal to be attained? That is the focus of many of the schemes for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the 'economic mechanism' enunciated at the Congress. One way is through mandatory conservation of fuel and material inputs. Tikhonov set a goal over the 11th FYP of 160-170 million tons of standard fuel to be saved throughout the economy. Each ministry, union republic, and enterprise will be given a firm minimum materials conservation target: in machine-building, for example, a decrease of 18-20% in the consumption of rolled steel products; in steel pipe manufacture, decrease of 10-12%; there is to be a decrease of 9-11% in the use of non-ferrous rolled products. Analogous savings targets are to be set for timber and cement used in construction. (34) Brezhnev asserted in his Report that just halving the existing losses and waste in metal-working operations would be equivalent to a 10 per cent increase in the production of rolled ferrous metal shapes. (35) He also noted that improving the quality of metals produced would permit large savings by reducing the weight required to meet strength specifications.

In a similar conservationist vein Tikhonov called for better utilization of metal scrap. One of the few new proposals at the Congress was the construction of small-scale smelting plants in regions with a heavy turnout of waste metal. At the same time, both he and Brezhnev called for improved metal-working processes and technologies to reduce the volume of required machining operations and, hence, the quantity of metal waste, shavings, etc.

At least equally important for the intensification program are the proposed economies of labour. By such practices as the long debated 'Shchekino experiment' in job re-definition, enterprises are expected to achieve their increased production targets with a stable or reduced labour force. There are also calls once again for an increased use of shift work.

But primary reliance for labour economies will be on technological innovation, including a faster schedule of replacement of obsolete machinery. Here, as in expansion generally, the emphasis is to be placed on the re-equipment of existing plants rather than the building of new ones. Tikhonov asserted that investment in such reconstruction pays off three times as fast as investment in new plants, and that labour requirements are also reduced (presumably by obviating the need for bringing in new workers). (36) However, both men complained that the results of modernization programs have often been disappointing, as the new machinery is frequently not much more productive than what has been replaced, and the shake-down process is much too long.

Both reports devoted considerable attention to energy problems. As in the West, major efforts are envisaged to shift from petroleum to coal, nuclear energy, and natural gas (to some extent) for electric power generation and heating, while leaving petroleum and natural gas supplies largely for use as petro-chemical feedstocks. On the other hand, greater emphasis is to be placed on diesel oil rather than gasoline as a motor fuel for over-the-road haulage. The huge brown coal deposits of the Kansk-Achinsk basin are to be developed for synthetic liquid fuels, as well as direct generation of electric power in conventional thermal power plants. Growth targets for petroleum production in the 11th FYP are extremely modest by Soviet standards, and apply predominantly to the newer West Siberian fields.

The principal innovation in energy development is to concentrate on a series of so-called 'territorial-production complexes' - new industrial growth centres based on large, proven energy reserves, mainly in the East of the country. A model for this program is the huge West-Siberian natural gas fields, which are being developed as a major petrochemical centre. Others include the Kansk-Achinsk brown coal basin, the Angara-Yenisei River hydroelectric complex, the Pavlodar-Ekibastuz coal fields, and the Timano-Pechora coal fields in the North. Open-cut mining is to be the primary method of extraction in the East, although Soviet mining equipment available for this method is said to be qualitatively inadequate.

A good deal of attention will be devoted to nuclear power generation, particularly in the European part of the country, where it and hydro-electric power are to account for almost the entire increase in electricity generation in the future. There appears to be none of the concern for the safety of nuclear power so prevalent in the West. Great expectations are placed on fast-breeder reactors, and nuclear fuel is even being touted for central urban heating installations located close to urban population centres. (37)

Not surprisingly, the problems of agriculture received a major share of attention in the Reports. In line with the systems approach implied in the concept of the 'Unified National Economic Complex', the 11th FYP refers to the development of the 'Agroindustrial Complex', and not simply to 'agriculture' as in the past. This orientation implies an intention to treat agricultural production, food processing and the various industries supplying these branches with machinery, storage facilities, agricultural chemicals, and packaging as an integrated system. Strangely, the widespread local experiments with horizontal and vertical integration of agricultural production and processing, such as in Moldavia, rate barely a

mention in the two principal reports. Nevertheless, both reports express a continued commitment to the principles of industrialization and specialization of agricultural production.

Once again the main emphasis is on meat and dairy production. Further recognition of the inadequate fodder base for livestock expansion is amply demonstrated, and both Brezhnev and Tikhonov stressed the necessity of a major shift in grain acreage toward feed grain cultivation. Increased chemical fertilizer production and improved quality of farm machinery both received high priorities in the reports, as did expanded construction of storage facilities and rural road systems, each of which has constituted a major impediment to agricultural growth even when harvests have been good. The seriousness of the agricultural situation has required the regime to adopt what it calls a new 'food program'. Whether or not this turns out to be mere rhetoric, the 'agroindustrial complex' is scheduled to receive almost one-third of total state capital investments in the national economy in the 11th FYP. (38)

Yet with all the talk of industrialization, specialization and concentration of agriculture, substantial attention is still being given to the private plots, which continue to play a major role in the supply of vegetables, potatoes, and livestock products to the population. Peasants and even industrial workers are being encouraged to intensify their efforts on their small parcels of land with promises of generous material incentives, technical assistance, and concessions from the socialist sector. The continuing exodus of young, trained people from the farms - largely because of the poor economic performance of the agricultural sector and meagre opportunities for material and cultural advancement - has forced the regime to increase investments in order to improve labour productivity. It is a classical 'Catch-22' situation.

Transportation problems are perhaps less immediately desperate but equally serious for the long-term development of the economy. For the first time in decades significant attention is apparently being devoted to the expansion of new railroad facilities and not merely to intensified use of existing equipment. During the 11th FYP there is to be a 30 per cent increase in capital investments in the railroad system. Part of these funds will be spent on expanding the fleet of electric and diesel locomotives and on rationalizing freight handling by the mechanization of manual loading operations and the use of containers. Gosplan, Gossnab (the State Committee on Material and Technical Supply), the Ministry of Transportation, and production ministries and agencies, are jointly ordered to improve shipping techniques so as to cut the length of freight hauls and eliminate back haulage. (39) Road and river transport are also to be expanded, and the networks of sealed roads will continue to be extended in European Russia, as well as Siberia and the Far East, but this is clearly not as high a priority. Gas and oil pipelines seem to be especially favoured as a cheap means of fuel transportation.

Naturally, the major eastern railroad expansion along the BAM rates special mention, although it has been going on for the better part of a decade already. What is relatively new is the intention to treat the BAM roadway and its hinterlands as an integral resource development complex. The USSR Gosplan and the RSFSR Government are urged to begin work on a coordinated scheme for opening up the various mineral deposits along the

track before the completion of BAM itself, (40) (which is scheduled for the end of the 11th FYP).

Consumer goods production is given pride of place on the list of key sectors of economic development in both reports. Sector 'B' - the consumer goods sector - is planned to grow at a marginally faster rate than Sector 'A' - the producer goods sector (27-29% vs 26-28%) over the 11th FYP period, thus reversing the traditional growth priorities of the Soviet economy. Real incomes and pensions are set to rise at a moderate rate, and various other measures to improve the none-too-satisfactory quality of life for Soviet citizens are promised. More attention is given to the quality of manufactured consumer goods, and, as already noted, more and better quality food items are to be made available. Most of these promises have, of course, been made before, including that of a higher growth rate for Sector B. Whenever serious economic difficulties have arisen in the past, the consumer goods sector has been the first to suffer, as higher priority objectives, more closely associated with state power, have received the lion's share of tight funds. Given continuing disappointments in the agricultural sector and the pressures of the arms race, it will be interesting to see how consistently the regime maintains its commitment to improving living standards. A certain amount of skepticism on the part of Soviet citizens, who have been told once again that they will have to work hard for those much delayed and still rather modest improvements in their material conditions, is certainly understandable. (41)

For Brezhnev and his Politburo colleagues science and technology constitute a crucial factor in the entire program for modernizing and intensifying the Soviet economy. Although there were fewer enthusiastic references to the 'scientific and technical revolution' at the 26th Party Congress than at its two predecessors, it is clear that Brezhnev is still pinning his main hopes on scientific and technological breakthroughs in machinery, materials, and energy sources to bring the USSR up to world standards on a broad front. His approach, as expressed at the Congress, rests on two main foundations; to involve 'big science' more directly in the identification and solution of key problems of the economy; and to speed up the process of introduction of scientific discoveries into working technologies of production.

On the former he suggested:

The precise formulation of practical tasks which demand the maximum attention of scientists is the concern, first of all, of the central planning and economic organs, and the State Committee for Science and Technology. At the same time science itself should be a constant 'disturber of the peace', pointing out in which sectors stagnation and backwardness are noticeable, where the contemporary level of knowledge offers the possibility of faster and more successful forward movement. We'll have to think about how to transform this work into an integral part of the administrative mechanism. (42)

In this connection he urged that the USSR Academy of Sciences improve its organization 'with an eye toward greater structural flexibility and the elimination of low pay off branches of research'. But most of all he

wanted 'big science' to give greater attention to applied problems of direct relevance to the economy. Furthermore, top-level scientists are to be enlisted as consultants on methods to improve the management of technological processes.

This suggestion pertains especially to the second of the two main foundations - 'vnedrenie', or the introduction of scientific discoveries into production.

However, one still often comes up against intolerable delays in the mastery of promising innovations for production - whether it is a question of continuous smelting of steel or powder metallurgy, of unique direct-current power transmission lines or the manufacture of high-strength artificial fibres. We must analyse the reasons why we frequently lose our lead, spend large sums on buying overseas those processes and technology which we are fully capable of producing ourselves, and often with higher quality at that. (43)

Brezhnev had little to recommend for achieving faster 'vnedrenie', other than increasing the personal responsibility of ministerial and R & D officials and removing organizational obstacles. Tikhonov was slightly more concrete. He foreshadowed the direct inclusion in enterprise plans of mandatory schedules for the introduction of new technological processes and the rapid withdrawal of obsolescent ones. Further to this objective he proposed to enlist scientific personnel in the formulation and implementation of so-called 'complex-goal programs' a kind of PPBS technique for focusing resources on strategic priority objectives and problem areas. (44) He also recommended further expansion of the number of 'scientific-production associations' (NPOs), combining R & D institutes and series production capacities and managed by scientists. The NPOs have been quite successful over the past decade in shortening the lead-time between applied scientific research and large-scale production of relatively high technology items.

These various measures should help to improve the economic payoff and effectiveness of the vast expenditures on science and technology. Left unstated, however, is the heavy drain on personnel, financial and material resources by the huge Soviet military production sector. Up to now there has been remarkably little 'spin-off' to the civilian economy from this sector, in contrast to Western practices. (45) This loss has been due in large measure to the extreme secrecy surrounding Soviet defense matters, even within given R & D institutes and production facilities where military and civilian production co-exist virtually side-by-side - for example, in military plants which are assigned consumer goods production quotas. From the impressive results of the Soviet weapons development and procurement programs it is obvious that military R & D has a much better record in speeding up the research-to-production cycle. Now Brezhnev has ordered that that experience and the superb research base behind it be made available for assistance to key sectors of the civilian economy. (46)

Finally, the effectiveness of applied scientific and engineering techniques as well as of virtually all the other measures proposed at the Congress to improve economic performance in the years ahead will depend

very much on the rationalization and streamlining of the Soviet administrative mechanism. Brezhnev expressly emphasised the widespread acceptance of the importance of administrative reform when he declared:

Comrades! The solution of the problems before us, the use of the possibilities at our disposal, depend in large measure on the level of leadership of the national economy, the level of planning and administration. That is probably something that every manager, every party official senses very strongly. (47)

The areas of administration needing special attention were discussed with considerable frankness and clarity by both main speakers. Brezhnev began his list with problems of planning and plan fulfillment. He particularly decried the growing tendency toward the downward 'corrections' of plans by intermediate and lower level officials of the managerial hierarchy. Strict fulfillment of plans had once again to be made a primary obligation of all responsible officials. But Tikhonov stressed the point that the plans themselves must be qualitatively improved - to serve as precise, well-balanced, and fully realistic bases for future development. Lack of careful balance in state plans has led in the past to serious disproportions and shortages which have caused 'no little economic damage'. (48) The increased use of contract fulfillment as a primary success criterion for enterprise management (in the July 1979 legislation) would exert a strong positive influence on plan discipline and overall balance in economic development. Very interesting, also, in this regard was Tikhonov's call for the building up of material reserves to relieve the pressures on production inputs. Previously 'reserves' have had an almost pejorative connotation - as something to be uncovered and utilized immediately. Apparently it has finally dawned on Soviet policy-makers that some excess capacity for unforeseen contingencies is a good and necessary thing for a smoothly functioning production system. Gosstab, the State Committee on Material-Technical Supply, is to have a greatly enhanced role in the allocation and manipulation of these reserves.

The second problem on Brezhnev's list, and probably one of the main hindrances to better performance for almost the entire post-Khrushchev period, is poor coordination among industrial branches and its corollary evil, the 'departmental' exclusiveness of the respective ministerial empires. Ever since the 25th Party Congress the party leadership has been trying to organize inter-ministerial cooperation and the coordination of departments with similar or complementary production profiles - apparently with little effect. The successful example of inter-branch coordination within a finite regional framework represented by the West Siberian Oil and Gas Complex, for which a special inter-departmental commission of the USSR Council of Ministers was established, is now held up as a model for emulation in other regional or 'complex-goal' schemes. Gosplan has also had some positive experience with the inter-departmental committee format, including the establishment of one operational headquarters in Tiumen' to direct local energy and industrial development. In short, Brezhnev has called for greater organizational flexibility so that new administrative forms and combinations can be tailored to the changing needs and problems of the economy. If this appeal succeeds, it could mean a radical shift from the structural stability, bordering on immobilisme, previously fostered by Brezhnev and once characteristic of the Stalinist system which

Khrushchev had striven so mightily to revitalize. In this regard it is noteworthy that Tikhonov has proposed a full - and presumably continuous - analysis of the organizational principles and functional specificities of the component sub-units of production associations, with the aim of tailoring their production profiles to the requirements of the 11th FYP. Past experience and the conservative political biases of the Brezhnev regime would seem to militate against any dramatic changes of basic structure, but the implications of the call for continuous review and greater structural flexibility could be significant.

The nagging problem of the squandering of capital construction funds over an unduly broad and territorially scattered range of objectives may at last be on the way to solution. Stringent measures to concentrate on completion of priority objectives in the past couple of years have reportedly cleared up a backlog of unfinished projects. Tikhonov warned that the practice of siting projects primarily according to the availability of construction enterprises in a given locality will no longer be tolerated. More emphasis is to be placed on the mobility of personnel and equipment in the building industry and concentration on a limited number of high priority projects. To combat departmental isolationism and lack of coordination on siting in regions earmarked for development the Executive Committee of the corresponding local Soviet is to have enhanced powers of control over economic construction.

Both men saw the ultimate solution to the problem of administrative reform in a change of psychology on the part of responsible managerial personnel. This has become a familiar refrain in what passes for Soviet political and administrative theory, but Tikhonov's formulation is quite poignant in its triteness and is worth quoting at some length for that reason:

The improvement of the administrative mechanism insistently demands a profound change in the content, methods and style of activity, a reconstruction of the very psychology of administrative cadres. The contemporary economic leader should deeply understand the scientific and technical foundations of production, its organization and economics; he must master the methods of struggle for high labour productivity and quality of output; he must combine professional competence with a broad ideological and political world view, and an ability to work with people. For him, as never before, businesslike qualities, an ability to take the long view, energy and perseverance, and a socialist entrepreneurial spirit are important. (49)

Assuming that such persons can be found in suitable numbers, the question remains whether the system in which they are constrained to operate will allow them to make the best use of their talents.

So far we have been reviewing the policy statements of only the two main speakers at the Congress, what might be called the 'normative' part of the proceedings. The other Soviet participants - mainly the regional party leaders and a few governmental officials - had some occasionally interesting observations to make on more practical 'empirical' aspects of the central themes of the Congress. In the remaining pages of the chapter a selected sample of these comments will be offered to help round out the

picture of the Soviet economy and its problems and prospects as they appeared to some of its leading protagonists at the time of the Congress.

On energy and related matters the First Secretary of the Rostov Obkom, I.A. Bondarenko, provided some interesting sidelights on problems surrounding the completion of the 'Atomash' nuclear energy equipment plant in the city of Volgodonsk. The failure to construct suitable urban amenities there has created difficulties for maintaining a stable labour force, the lack of which has seriously delayed delivery schedules for nuclear equipment. (50)

Another side of the energy problem was discussed by A.K. Chernyi, First Secretary of the Khabarovsk Kraikom. His complaint was that in his strategic territory on the Chinese border shortages of electricity and coal have seriously impeded development in the region. Plans for the electrification of the Eastern sections of BAM have been unfulfilled, and targets for soft-coal extraction to fuel thermo-electric power stations for general development needs have not been met. For this he blames the coal-mining construction industry for insufficient activity. (51)

Similar complaints were uttered by G.P. Bogomiakov, party leader in Tiumen' Oblast, the centre of the vital oil and gas field of Western Siberia. There, too, despite Brezhnev's initiative in creating a model 'territorial-production complex', tardy construction of electric power generation facilities using abundant natural gas reserves have held up industrial development. Bogomiakov also mentioned a number of 'unresolved problems' of the social infrastructure requiring solution to keep the necessary labour force on hand for planned development. (52)

Another important aspect of the energy problem was discussed by B.V. Kachura, party chief of the Donetsk Oblast in the Ukraine, the centre of the old coal-mining industry. The main issue there was a noticeable tendency for central authorities to neglect additional capital investment in modernizing the mines, the metallurgical plants, and the social infrastructure of the region as coal reserves become more difficult and costly to exploit. (53) Analogous complaints were sounded by V.D. Naumkin, a veteran labour hero from a steel smelting plant in the aging Magnitogorsk metallurgical complex in the Urals. Modernization of equipment has been lagging badly, and it is impossible to meet current goals for qualitative and quantitative improvements with the existing obsolete plant. The fact that local ore deposits have essentially run out is undoubtedly an important cause of this neglect. Yet, according to Naumkin, abundant supplies of ore lie nearby in the Kustanai Oblast. The trouble is that there and elsewhere, extraction work is proceeding too slowly, and geologists and metallurgists seem to be dragging their heels in developing practical techniques for enrichment of the ores. (54) Similar comments on the slow tempo of modernization programs for old mines and smelters were made by the Chairman of the Ukraine Council of Ministers, A.P. Liashko. The new targets for quality and assortment of production are practically unattainable with the existing outmoded equipment, yet reconstruction work seems to have a low priority. (55)

The Minister of the Gas Industry of the USSR, S.A. Orudzhev, outlined some of the complex problems to be solved in developing the tremendous West Siberian gas fields. On the whole, his speech exhibited a confidence which

undoubtedly reflected the signal successes of this industry in the past few years. However, he warned that measures to economize on gas consumption should be taken promptly and sought legislation to make conservation practices mandatory. (56)

The appropriately named Minister of the Electronics Industry, A.I. Shokin, had some encouraging things to say about the performance of his ministry in recent years, one of the few success stories in the area of Soviet high-technology production. Shokin attributed much of the industry's success in speeding up the research-to-production cycle to the use of complex-goal programming in the planning of R & D work. (57) He drew several rounds of applause for his boasts that his ministry had defeated the U.S. embargo on micro-electronic components by developing home-grown items which even the Americans had to admit were up to world standards. (58) Yet he had to concede that there were still problems in some areas. Some items included in production plans could not be produced; and some materials needed for state-of-the-art micro-components were still not available in the USSR. For this purpose he suggested the establishment of specialized plants to produce materials specifically for the electronics industry.

The number of speakers on agriculture and its problems was virtually as long as the list of party officials who spoke at the Congress. Given the unfavorable food supply situation, almost every region still has to work toward maximum self-sufficiency, and in any given year there are few regional leaders who do not have at least some standard complaints. The 26th Congress was no exception; all the old laments were repeated: about the continuing exodus from the farms, fodder shortages, shortages of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, inadequacies of transportation and storage facilities, poor cultural and living conditions in the village, etc., etc. The Central Asian party leaders added a not entirely new twist by implicitly ganging together in demanding concrete work on the long-discussed, Stalinesque program to divert the major Siberian rivers to flow southwards for the expansion of irrigated farming. (59)

Another agricultural issue almost forgotten at the Congress was Brezhnev's pet project for reviving agriculture in the non-black-earth zone of European Russia. One speaker, a kolkhoz chairman from Kirov Oblast east of Moscow, complained that most construction work in the zone has to be carried out by local forces and that this is not good enough. He demanded that the reconstruction effort be given a top state priority. (60)

The speech by the USSR Minister of Agriculture, V.K. Mesiats, was essentially one prolonged mea culpa. Nor was there much promise for a speedy turnaround in the near future. The main hope was still for better utilization of available material and technical resources in the village and Mesiats's assurance that agricultural specialists and bureaucrats were currently involved in a major project to draw up and introduce scientifically based farming practices for each zone of the county as the foundation for intensification is hardly as encouraging as it sounds. (61) Soviet farm managers already suffer from too much central advice and supervision.

Several interesting comments about transportation and its problems and prospects were contained in the address by USSR Ministry of Transportation ('Ways of Communication'), I.G. Pavlovskii. He noted that 6,500 kilometres of existing railways were to be electrified, so that by the end of the 11th FYP almost two-thirds of freight shipments would be handled by electric locomotives. (62) Diesel locomotive construction and modernization are still a bottleneck for the industry, however. But from his comments the conclusion emerges that a good deal of the anticipated improvements are still being sought through simply more sophisticated variants of the traditional methods of squeezing more intensive utilization practices out of existing facilities.

Other than the statements by Electronics Minister Shokin, the most arresting comments on the scientific and technological program were made by A.P. Aleksandrov, the President of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He, too, boasted of Soviet successes in thwarting the US embargo on high-technology items. The USSR, he claimed, can now sell abroad certain technological articles that are superior to Western versions. The Soviet Union, he said, no longer lags in the fields of biology and polymer chemistry. He cited problem areas where noted scientists have successfully cooperated with industry in monitoring and accelerating the process of vnedrenie. And he warned against the dangers of permanent obsolescence inherent in over-dependence on imports of foreign technology. (63) So his basic message was to concentrate on domestic R & D on as broad a front as possible. This was probably sound advice under the circumstances, but it could also be interpreted as an example of special pleading for additional budgetary allocation which will have a not very unfamiliar ring to observers of the Western scientific and technical scene.

In general the complaints and requests by the secondary speakers at the Congress illustrated the tremendous range and variety of the claims on the central decision-makers as they seek to revitalize and re-orient the Soviet economy under the changed conditions of the eighties. Even without considering the crucial, if unstated, military spending factor, always lurking in the background as a major claimant on resources, the Soviet leaders will undoubtedly have enough on their plates in trying to determine rational priorities and orchestrating an optimal mix of resources to achieve them.

Conclusions: Soviet Economic Prospects for the Eighties

The extremely disappointing harvest of 1981 - the third such misfortune in succession and the first year of the 11th FYP - demonstrates the folly of relying too heavily on precise planning in an economy whose managers have no intention of settling for steady-state equilibrium or merely nominal growth. Indeed, as long as the GNP of the USSR continues to lag substantially behind that of its main capitalist superpower rival, tangible evidence of dynamic growth will be considered mandatory as, among other things, a symbol of the ideological and political legitimacy of the reigning power-holders. The importance of this competitive element as a motivating factor in Soviet economic policy-making cannot be over-estimated. It is perhaps most visible and easiest to rationalize - for those who feel it necessary to justify Soviet behaviour - in the military field. But it is equally important in the civilian field as well. Soviet political leaders, and most Soviet citizens, too, as far as we can tell, seem to evince little of the scorn for the materialism of the 'American way of life', so common among bourgeois intellectuals on both ends of the political spectrum in the West. However much they may publicly deny the fact, Soviet planners continue to regard the assortment of scientific, industrial, and commercial goods associated with American capitalism as a kind of beacon. Will they succeed in getting any closer to that beacon in the 11th Five-Year Plan - or ever?

Apart from the chronic problems of agriculture and the depressant impact its failures have on living standards, the Soviet economy cannot be said to be in any danger of collapse. Its shortcomings exist primarily in terms of comparison with the ambitions and ideological objectives of its leaders.

The political and administrative system which has evolved has been a primary factor in both the successes and failures of the economy. It is essentially a military-type mobilization system, effective in marshalling available material and human resources for strategic objectives, but like all such systems it is extremely wasteful and poorly suited to achieve balanced growth on an economy-wide basis. Moreover, because the mobilizational style has proven psychologically exhausting for its executors, the system has generated certain institutional and behavioral syndromes whose latent function is to 'normalize' the routines of ongoing management. In short, the mobilizational system is often at war with itself - a kind of counter-guerilla warfare in which the party centre is forced to conduct sporadic mobilizational campaigns to impose its will against the active and passive resistance of the administrative bureaucracy and the working class itself. Since the administrative bureaucrats are actually an important part of the party leaders' political constituency, the latter must take extreme care not to alienate too many of them at any one time, as Khrushchev found, to his misfortune.

This correlation of political forces helps to explain the atmosphere of studied caution surrounding the discussions and suggestions at the 26th Party Congress. It also gives grounds for the presumption that the most radical recommendations for change, particularly in the area of administrative reform, will be significantly attenuated in the course of their eventual implementation. (64)

In general, one can probably assume that a reasonable degree of success will be achieved on those objectives defined as having top priority, for example, the West-Siberian gas and petrochemical development project and certain of the other territorial-production complexes. Transportation and some aspects of the machine-tool industry modernization program also lend themselves to the mobilizational style and will probably also be more or less satisfactorily developed. The food program, being much more diffuse, and more susceptible to the vagaries of weather, is less likely to respond to campaigning, although concentrated development of the industrial and technical infrastructure may eventually succeed in moderating the annual swings of production. The success of the consumer goods sector, likewise extremely diffuse and heavily dependent on agricultural performance, must also remain doubtful.

The hidden factor of military spending will, of course, determine the fate of many of the proposed developmental projects, especially those with a lower priority. Continuation or intensification of the arms race will call into question the success of all but the highest priority objectives. There is no reason to believe that the military development program is any more efficient than the main civilian economy, except for its evident superiority in cutting lead-times from design to serial production. The added cost of this speed can only be conjectured. Already accounting for approximately 15% of the state budget, military spending represents a heavy mortgage on the entire Soviet economy. There is little doubt that Soviet planners will continue to impose whatever sacrifices are considered necessary to maintain their competitive position vis-à-vis the USA in this decisive area.

Thus, although the Soviet economy, at its present level of development, is not in serious danger, there is little room for complacency. Western countries, almost without exception, would gladly exchange places with the USSR in regard to energy potential, for example. But the Soviet leaders must obviously do better in making use of their country's natural advantages in many areas. The Soviet masses certainly demand better performance, especially in the consumer goods area, and their leaders themselves undoubtedly wish to accommodate them, if only as a matter of pride in demonstrating the viability of their system. But given the persistent inefficiencies and contradictions of the system itself - consider, for example, just the annual costs of maintaining the section of the party apparatus engaged in supervising the economy (probably not far short of 750 million rubles by our rough calculations) - one cannot be very optimistic about Soviet prospects for closing the economic gap with the advanced Western economies in the eighties.

Notes

1. The slogan gained wide currency following its enunciation by Brezhnev in his Central Committee Report at the 24th Party Congress in 1971. L.I. Brezhnev, 'Otchetnyi doklad Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS XXIV s"ezdu Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza,' Kommunist, No. 5 (March 1971), p. 46.
2. Ekonomicheskaja gazeta, No. 5 (January 1981), pp. 10-11; for selected targets in the 1980 plan see *ibid.*, No. 50 (December 1979), p. 1.
3. Ekonomicheskaja gazeta, No. 5 (January 1981), p. 12.
4. 'Russia Can Get By With a Little Help From Its Enemies', The Economist, 9 May 1981, pp. 97-99; see, also, David Dyker, 'The Soviet Energy Balance and the Conundrum of Coal', Radio Liberty Research, RL 43/81, 27 January 1981.
5. A. Laliants, 'Elektrifikatsiia strany -- itogi i problemy', Kommunist, No. 12 (August 1981), p. 36.
6. *ibid.*, p. 33.
7. The Economist, 9 May 1981, p. 98.
8. V. Kremer and N. Limonov, 'Normativnye dyry', Sotsialisticheskaja industriia, 25 October 1981, p. 2.
9. For a good analysis of current problems in the Soviet machine-tool industry see James Grant, 'Soviet Machine Tools: Lagging Technology and Rising Imports', in Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Soviet Economy in a Time of Change, vol. 1 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 10 October 1979), esp. pp. 577-581 *passim*.
10. E. Prokhorenko, 'Sovetskaia tekhnologiya na vsex kontinentakh', Sots. ind. 6 August 1980, p. 3.
11. 'O merakh po uvelicheniiu proizvodstva i shirokomu primeneniiu avtomaticheskikh manipulatorov v otrasliakh narodnogo khoziaistva v svete ukazanii XXV s"ezda KPSS', a summary is published in Sots. ind., 9 August 1980, p. 1.
12. There is evidently some debate as to whether robots should be tailor-made by individual plants to suit their own process requirements, or centrally produced, using state-of-the-art technology for standardized machines. For the first position see N. Zemlianoi, 'Svoimi silami', Sots. ind., 28 November 1980, p. 2; for the second, and more generally accepted, see I. Marchenko, 'Zavodskoi propusk robota', Sots. ind., 30 June 1981, p. 2. Even proponents of the former position would like to see standardized components readily available for the construction of their specialized machines, however.

13. This disproportionate share of investment going to agriculture (about 30% of total state investment) is noteworthy even if the real value of gross agricultural output is considerably higher than is officially recognized. (Recent estimates are that agriculture accounts for close to 20% of gross social product, rather than the officially state 15-16%). Radio Liberty Research, RS 123/80, 2 September 1980.
14. Andreas Tenson, 'The Human Factor As an Obstacle to Mechanization on Soviet Farms', Radio Liberty Research, RL 383/81, 22 September 1981.
15. V. Biriukov, 'Dosrochno ... v lom', Izvestiia, 22 August 1981, p. 2.
16. 'Ob uluchshenii planirovaniia i ekonomicheskogo stimulirovaniia proizvodstva i zagotovok sel'skokhoziaistvennykh produktov', Decree of the CC CPSU and the Council of Ministers, USSR, of 14 November 1980, Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta, No. 52 (December 1980), pp. 5-7.
17. See, for example, the letter to Izvestiia from a group of four kolkhoz chairmen from Tula Oblast': A. Vorob'ev, V. Rodionov, G. Trushin, and V. Shishkanov, 'Khozaschet i kolkhozy', Izvestiia, 25 September 1981, p. 3.
18. For an excellent analysis of problems of the Soviet railroad industry see the paper by J.N. Westwood, 'Soviet Transport Policy: Past, Present, and Future', presented at the Seminar on Soviet Science, Industry and Technology at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, in april 1981, p. 3. I am indebted to my colleague Dr S. Fortescue for bringing this paper to my attention.
19. See, for example, the recent article by V. Sviatotskii, the Transport Secretary of the L'vov Obkom, entitled 'Effektivnee ispol'zovat' transport', Partiinaia zhizn, No. 20 (October 1981), pp. 43-47. The whole thrust of the campaign described is toward improving the use of existing equipment.
20. E. Rubinchik, 'Priamye sviazi', Sots. ind., 3 December 1980, p. 2.
21. V. Seliunov, 'Iskliucheniia bez pravil', Sots. ind., 9 October 1980, p. 2.
22. Mervyn Matthews, Privilege in the Soviet Union: A Study of Elite Life-Styles Under Communism. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), esp. chapter 2.
23. Andreas Tenson, 'How Will Soviet Living Standards Fare Under the 11th Five-Year Plan?' Radio Liberty Research, RL 229/81, 4 June 1981.
24. See, for example, the apparently not unusual case of a plant manager who called in the sanitary inspectors in order to have an unprofitable production process closed down after his superiors had refused to drop the item in question from his production plan. v. Simonov, 'Miasorubka ... bez ruchki', Sots. ind., 20 August 1980, p. 2.

25. 'Ob uluchshenii planirovaniia i usilenii vozdeistviia khoziaistvennogo mekhanizma na povyshenie effektivnosti proizvodstva i kachestva raboty', in Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, 20th edition (Moscow: Politizdat, 1980), pp. 216-257. See also, the summary of the Decree in Pravda, 29 July 1979, pp. 1-2.
26. Allan Kroncher, 'Kuda vedet Postanovlenie 29 iulia 1979 goda?' Radio Liberty Research, RS 120/79, 9 August 1979.
27. The quotation is from the summary of the Decree in Pravda, 29 July 1979, p. 1.
28. The fact that the centralizers, or 'perfect computationists', as they are sometimes called, do not have things all their own way is suggested by the publication in Kommunist, of all places, of an article by a well known centralizer, A. Kats, and several colleagues claiming to prove, on the basis of an extended experiment, that the new indicator of standard net output can be made to work flawlessly. But the fact that it was published only as a focus for discussion is a clear sign of its controversiality. It is highly unusual for so technical (and long) an article to be published in Kommunist, the party's most authoritative political journal, implying high-level support for Kats's centralist ideas, but also a certain reluctance to go out on a limb for them against evidently strong opposition. A. Kats, M. Mirkovskii, and A. Porada, 'Ob odnom eksperimente po sovershenstvovaniu khoziaistvennogo mekhanizma', Kommunist, No. 11 (July 1981), pp. 42-54. See especially the editorial comment at the bottom of p. 42.
29. See the last paragraph of Section XI of the 11th FYP (Osnovnye napravleniia ...) on 'Development of Foreign Economic Links', XXVI s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuzha, 23 fevralia - 3 marta 1981 goda: Stenograficheskii otchet, vol. 2 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1981), p. 221.
30. Even the CIA has had to revise upward its 1975 forecast that Soviet oil production would have begun to decline by 1985. On this prediction see, for example, The Economist, 9 May 1981, p. 98.
31. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, p. 56.
32. ibid., p. 58.
33. XXVI s"ezd, vol 2, p. 15.
34. ibid., p. 16.
35. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, p. 57.
36. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 2, p. 17.
37. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, p. 56.
38. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 2, p. 23.

39. *ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
40. *ibid.*, p. 28.
41. Michael Binyon, 'Going Through the Motions in Moscow', The Times, 5 March 1981, p. 16.
42. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, p. 61.
43. *ibid.*
44. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 2, p. 18.
45. For an excellent earlier treatment of this problem see Robert W. Campbell, 'Management Spillovers From Soviet Space and Military Programmes', Soviet Studies, vol. XXIII, No. 4 (April 1972), pp. 586-607.
46. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, p. 62.
47. *ibid.*, p. 68.
48. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 2, p. 33.
49. *ibid.*, p. 34.
50. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, pp. 159-160.
51. *ibid.*, p. 322.
52. *ibid.*, pp. 351-352.
53. *ibid.*, pp. 356-357.
54. *ibid.*, p. 136.
55. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 2, pp. 48-49.
56. *ibid.*, p. 115.
57. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, p. 273.
58. *ibid.*, pp. 274-275.
59. See, for example, the speeches of Rashidov (Uzbekistan), *ibid.*, p. 149; Kunaev (Kazakhstan), *ibid.*, p. 127; Usubaliyev (Kirghizia), *ibid.*, pp. 270-271; and Gapurov (Turkmenistan), *ibid.*, p. 313. For a good recent study of the politics of Soviet water resources policy under Brezhnev see Thane Gustafson, Reform in Soviet Politics: Lessons of Recent Policies on Land and Water (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. chs. 7 & 8.
60. A.D. Cherviakov, in *ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

61. SSVI s"ezd, vol. 2, p. 136. K.E. Wädekin notes the evident determination of the regime not to let recent agricultural setbacks lessen its commitment to a specific set of long-term developmental strategies, such as the non-Black Earth a specific zone program. 'Viele Hoffnungen, aber wenig Zuversicht: Zur Lage der sowjetischen Landwirtschaft', Osteuropa, vol. 31, No. 9/10 (September- October 1981), pp. 839-840.
62. *ibid.*, p. 144.
63. XXVI s"ezd, vol. 1, pp. 221-222, 225.
64. Peter Knirsch, in a recent article on the economic aspects of the Congress, makes the interesting observation that the extension of the planning period under the 'Basic Directions ... beyond the 11th FYP to 1990 suggests a commitment to maintain the present institutional and policy perspectives for the indefinite future. Thus, Brezhnev is leaving a questionable legacy for his successors. If that is indeed his intention, it is hardly likely to be realized. Peter Knirsch, 'Der schwierige Weg zur wirtschaftlichen Effizienz: Wirtschaftsfragen auf dem XXVI. Parteitag', Osteuropa, vol. 31, No. 9/10 (September-October 1981), p. 828.

Introduction

The 26th Party Congress of the CPSU, which met from 22 February to 3 March 1981, will probably have been the last one at which Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev plays the leading role. It is not clear that he was able personally to read more than the first half hour or so of his long Report on the Central Committee's work since the last Congress and prospects for the future. But this was clearly his Congress. Soviet and Bloc leaders vied with each other in praise of his leadership and personal traits, as if to assure him that his place in history is secure - much as Tito was revered in the penultimate years of his life. And there was probably as strong an element of conscious orchestration with the full connivance of the object of veneration in Brezhnev's case as there was in Tito's.* Why aged Communist Party leaders should feel the need for such vulgarly fawning adulation and hyperbolic praise is a psychological issue in its own right and need not detain us here. Brezhnev's chance of making his beatification stick is far less than Tito's, if Soviet history to date - and his own relatively modest real role in it - offers any guidance in the matter.

The record of Soviet foreign policy since the 25th Party Congress in 1976 had been a mixed one. On the positive side, growing Soviet strategic military power, which according to some had already gone beyond parity with the US, and the increasing lead over the West in conventional arms, along with an expanding capacity to project Soviet power to the far reaches of the globe, had begun to cancel some of the inhibitions toward risk-taking previously evident in Soviet international conduct. The resultant tendency toward a more adventurous foreign policy was undoubtedly stimulated by the apparent reluctance of the Carter Administration to contest Soviet assertiveness in peripheral areas. The express working hypothesis of the American foreign policy establishment that the USSR was essentially a 'satisfied power', similarly interested in international stability, and the lethargic response of the White House to patent evidence to the contrary, must have seemed to Moscow strangely inconsistent with President Carter's simultaneous insistence on calling attention to Soviet violations of human rights. Moreover, the explicit repudiation of 'linkage' as a principle of US conduct toward the USSR and the relegation of US-Soviet relations to a less-than-central place in American perspectives on foreign policy merely added to the perplexity and anger of Soviet decision-makers. As targets of opportunity successively presented themselves in various parts of the world, Moscow accordingly appeared increasingly inclined to take advantage of them. Brezhnev and his colleagues clearly felt that the growing military power of the Soviet Union entitled them to be consulted on an equal footing with US leaders on all major world problems. Washington's refusal to accord them this recognition -- for example by excluding them

* Tito's cult at least had the rational objective of legitimizing and consolidating the institutional structures he was trying to leave to his successors.

from the search for an Arab-Israeli settlement which culminated in the Camp David accords -- evidently infuriated the Soviet leaders. But their frustration obviously did not stop them from pursuing expansionist opportunities wherever they could; on the contrary, it seemed merely to reinforce their determination to do so.

The list of Soviet successes in the inter-congress period was quite impressive. In Asia the expansion of their Vietnamese clients into Laos and Cambodia and the revival of close ties with Delhi following Mrs Gandhi's return to power contributed strongly to the encirclement of China and effectively countered the rather unobvious efforts of Carter and Brzezinski to play the 'China card' against Moscow. The collapse of the Shah of Iran and the ensuing turmoil loosed by the Islamic fundamentalism of Ayatollah Khomeiny liquidated a source of 'imperialist' pressure from the South and created potential opportunities for greater future influence in that important neighboring country and the surrounding oil-rich region. The Afghan adventure must also be seen in the context of the perceived opportunities (and dangers) emanating from that unstable region, namely the opportunity to exchange a situation of strong influence for one of direct control.

In Africa the previous success in Angola was soon followed up by the extension to Ethiopia of the same basic strategy of using Cuban (and East German) military proxies to expand Soviet influence in the important Northeastern quarter of the continent. The concomitant loss of position in Somalia was evidently regarded in Moscow as an acceptable interim 'min-max' solution - a temporary tradeoff to be made good under more favorable circumstance in the future. The analogous earlier loss of Egypt, although obviously serious, was partially compensated by increasingly close ties with radical Libya, effectively sandwiching President Sadat between the pro-Soviet radical regimes of Colonel Gaddafi and Haile Menghistu Mariam.

Even in Washington's backyard, Central America, opportunities for expanded Soviet influence were suddenly emerging. Granada, in the Caribbean, actively solicited Soviet assistance through increasingly close links with Brezhnev's 'man in Havana', Fidel Castro. The Soviets were understandably somewhat more cautious in this region, for example, in Nicaragua, but covert material (and military) aid and more overt political support were extended to the Sandinista regime in that country; and similar moves were afoot in El Salvador and Honduras. Fidel was obviously willing and able to lend assistance to such efforts - as he had done in Africa - both out of revolutionary fervour and, perhaps, as a repayment for over two decades of generous Soviet economic support. For Castro such internationalist activism was undoubtedly also a useful device for diverting domestic attention from the sorry economic situation in Cuba.

In Western Europe détente had resulted in a two-sided gain for Soviet interests. Soviet technological imports had helped to bail out the stagnating industrial economies of several important NATO countries, creating a strong interest in the continuation of Soviet business on the part of important industrial and political leaders. In addition, the combination of visibly growing Soviet military might and of the erratic leadership and doctrinal ambiguities emanating from Washington had led to the revival of neutralist sentiments in significant sections of the West European public.

But if, on balance, the foreign policy picture viewed from the Kremlin in early 1981 looked quite promising, the scene was not entirely positive. Indeed many of the achievements cited above were themselves directly or indirectly the cause of some of the difficulties which Brezhnev and his colleagues had to address at the time of the 26th Party Congress. There can be little doubt that public dissatisfaction with the passivity of the Carter Administration's response to the deterioration of American military and political fortunes vis à vis the USSR was a major factor in the Republican Party's landslide electoral victory in November 1980. Americans, it turned out, did not want to 'think small' and accept the inevitability of decline as preached by Carter (and, let us not forget, Henry Kissinger before him). Ronald Reagan seemed to articulate this mood best, whatever the rationality of his proposals to regain the military-political initiative. But the vote in 1980 was really against Carter and the image of détente he espoused. The string of apparent Soviet successes and the military buildup behind them had thus largely caused the shift in American public opinion.

Even in Western Europe, where the attitude of political leaders toward a return to a cold-war atmosphere in East-West relations was much more ambivalent, the political demise of the Carter Administration was greeted with a sigh of relief. Reagan was hardly a culture hero in Bonn, Paris, Rome, or even Thatcherite London; nevertheless, after Afghanistan, any sign of renewed American resolve was being greeted, by January 1981, with noticeable satisfaction.

The collapse of SALT II, NATO plans to deploy so-called Theatre Nuclear Weapons, and tightened controls over exports of Western technology were all products of the threat to détente and international security posed by demonstrated Soviet adventurism. Just how irreparable the damage to Soviet interests would prove to be was still uncertain at the time of the Congress - as was the direction, consistency, and the acceptability to Washington's NATO allies of the policies of the new Reagan Administration.

Afghanistan was, thus, something of a watershed in Soviet foreign policy, although the full implications of it were far from clear. Had the invasion succeeded immediately, Soviet losses in international prestige would have been very severe, but probably of relatively short duration. Curiously, however, the caution which Western and, perhaps even more importantly, world Islamic reaction imposed on Moscow in the prosecution of the Afghan enterprise somewhat attenuated the impact of the invasion on Western policy. Fear of further deterioration in Moscow's international standing after Afghanistan undoubtedly played a part in Soviet restraint in the handling of the Polish situation. To that extent the Afghan experience had a chastening effect on Soviet decision-makers. On the other hand, the evident troubles they have had in Afghanistan - 'Brezhnev's Vietnam', as some have laboured to portray it - have had a strangely reassuring effect on some West European leaders. It is almost as if Soviet failures in Afghanistan have shown that Reagan, not Brezhnev, is the real threat to world peace. Therefore, business with Moscow as usual is apparently the order of the day.

These considerations and potentialities could hardly have been clearly evident to Soviet leaders at the time of the Congress. Nevertheless, some foreshadowing of such opportunities appears to have been present in their

thinking as they sought to limit the damage to détente and counter the new challenge of the Reagan Administration evoked by their recent 'dizziness from success'.

The major thrust of Brezhnev's Report to the Congress and of most of the associated discussion on it and on Prime Minister N.A. Tikhonov's companion report on the economy was on domestic policy. But there were important foreign policy comments as well, and some of the domestic developmental issues raised also had significant indirect foreign policy implications. Among the more direct foreign policy issues raised by Brezhnev was his important package of 'initiatives' designed to reopen or maintain dialogue with Western leaders on arms control, weapons deployment, and other 'confidence-building' measures associated with détente. There were also the obligatory analyses of relations with the three traditional areas of political and ideological concern: the international socialist system and movement, the capitalist world, and the developing countries, most of which were considered to have finished the anti-colonialist phase of their struggle for national liberation. Included in these analyses were special references to two of the main issues of the 'first' world; namely, the continued hostility of China, and the declining but still annoying challenge of 'Eurocommunism'.

Among the indirect foreign policy considerations were, of course, the vital questions of foreign trade and the stimulation of a substantial inflow of goods and capital to assist high-priority resource development in the more difficult Northern and Eastern regions of the country. There are many facets to this problem, from the importation of coarse grains to assist the buildup of livestock herds, to the purchase of high-technology equipment to speed up the development of major contemporary industrial sectors. Underlying the concern for a rapid quantitative and qualitative improvement in living standards was the situation in neighboring Poland. Russians are not Poles, to be sure, but the Polish example, and accounts of disturbances over food shortages in the provinces, had undoubtedly signalled a warning to Soviet Party leaders that further belt-tightening for the sake of other priorities was simply not on.

Another source of foreign policy implications with which the Soviet leaders had to contend were the remarks by foreign delegates at the Congress. Among the bales of chaff heaped up in that quarter were some occasionally interesting kernels of substance, especially from Bloc party leaders, but not exclusively so.

The approach taken here is the familiar one of interpreting the detailed pronouncements of the main speakers and relating the nuanced differences in response by the various Soviet and foreign discussants. It is perhaps not an entirely scientific procedure, but it is no less painstaking and exhausting for all that - especially since the 26th Party Congress was not among the more exciting and eventful examples of the genre.

The Setting

On the 2nd of December 1980 the main Soviet newspapers (e.g. Pravda and Izvestia) published a long draft policy outline by the Central Committee of the CPSU on 'The Basic Direction of the Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1981-1985 and for the Period to 1990' (1). The covering Decree ordered a nationwide discussion of the Draft up to the opening of the 26th Party Congress to bring its basic message home to the people and to mobilize support and enthusiasm for the Congress itself. Whether or not this campaign achieved its objectives, the Draft did serve as the basis for most of the discussion of domestic policy at the Congress. It also touched briefly upon areas of direct or indirect relevance to foreign policy, if only en passant. On the matter of further economic integration in COMECON, for example, the Draft called for direct linkages between Soviet and COMECON-member ministries, enterprises, and organizations involved in cooperative and integrated production arrangements. It suggested also a greater dependence than heretofore upon these countries for assistance in accelerating scientific and technical progress.

On the matter of trade with capitalist countries the Draft called for the development of stable, mutually profitable relations with those countries 'interested in cooperation with the USSR', especially in the financing of large-scale projects in the energy, metallurgical, and chemical sectors. The chastening effect of recent trade embargoes and perhaps recognition of opportunities for playing individual Western countries off against one another are reflected in the phraseology employed. The Draft also ordered a change in the structure of Soviet exports toward a greater concentration on sales of machinery and other finished manufactures at competitive world-market quality and technical standards, than on the traditional raw material and fuel exports.

Finally, in the area of imports the appeal is for

rationally utilizing the possibilities of the international division of labour for the acceleration of scientific and technical progress, the fuller satisfaction of the needs of the national economy for progressive equipment, the newest technological processes, raw and other materials, and also the demands of the populace for consumer goods. (2)

Except for a slightly more cautious verbal statement of these issues, reflecting, perhaps, the recent painful experiences with the US and a certain disillusionment with previous 'shotgun' approaches to the procurement of foreign technologies and industrial processes, there does not appear to be much change here from past policies in the trade area. However, in the longer sections of the Draft devoted to specific elements of development for the 1981-85 period it is clear that the aim is to avoid dependence on the West and work for the building of indigenous capacities in all major technological fields. This objective became clearer in Brezhnev's Report at the Congress and even more so in the remarks of some Soviet officials, who seemed to be taking a more autarkic and inner-directed position than is reflected in the Draft. Whether these discrepancies were intended merely for propaganda effect (both internal and

external) or are a matter of real differences of emphasis or direction is difficult to say. (The two possibilities are, of course, not mutually exclusive.) The collapse of détente and the imposition by the US of a partial embargo on grain and high-technology sales have obviously had an impact on Soviet thinking about modes of industrial modernization and development, even if the changes called for seem anything but radical at this point. As usual, everything will depend not so much on the nature and correctness of the options selected as on the speed and coherence of their implementation.

From the adulation universally expressed for Brezhnev at the Congress, both for the quality of his analysis of current problems and proposals for the future and for his past services to the party and State, one cannot escape the impression that party leaders were, by and large, quite comfortable with his strategy of deliberate, non-radical change. In Chapter Four we provide statistical confirmation of the relative stability of leadership personnel, and some of the domestic structural and administrative implications of the declared developmental strategy have already been considered in Chapter Two. Here it is sufficient to note that these factors of stability and slow change are in sharp contrast to the much more dynamic record of Soviet policy in foreign affairs since the 25th Party Congress and also to point out that the accumulated problems of domestic development outlined in the Draft and in Brezhnev's and Tikhonov's reports are bound to have important effects in the foreign policy area as well. Brezhnev's new 'peace initiatives' must be seen in this light.

Foreign Policy Proposals and Implications of Brezhnev's Report

In a recent article in Problems of Communism Professor Uri Ra'anah has argued that "'Good Leninists", in their approach, as in action, display an innate penchant for the initiative as a major asset in political no less than military affairs'. (3) This apt characterization certainly applies to Brezhnev's policy proposals at the 26th Congress.* There is little doubt that the aggressive stance of the new Reagan Administration and its announced determination to halt the slide in US military and political influence have alarmed the Kremlin leaders. The relatively weak and erratic responses of the Carter Administration to opportunistic Soviet foreign policy advances in Asia, Africa, and less directly, in Latin America, in the past half decade had been interpreted by them as tacit acquiescence in what they perceived as the changed balance of forces in favour of the 'world socialist system'. The steady and massive

* A good example of this striving to maintain the initiative in the immediate past were Brezhnev's proposals for the demilitarization of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean during his recent journey to India, ineptly dubbed in the Western media as a new 'Brezhnev Doctrine' (Sotsialisticheskaya industriya, 11 December 1980).

buildup of Soviet conventional and nuclear armaments had thus ostensibly accomplished its main (and probably predominantly) political objectives. Under the umbrella of SALT II, attention could safely be turned, it was expected, to satisfying the main domestic civilian economic requirements which had been deferred to pay for the buildup, while the recent foreign policy victories were 'digested' and the anticipated pro-forma Western outcry was induced to fade away by suitable diplomatic and economic blandishments.

The early policy statements of the Reagan Administration and their apparent resonance in Allied capitals threatened to disrupt this scenario, especially since they were accompanied by military budget and deployment programs which suggested anything but an acquiescence in the recently evolved East-West 'correlation of forces'. In short, at least for a time the initiative had been seized by Washington. Brezhnev's proposals at the Congress were, therefore, designed to wrest it back by blunting the Reagan challenge, most desirably through the fragmentation of the hastily 'born-again' unity and determination of the Western Alliance.

The content of the Brezhnev 'peace initiatives' made this aim quite clear. In the section of his Report entitled 'Relations with Capitalist States. To counteract the Forces of Aggression. A Policy of Peace and Cooperation', after noting the 'unprecedented' growth of military expenditures, especially in the USA, and after rejecting the alleged American stake on limited nuclear warfare with the warning that the latter really means sacrificing Western Europe to the interests of American security, Brezhnev presented a set of proposals designed to demonstrate Soviet flexibility and willingness to make mutual concessions for the sake of averting such a catastrophe. These include a restatement of his New Delhi offer to enter into an international agreement guaranteeing the security, stability, and peace of the Persian Gulf region with the hope that the USA and its NATO partners will, 'calmly and without prejudice', give the offer serious consideration.

Reversing the previous Soviet position, Brezhnev offered the USA the opportunity to renegotiate the SALT II treaty albeit with the reservation that the 'positive' achievements of the past agreement must be preserved. He also invited a reexamination of the balance of conventional weapons between NATO and the WTO taking great pains to argue that the European weapons distribution is essentially equivalent. He asserted, for example, that although the WTO has more tanks, NATO has more anti-tank weapons, and, that the military manpower situation is slightly skewed in favour of the West. The USSR, he said, will never accept a position of inferiority, but it does not seek superiority.

'It is generally acknowledged', he asserts, 'that the international situation to a great extent depends on the policy of the USSR and the USA. The state of relations between them at the present time and the acuteness of international problems demanding resolution, in our opinion dictate the necessity of a dialogue on all levels, and an active one. We are ready for such a dialogue'. (4)

And he therefore proposed a summit meeting with President Reagan.

With respect to Western Europe Brezhnev promised many opportunities for continual cooperation and good relations in a number of civilian fields, pointing out the special relationship that has evolved with France, and to a lesser extent with West Germany. Finland was, not surprisingly, held up as a model of cordial Soviet relations with a capitalist state.

However, he noted a serious deterioration in the military situation in recent times:

I'm talking above all about the decision of NATO to deploy in Western Europe American nuclear rocket systems. This decision is 'an answer' to an imaginary Soviet challenge, not an ordinary modernization of the arsenal, as they assert in the West. What it is is a clear intention to change in NATO's favour the existing military balance in Europe. (5)

Such developments, he warned, cannot but harm relations with the countries involved, and damage their own real security interests.

Brezhnev expressed similar concern over recent Japanese policies. Japan is letting herself be used, he asserted, as a pawn of US and Chinese intrigue. Nevertheless he was hopeful that the Japanese leaders could eventually be brought around to see their 'real interests'.

Addressing one of the major themes in this section, he warned that the arms race was threatening to get out of hand. New weapons systems already on the horizon would be even more difficult to control and could only undermine international stability and increase the likelihood of the outbreak of war. Therefore, he presented an offer to negotiate a number of specific control and 'confidence-building' measures. For example, if Western Europe is prepared to reject renewed American proposals for the development and deployment of neutron weapons, the Soviet Union would not begin to produce them (implying, probably falsely, that Soviet development had already reached the stage at which production could begin). In a similar appeal to West European fears and sensibilities he also offered a mutual pledge by West European and WTO countries that neither side be the first to resort to either nuclear or conventional arms: that existing military blocs not be expanded (i.e. by the inclusion of Spain in NATO); and that new military blocs not be formed either in Europe or on other continents. In this connection he called for a 'General European Conference' on disarmament, complaining that the existing Vienna negotiations on arms reductions in Central Europe have been so impeded by the Western participants, who have in the meantime been increasing their military potential, that the Soviet Union can only question their basic motives.

To stimulate the negotiation process, therefore, Brezhnev proposed a number of so-called 'confidence-building measures' (already dubbed 'CBMs' in the jargon of Western strategic studies). First of all, he announced Soviet willingness to extend provisions for advance notification of military manoeuvres to air and naval, as well as ground, exercises and to apply the notification requirements to all large-scale troop movements in general. The particular innovation in this area, however, was Brezhnev's proposal to extend its territorial coverage to include the entire European part of the USSR, in return for analogous territorial concession by the

West (shades of the Gaullist conception of a Europe 'from the Atlantic to the Urals', which the Soviets had once so indignantly rejected!).

Furthermore, Brezhnev suggested the extension of the CBM approach to other trouble spots, namely the Far East, where China, Japan and the USA are invited to join in negotiation for a presumably similar type of agreement.

Turning to the Persian Gulf region, he signalled a new willingness to discuss the question of Soviet troops in Afghanistan as part of a general discussion on the security of that region - but with the express reservation that internal Afghan affairs could not be included as a subject of such negotiations.

Once again on the question of strategic arms limitation talks with the USA, Brezhnev, in addition to offering to renegotiate SALT II, also proposed discussions on the future deployment of the new generation of US 'Trident' and Soviet 'Typhoon' submarine-launched ballistic missile systems. This proposal was aimed specifically at a moratorium on the further development of both the submarines themselves and the missiles associated with them. (The offer suggests that the Soviets consider that they have now drawn abreast of the US in this vital strategic area and do not wish to risk another American breakthrough).

The last concrete proposal in the set of arms limitation initiatives was an offer of an immediate moratorium on the deployment of new medium-range nuclear weapons systems in Europe, specifically naming the US Pershing-2 MRBMs and GLCMs (ground-launched cruise missiles), which are scheduled for the middle of the 1980s. In essence the USSR offered not to add to its already substantial deployment of SS-20s if NATO does not proceed with the development and deployment of systems designed to counter the SS-20 - not a very attractive offer, one would think, until one recalls the difficulties the Carter Administration had had in convincing some members of NATO to accept the stationing of Pershing-2s and GLCMs on their territories.

Finally, to spread the new Soviet message and create a receptive climate for his package of initiatives Brezhnev called for the establishment of an international committee of outstanding scientists to propagate the dangers of a nuclear catastrophe. He also looked toward the summoning of a special session of the UN Security Council attended by the leaders of member states, to search for the 'key' to the 'rehabilitation' of the international situation and to the 'disallowance' of war. Leaders of other interested states could participate as well if they wish.

These proposals represent the substance of Brezhnev's new initiatives. The defensive, mildly curious preliminary reactions to them in Washington, London, and Bonn, for example, suggested that the effort to disrupt the momentum of President Reagan's new political and strategic offensive had been at least partially successful. This is particularly visible in those Western capitals where the drift away from detente has produced unmistakable signs of uneasiness. To this extent the Soviet effort to wrest the initiative away from Washington appears to have some chance of success. Time will tell just how much.

Other important areas of direct foreign policy relevance in Brezhnev's Central Committee Report centre on the question of relations with the Chinese People's Republic and the international communist movement, most particularly the problems of Eurocommunism and the events in Poland.

Direct references to China were relatively sparse in Brezhnev's Report, although it is worth noting that the main discussion was still included in the section on relations with the countries of the socialist system. On the question of internal developments in China, the Soviets appeared to be as confused as we are. Earlier hopes for a reversal of the 'Cultural Revolution' foreign policies had been disappointed. Current prospects were uncertain, but not encouraging:

Changes are now taking place in the internal policies of China. Time will tell their real meaning. It will tell how much the present Chinese leadership will succeed in overcoming the Maoist legacy. But one cannot, unfortunately, speak about any changes for the better in the foreign policy of Peking as yet. As before, it is aimed at aggravating the international situation and converges with the policies of imperialism. This, of course, will not orient China on a healthy path of development. Imperialists aren't likely to be friends of socialism. (6)

This attitude of sorrowful resignation to current Chinese hostility, accompanied by assurances that the USSR sought no confrontation with China, did not apply to the specific instances of Chinese behaviour, mentioned in other parts of the Report - for example, where the 'barbarous' Chinese invasion of Vietnam and Chinese support for Pol Pot in Kampuchea were unequivocally and vigorously condemned. And China's alleged proto-military collusion with the US, Japan and certain unnamed NATO powers was treated as a direct foreign policy danger to the USSR.

Relations with the other 10 countries of the 'Socialist Commonwealth' occupied a special place in the perspectives on Soviet foreign policy, according to Brezhnev, and not only for ideological reasons. The political and economic vicissitudes of the Western capitalist system in the past few years have forced the COMECON countries to draw closer together economically as well as politically to satisfy some of the developmental requirements they had earlier expected to fulfil through East-West trade. Hence Brezhnev's call for further steps toward integration of the member countries' economies. To be sure, this had been a familiar refrain for over a decade, and progress had been painfully slow. Now, however, there seemed to be an added sense of urgency and commitment. For one thing, Brezhnev was calling for long-term 'goal programs' as the focus of specific cooperative efforts. For another, he foreshadowed a 'convergence' of types of economic and managerial structures. For yet another he suggested the establishment of joint firms and direct links between the ministries, trusts, and enterprises of the cooperating countries.

And when he repeated the old (basically untrue) truism that the exchange of experience in the practises of building socialism had always been a multilateral process, he now mentioned specific examples where Bloc countries had something to teach the USSR - e.g. the smooth operation of agricultural cooperatives and enterprises in Hungary, the rationalization of production and conservation of energy and production inputs in East

Germany, the social security system in Czechoslovakia, and agro-industrial cooperative ventures in Bulgaria and certain other European socialist countries.

So much for the good news. The bad news, needless to say, concerned Poland. Here Brezhnev's tone was firm, but relatively moderate. The imperialists and their agents, naturally, came in for the lion's share of blame for the undermining and discrediting of socialism. Having learned from their past mistakes, he warned, they were now 'acting against the countries of socialism with ever more refinement and insidiousness'. But the external factor was not the only cause of disruption.

Where mistakes and slipups in internal policy are added to the subversive activity of imperialism, there arises fertile soil for the activation of elements hostile to socialism. That is what happened in fraternal Poland, where the enemies of socialism, with the support of external forces, creating anarchy, are seeking to divert the course of events into a counterrevolutionary channel. (7)

But Brezhnev expressed his support for the Polish party leadership in their efforts to rehabilitate the party's 'action capability' and restore the economy to health with the promise (or was it a warning?):

Polish communists, the Polish working class, and the toilers of that country can firmly bank on their friends and allies; we shall not leave socialist Poland, fraternal Poland, in misfortune, we shall stand up for it. (8)

Eurocommunism (the term itself was never mentioned at the Congress) was given short shrift in Brezhnev's Report. The basic message was that the times are too unsettled for the world communist movement to indulge in the luxury of internal squabbling and frivolous declarations of independence. Constructive criticism is always welcome, he asserted, and differences of opinion among communists can be overcome. However, harmful criticism which 'distorts socialist reality' was only grist to the mill of imperialism and the class enemy; and there can be no compromise with reformists, dogmatism and leftist adventurism (in that order) - no more so now than in Lenin's day. Ominously, perhaps, Yugoslavia was mentioned among those communist states which have been building socialism according to their own, but fully acceptable, patterns. And the list he provided of non-ruling communist parties with which the CPSU had good relations based on mutual understanding was interesting in its own right. The list was headed by the French Communist Party and included the Portuguese, West German, Finnish, Danish and Austrian parties as well as those of the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Australia (the small breakaway Socialist Party of Australia). But it pointedly omitted the strong Italian and Spanish parties, the main surviving centres of Eurocommunism.

The obvious strategy was to isolate the Eurocommunist parties (including the Japanese party) in the hope that the logic of the situation of heightened international tensions in Europe would force them back into line rather than be caught on the imperialist side of the barricades if the neo-Cold War atmosphere persisted. On the other hand, the existence of

such nominally independent and isolated parties in the 'heart of imperialism' could prove useful in disrupting the internal unity of NATO. Nevertheless, one doubts whether such consideration would carry much weight in the Politburo, as preoccupied as it currently appears to be with restoring unity in the international movement.

Turning, finally, to the indirect foreign policy section of Brezhnev's Report, where questions of internal development and their foreign trade implications were considered, one noted certain basic themes pointing toward the autarkic aspirations mentioned earlier. While he appeared confident of the ability of the Soviet R&D establishment to maintain its position of essential equality in the international science and technology sweepstakes, Brezhnev was less sanguine about the Soviet system's ability to translate high-technology developments into production before they become obsolete. In some important cases the resulting gaps have been filled by imported technology. In future this practice was evidently to be significantly reduced; and Brezhnev called for an investigation into the practice of importing costly equipment that the USSR was fully capable of producing itself. (9) Here the military R&D establishment, significantly better equipped and experienced in ways of shortening production lead-times, was called upon by Brezhnev to help the civilian economy bridge the science-production gap.

A large part of Brezhnev's emphasis on consumer goods production was focused on improving both the quantitative and qualitative sides of the food supply problem, particularly in livestock products. To combat the perennial shortage of animal fodder he called for a shift in production from food to feed grains and for a large, regionally specific expansion of corn, soybean, and legume acreages. The aim of the program was expressly to achieve a long-term, stable supply of food, fodder, and fibre, adequate for the projected needs of the economy. The US-led grain embargo obviously had had a serious impact on the Soviet economy, and Soviet leaders are determined to eliminate their country's vulnerability to this type of pressure as rapidly as they can.

Tikhonov had much more to say than Brezhnev about foreign trade perspectives and objectives as well. For example, he justified the turn toward greater stress on intra-COMECON integration by, among other things, the desire to insulate the community of socialist economies from the 'influence of unfavourable tendencies occurring in the world capitalist economy'. Given the vast mineral and energy resources of the USSR, this is at least a plausible strategy and sounds much better than the usual ideological justification of unity for unity's sake, even if it is probably just as unworkable.

As regards necessary trade relations with the capitalist countries, Tikhonov insisted on the 'strict observance of mutual obligations', taking a direct swipe at Washington for the present stagnation in US-Soviet trade. But perhaps his most interesting comments on trade questions were reserved for the enunciation of the main objectives of future Soviet policy in this area.

Our foreign economic activity should facilitate, to a still greater degree the satisfaction of the requirements of the national economy for equipment, technological processes, raw and

semi-finished materials, and also the demands of the populace for consumer goods. Planning and economic organs are called upon to work continually on raising the effectiveness of foreign economic ties in the interest of economizing labour and material resources, accelerating technological progress, and gaining time.
(10)

In short, notwithstanding the bravado of Brezhnev and other speakers at the Congress about the superiority of Soviet technology and the hopelessness of Western embargoes, there is still a very significant role for imported goods and processes in the further development of the Soviet economy. Greater attention than heretofore was to be given to the rationality and expediency of such purchases, but they are still considered necessary in the struggle to reduce the productivity gap between the Soviet and the advanced capitalist economies, especially in the areas of high technology.

The Brezhnev and Tikhonov Reports represent the most authoritative statements of Soviet policy on the whole spectrum of foreign and domestic concerns at the present historical juncture. Some Western commentators have perhaps exaggerated the aura of stagnation and rigidity emanating from the Congress, but it is undoubtedly true that the catalogue of problems and issues soberly presented in the two reports is taxing enough to occupy the energies of the Soviet system for some time to come. The foreign policy initiatives announced by Brezhnev clearly reflect this concern not to let the international situation deteriorate to such an extent that sufficient attention cannot be devoted to solving the most pressing domestic problems. But just how much of a constraint the latter will exert on Soviet international behaviour depends on a number of factors - on the genuine seriousness of the domestic problems, on the readiness of the political leadership to 'bite the bullet' and really apply themselves to solving them, and on the continuing tolerance or apathy of the Soviet population, to cite a few.

One of these factors will be the acceptance of party officials at home and in the international movement of Brezhnev's assessment of the world situation and his judgment on how best to cope with it. Some scattered indications of their attitudes can be gained from a perusal of their comments on the two main reports in the so-called 'debates' at the Congress. These will be considered briefly in the following section.

Reaction to the Reports by Delegates to the Congress

There remains for us to examine briefly the variety of reactions to the main reports by the Soviet speakers and foreign guests at the Congress. No effort will be made to undertake a formal content analysis of the commentary - to count and weight the responses on particular issues. We have become convinced over the years that this is rarely a very fruitful exercise. (How does one weight, for example, the significance of statements by the representative of the Italian CP, Giancarlo Pajetta, in comparison with those by, say, the San Marino CP delegate, or by Peter Simon of the Socialist Party of Australia, George Jackson of the Socialist Unity Party of New Zealand or Gus Hall of the CPUSA?) Besides, the substantive content and style of the messages and debate were sufficiently

varied in themselves to permit some interesting observations on the geographical, political, and organizational situation of the speaker and his party.

The issues we wish to focus on here are (1) the peace initiatives presented by Brezhnev (whether the speaker stressed the tension-reducing, confidence-building, and/or arms limitation themes of the initiative or whether he emphasized the military-preparedness aspects of Soviet policy); (2) the foreign trade issue (whether the speaker placed greater emphasis on technological self-sufficiency or continued use of foreign trade to accelerate Soviet scientific and technical development); (3) China; (4) Afghanistan; (5) Poland; and (6) the problem of unity in the international communist movement (essentially Eurocommunism). Few speakers voiced a position on all of these issues, and the comments of those who did address some of them were considered of interest only if the situation of the speaker or his party made them seem relevant or especially revealing. For example anti-Chinese remarks by the Bahrain National Liberation Front delegate would not be considered of particular interest, while similar remarks by the delegate of Bangladesh or Indonesia might be.

The comments of the Soviet speakers stood by themselves if only from the stylistic standpoint. As described in Chapter One, they all seemed to be engaged in a competition for the most fulsome praise of Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev (his full name was always used). Their remarks commonly took the form of personal communication with Brezhnev, almost a serenade. Georgii M. Markov, the Secretary of the Writer's Union, for example, even went so far as to describe Brezhnev's published reminiscences as a model of Soviet literary creativity.

While most of the Soviet speakers, such as Politburo member and RSFSR Premier M.S. Solomentsev, supported Brezhnev's peace initiative as an effective counter to the Western-inspired arms race, their Politburo colleagues V.V. Grishin, head of the Moscow Gorkom, and V.V. Shcherbitskii, the Ukrainian Party First Secretary, emphasized internal vigilance and reliance on the military might of the Soviet State. G.A. Aliev, the Azerbaidzhan party leader, also supported the peace initiative, but he pointedly warned outsiders against trying to subvert the solidarity of the Soviet nationalities. Iu. N. Khristoradnov, the 1st Secretary of the Gor'kii Obkom, strongly condemned the adventurism of the Reagan Administration and suggested an increase in Soviet military strength as the best way to counter it. The fact that Gor'kii is a major centre of the Soviet defense industry may indicate an element of special pleading in his remarks, however.

On the question of China, virtually all Soviet speakers had nasty comments to make on the policies of the present Chinese leadership. Their tone is generally less restrained than Brezhnev's in this regard. The Kazakhstan Party chief and Politburo member D.A. Kunaev condemned the anti-Soviet behaviour across the border as madness and noted that frontier provocations were continuing. Another party leader from a border region, A.K. Chernyi, 1st Secretary of the Khabarovsk Kraikom, supported Brezhnev's proposals for confidence-building measures in the Far East, aimed at containing the Chinese danger, but he also urged a campaign for greater vigilance and military-political training of the local population (11).

The few Soviet speakers who had anything to say about East-West trade tended to play down the importance of such trade as a factor in Soviet industrial and technological development. A.P. Aleksandrov, President of the USSR Academy of Sciences, explicitly characterized the US embargo on high-technology items as a failure and boasted that Soviet R&D had successfully stepped in to fill the gap. Now the USSR was itself able to export high-technology equipment, formerly purchased abroad, which is better than available foreign models. In fact he warned that too broad a reliance on imported technology could lead to built-in obsolescence in some industrial fields. (12)

The Minister of the USSR Electronics Industry, A.I. Shokin, likewise derided the effects of the US embargo, asserting that the installations targeted for boycott by the US were now fully equipped with high-quality domestically produced equipment. He cited a recent American journal article which noted the rapid closing of the gap between US and Soviet technology levels in the electronics field. (13) How true these contentions are and how broadly they apply throughout Soviet science and industry are difficult to judge in view of the paucity of up-to-date information. But judging from past experience, the assertions probably reflect a substantial element of propaganda and just plain 'whistling in the dark'. The final version of the draft 'Basic Direction' passed by the Congress certainly suggests a continuing interest in technology imports.

One would not expect the Soviet participants to have much of interest to add to what Brezhnev had already said on the sensitive issues of Afghanistan, Poland, and relations within the international communist movement. Shcherbitskii and Belorussian party leader Kiselev made the standard observation that the dissenting West European communist parties (the Eurocommunists) are deceiving themselves and doing a disservice to socialism by refusing to close ranks with 'real socialism' in these dangerous times, but such views are hardly surprising.

The Bloc party leaders were considerably more interesting on these issues. Erich Honecker, the East German party and state leader, surprisingly made no mention at all of the Polish situation, although he had been one of the main critics of Solidarity and the decline of party authority in Poland. He supported Brezhnev's peace initiative, but praised Soviet military might as a major pillar of the struggle for peace and progress in the world (14). Gustav Husak, the Czechoslovak party chief, condemned 'international reaction' for trying to tear one of the states (unnamed) away from the family of socialist states (15). Incidentally, Honecker, Husak and Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov were almost on a par with the Soviet speakers in crooning the praises of Brezhnev.

Polish Party leader Stanislaw Kania, by contrast, barely mentioned Brezhnev at all in his speech. He thanked the USSR and CPSU for their past help to Poland and asked for continuing patience, while he and his party comrades sorted things out by themselves, promising to do better in future. Meanwhile he pledged continuing Polish support for and participation in WTO and COMECON affairs (16).

Hungarian leader Janos Kadar directly referred to the Polish difficulties but expressed understanding of Kania's efforts to work out a solution. By contrast he roundly condemned the Chinese for 'pouring water

on the mill of the cold war' and its instigators, a typically safe bit of foreign policy posturing by the Hungarian leadership, which is much more concerned with maintaining a modicum of freedom in domestic affairs (17).

Todor Zhivkov, as expected, went out of his way to praise the 'Soviet way of life' and 'Soviet morality'. He figuratively prostrated himself in pledging fealty to Moscow and the principles of proletarian internationalism (a sidewise slap at the Eurocommunists).

Fidel Castro made one of the most interesting and eloquent pleas along these lines. The aggressive stance of the Reagan Administration, particularly in its attitude to recent developments in Central America and the Caribbean Sea, has greatly raised the danger to Cuba. Accordingly, Fidel is particularly concerned with the maintenance of Soviet military strength and the willingness of the Kremlin to use it to defend socialism. He unequivocally charged the 'imperialists' with responsibility for the events in Poland and played up the past loyalty and valuable services which Cuba has furnished to the USSR and the cause of 'real socialism'. 'Never will ingratitude, opportunism, or treachery creep into our hearts', he pledged, obviously hoping that the Soviet leaders would reciprocate. Cuba was ready to defend every inch of her soil and would not compromise her principles. And he expressed confidence that the USSR would stand behind her. (18)

The best known maverick of the Bloc, Romanian party and state leader Nicolae Ceaușescu, continued to maintain his independent position on virtually all the issues. He evidently finds no particular theoretical or political preeminence in Brezhnev's leadership. Although Ceaușescu admitted that the world situation is bad and requires the solidarity of all progressive forces (not just communist parties) and pledged to continue to work closely with COMECON and the WTO, 'for defensive purposes', he adhered to the traditional Romanian line of refusing to comment on the internal affairs of fraternal parties, by never mentioning Poland at all. Indeed, he stressed the importance of independence and non-interference as the basis of RCP-CPSU relations and linked the prestige and power of socialism in the world with the performance of each communist party in building socialism in the special conditions of its own society. He heartily endorsed Brezhnev's proposals for detente and CBMs in Europe (for obvious reasons). And he expressed his party's readiness to work for peace and economic progress with all parties (presumably including the Chinese) prepared to accept the principle of full autonomy and non-interference. (19)

Among the non-Bloc party leaders the delegate of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Presidium Secretary Dušan Dragosavac, took special pains to indicate his country's general disagreement with the CPSU on most issues. He emphasized the special nature of LCY-CPSU and SFRY-USSR relations deriving from the Belgrade and Moscow Declarations of 1955 and 1956 - namely, the principles of mutual respect for different approaches to building socialism, non-interference in internal affairs, and full equality. Dragosavac especially underlined Yugoslavia's commitment to the principles of non-intervention, territorial integrity, and the impermissibility of the use of force to settle international disputes (obviously referring to Afghanistan). Elsewhere he expressed support for detente, non-alignment and a non-bloc approach to solving international

problems - in short, he set forth a complete recapitulation of Yugoslavia's traditional approach to international relations. Dragosavac's remarks seemed pointedly to ignore the specifics of Brezhnev's peace initiatives and bore the character more of an independent declaration than of a dialogue with the Soviet hosts, in contrast to the speeches of the majority of the delegates. It was almost as if the Yugoslavs were embarrassed at being present at the Congress in the first place. (20)

The Eurocommunist spokesmen did not go quite so far. Indeed, the French party delegate, Gaston Plissonier (Marchais did not attend - almost the only symbol of French dissent from Moscow-centred orthodoxy by now) pledged to work for closer relations with the CPSU, and fully supported Brezhnev's peace initiative. Although he emphasized that each party must develop its own approach to gaining and utilizing power, he assured his listeners that the CPF was committed to a clear class strategy and truly radical social change in France.

Plissonier did not mention the Polish or Afghan situations, although the French stand on the latter is well known: the only outside intervention there is being waged by the 'imperialists'! As most observers now agree, the CPF has effectively ceased being a 'Eurocommunist' party. (21)

This is decidedly not the case with the Italian party (the Spanish party delegates were not even allowed to address a Soviet audience). The PCI spokesman, Giancarlo Pajetta, reacted rather coolly to Brezhnev's report in a speech permitted only outside the Congress hall itself. (22) From the beginning he stressed his party's disagreement with the CPSU 'on important questions', but said that this should not impede discussions and cooperation for peace, freedom, and social progress. He was forthright on the need to get 'foreign troops' out of Afghanistan and expressed his concern that the Polish people be allowed to settle their own problems in securing the socialist development of Poland. He even noted the PCI's commitment to observe Italy's 'alliance ties' while seeking to make her a force for détente in Europe. And he justified PCI participation in the organs of the European Community as part of its specific contribution to a peace strategy. One need only contrast these positions and those of the Japanese and British speakers with the diametrically opposite stands of Moscow-loyalist party leaders like Alvaro Cunhal of Portugal, Michael O'Riordan, of the tiny Irish party, Gus Hall of the CPUSA, and Charilaos Florakis of the Greek Communist Party (Exterior), to appreciate the very real differences which continue to plague the international communist movement. Whether the logic of sharpened East-West tensions will compel the Eurocommunists to admit defeat and close ranks once again, remains to be seen, but for the moment they seem to be trying very hard to maintain their distance from Moscow. A direct Soviet involvement in Poland would obviously force all those parties with the slightest chance of retaining influence in their own countries to make a definite choice, a choice which even the super-loyalists like Cunhal and 'closet' loyalists like Marchais clearly would like to avoid.

Conclusions

The picture of economic problems and developmental requirements presented in the Central Committee Draft and the Brezhnev and Tikhonov Reports at the 26th Party Congress was a sober one, and the proposals for solving them were not particularly radical or imaginative. However, the situation was not as hopeless as some Western commentators have been suggesting. The USSR is in a better position to address its energy and raw materials problems than most of its Western adversaries, if only because of the tremendous fund of resources with which the huge country is endowed. Nevertheless, as the Soviets themselves are at last well aware, the time of extensive, relatively easy development and high growth rates is over, and the financial and managerial strains will be considerable. The Polish events have shown, moreover, that further delays in improving popular living standards, while concentrating on endless military and heavy industry expansion, are likely to be politically dangerous.

All these factors suggest a sound objective basis for a policy of avoidance of further deterioration in the international situation, particularly since the principal adversary, the USA, seems intent on challenging future Soviet efforts to take advantage of quick and relatively cheap opportunities for expansion. The recent Soviet military buildup has been so great that the West will probably have to carry through with its announced plans to increase military capabilities in order to maintain pressures for restraint on the Soviet leadership. Nevertheless, the opportunities for negotiations on genuine arms control and confidence-building measures should certainly be explored, at least when the Western buildup has reached a stage where defensive and deterrent capabilities are adequate, and visibly so, to both sides. The West could probably win any arms race, if it came to that, but what would 'winning' mean, unless one side or the other were determined to undertake a major hot war? There is no evidence that the Soviets presently have such an intention, and one can confidently expect the US to be even less inclined to do so. Acting under considerable pressure from his NATO allies, President Reagan has come forth with proposals for the total elimination of theatre nuclear weapons in Europe by both sides (a trade-off of Soviet SS-20s already deployed for US Pershing 2s and GLCMs scheduled for deployment in 1983). The Soviets, as anticipated, have rejected this offer, but both sides appeared ready to undertake serious negotiations on TNW limitations by the end of 1981. The relative softening of Reagan's position and Brezhnev's apparently successful meetings with German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in November indicated that the campaign launched at the 26th Party Congress to regain the diplomatic initiative in Europe and to take advantage of the increasingly obvious tensions within NATO had already begun to succeed. The shock of Afghanistan had manifestly subsided, at least as far as the West was concerned.

The Third World however is likely to continue to be the primary source of targets of opportunity for Soviet expansion. President Reagan's announced intention to contest Soviet moves in these regions will certainly raise the stakes for the USSR and will probably impose significant constraints on her behaviour and that of her surrogates, such as the Cubans, at least as long as Western pressure is credibly maintained. But judging from the remarks of Third World spokesmen at the Congress, like the Ethiopian leader, Haile Menghistu Mariam, SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma, and the

African National Congress General Secretary, Alfred Nzo, the facile assumptions, which were fashionable in the West during the 1970s, that the leaders of the newly independent nations would inevitably be led by nationalist considerations to reject close ties with the Soviet Union are no longer automatically valid. These leaders are more likely to follow the path of Fidel than that of Tito (Robert Mugabe, it will be remembered, was Chinese- rather than Soviet-oriented). Menghistu's speech marked him as a future Fidel Castro, if there can ever be another Fidel, and the comments of the other aforementioned Third World leaders suggested that they are even more orthodox in support of Soviet policies - for example, on Poland and Afghanistan - than are many of the more venerable Moscow-line parties. Now, more than ever, a differentiated approach to each regional situation will have to be adopted by the West if further Soviet expansion is to be deterred.

The issue of East-West trade as a source of technological progress was probably not as controversial for the Soviet leaders as the Congress remarks of people like Academician Aleksandrov implied. While some rationalization of the import policy was considered necessary, there is no doubt that the Soviets continue to regard it as an important element of their developmental strategy. For the Soviets to have to undertake the entire R&D cycle on their own in major 'state-of-the-art' technologies is to risk delays which will almost certainly guarantee a continuation of previous lags, pace the boasts of Messrs Aleksandrov and Shokin. Hence, the continuing commitment to the import of technology wherever expedient and available. It is of some interest in this connection that one of the few amendments to the Draft of the 'Basic Direction' in the final version adopted by the Congress was precisely in this area: the original sentence, 'More broadly to utilize the possibilities of foreign economic links for raising the effectiveness of social production', was amended to read: 'More rationally to utilize the advantages of the international division of labour and the possibilities ... ' (24)

A possible implication of this change is that such intercourse is an objective economic process, devoid of evaluative political content, and hence perfectly legitimate as an instrument of technological progress. From a Western strategic standpoint this is an unviable proposition, however attractive it may seem to some businessmen, and the West should be extremely careful in the selection of technological items it is prepared to sell to the USSR and its associates.

The question of Poland remains, of course, the acid test not only of relations within the international communist movement, but of almost all other central foreign policy issues as well, including East-West trade. If the Soviet Union were forcibly to intervene to assist the Jaruzelski regime in its crackdown on Solidarity, the entire spectrum of East-West and internal communist relationships would certainly change. Forced to choose which side of the barricades they wish to stand on, the Eurocommunist parties would find themselves under almost unbearable pressure. Some would undoubtedly elect to align themselves firmly with Moscow. Others, like the PCI, who are still trying to establish themselves as a legitimate factor in the domestic politics of their country, would almost certainly have to disassociate themselves from the USSR. The Italian party has already condemned the Polish Government's suppression of Solidarity, implicitly blaming Moscow, whose hand was obviously decisive in impelling the Polish

regime to take this repressive step. Other similarly oriented parties can be expected to follow in due course. The conduct of the French communists, now at last a 'party of government', will bear special watching in this connection.

Even without direct Soviet intervention - and Moscow has been extraordinarily careful to avoid an exposed position on the Polish troubles as long as possible - East-West relations can be expected to suffer. Social-democratic and socialist parties in the West will find it at least inconvenient to maintain business as usual with a system which has, for the first time, clearly and openly repressed the entire working class of a nation. Direct Soviet intervention would certainly intensify these sentiments. To be sure, it took less than two years for Willi Brandt to swallow the scandal of Czechoslovakia, and the fallout from the Afghan invasion seems to have dissipated in about the same two-year cycle. However, a Polish version of the Soviet 'fraternal assistance' scenario would probably have more far-reaching effects, setting East-West relations back to a cold-war level for perhaps an entire generation. The situation of a non-aligned country like Yugoslavia would become extremely precarious.

Clearly, as the 26th Party Congress and its aftermath have shown, the Soviets are keen to avoid such a deterioration. But their handling of the Polish crisis has emphasized their unwillingness to pay the price of relaxation of their firm control over a country which they had already appropriated as part of their socialist 'patrimony', even if that was to mean the end of détente and almost certain failure to achieve the goals of their own internal economic development programs. They still evidently find it easier to repress popular dissatisfaction than to remove its causes by improving the standard of living. (25)

Notes

1. Izvestiia, 2 December 1980.
2. *ibid.*
3. Uri Ra'anan, 'Soviet Decision-Making and International Relations', Problems of Communism, vol. XXIX, No. 6 (November-December 1980), p. 42.
4. XXVI s'ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza: Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow: Politizdat, 1981), vol. 1, p. 41.
5. *ibid.*, p. 42.
6. *ibid.*, p. 28.
7. *ibid.*, p. 26.
8. *ibid.*, p. 27.
9. *ibid.*, p. 61
10. XXVI s'ezd ..., vol. 2, p. 30.
11. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 323.
12. *ibid.*, p. 222.
13. *ibid.*, p. 274
14. *ibid.*, p. 176.
15. *ibid.*, p. 200.
16. *ibid.*, p. 175.
17. *ibid.*, p. 202
18. *ibid.*, p. 153.
19. *ibid.*, p. 211-212.
20. *ibid.*, pp. 259-260.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 208-209.
22. Izvestiia, 2 March 1981. Pajetta's speech was not allowed to be read at the Congress, but at a subordinate gathering in the Hall of Columns in the House of Trade unions in Moscow. It is missing from the Stenographic Account from which most of the other speeches cited in the text here are quoted. For a comprehensive treatment of the 'Pajetta Case' see Heinz Timmermann, 'Eine widerspruchliche Bilanz fur die KPdSU', Osteuropa, vol. 31, No. 9/10 (September-October 1981), pp. 917-921.

23. Izvestiia, 2 December 1980.
24. Izvestiia, 3 March 1981, p. 6. In the Stenographic Account (op. cit., vol. 2, p. 221) there is yet another version of this formulation: simply '... to use rationally the possibilities of the international division of labour ...'
25. For an interesting discussion of the foreign policy implications of the Congress from a West German perspective see Robert K. Furtak, 'Die sowjetische Aussenpolitik - Fortsetzung der Entspannungsstrategie', Osteuropa, vol. 31, No. 9/10 (September-October 1981), esp. pp. 869-873.

THE PARTY AND ITS LEADERSHIP

The Party Membership

In his Congress report Brezhnev put the size of the party at 17,480,000 (1) of whom nearly three quarters of a million were 'candidates' serving their compulsory twelve months probation before acceptance as full members. (2) This figure indicates a significant increase in the party's growth rate in recent years, a fact that calls for some comment.

Official pronouncements since shortly after the removal of Khrushchev have consistently stressed the need for greater care in accepting new members, and indeed the recruitment rate fell off substantially in the later 1960s and early 1970s, while at the same time measures were taken to tighten party discipline and to expand and intensify indoctrination programs. (3) Since, however, the reduced intake can be largely accounted for by demographic changes - a sharp reduction in the number of 20-30 year olds, the party's main recruitment cohort (4) - the campaign against excessive enthusiasm in the admission of new members and lack of discrimination in this matter is perhaps best seen not so much as the cause of the reduction as a legitimization of it and at the same time a warning to local party officials not to lower their sights in an effort to maintain the previous high levels of expansion. In the later 1970s the numbers of 20-30 years olds began to rise again, and this has reflected itself in increased admission to the party, although the increase remains modest by earlier standards, as can be seen from Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

CHANGES IN PARTY GROWTH LEVELS 1961-1980

	Increase in Membership		Average Annual intake of Candidates
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
1961-65	3,080,000	33.1	760,000
1966-70	2,000,000	16.1	600,000
1971-75	1,240,000	8.6	520,000
1976-80	1,790,000	11.4	630,000

Sources: Spravochnik Partiinogo Rabotnika. Vypusk 18: 1978 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1978), pp. 367, 371; Ibid, Vypusk 21: 1981 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1981), p. 488. Figures rounded to nearest 10,000.

Since the number of 20-30 year olds will remain relatively large throughout the 1980s (before dropping off steeply thereafter), the current level of recruitment is likely to persist for some years, unless the leadership takes tougher measures to reduce it. The fact that Brezhnev's admonition to caution in admitting new members was couched in milder terms at the 26th than at previous congresses suggests that no further radical measures to tighten up admissions are under consideration. This is also indicated by the relatively modest levels of expulsion of members and of rejections of candidates for full membership. Brezhnev stated that since the 25th Congress almost 300,000 had been expelled 'for conduct inconsistent with the lofty calling of a communist'. On a per capita basis this represents a lower rate of expulsions than in 1966-68, the last period for which comparable figures have been discovered (0.38 per cent per annum, as against 0.46 per cent). (5) Brezhnev also referred to the 91,000 candidates who had been rejected for party membership since the 25th Congress as 'a more or less normal sift-out'. It is, however, a significantly lower rejection rate than that reported between the 23rd and 24th Congresses (1966-71) and not much higher than that prevailing in the early 1960s, which has since been criticized as indicative of too permissive an approach to recruitment. (6)

The note of complacency colouring Brezhnev's remarks on current membership trends was also observable in the corresponding sections of the reports given by the various Republic party chiefs at their local congresses. Yet party membership continues to rise at a level significantly higher than the rate of increase in the adult population, a fact which over the long term could be seen as jeopardising that 'vanguard' status of the party in Soviet society which the leadership is clearly concerned to preserve. This concern is implicit in all official discussions of membership policy, and was emphatically reaffirmed shortly before the Congress by Central Committee Secretary and Politburo member Konstantin Chernenko, who stated that the party 'keeps watch that the boundaries which separate and distinguish it from the non-party masses should not be erased'. (7) The explanation for this apparent contradiction probably does not lie in policy differences within the Politburo, but rather in the leadership's awareness of the implications of demographic trends for party membership levels. The age structure of the CPSU is such that the next decade will see deaths from natural causes as a major contribution to thinning its ranks for the first time in the party's history. The substantial aging of the party membership in the Brezhnev period, despite the considerable recruitment of younger members, is shown in Table 4.2. One communist in seven is now aged over 60 and a further fifth of the membership is aged between 51 and 60. (8) An additional relevant consideration is that few of the growing number of pensioner communists are in a position to contribute significantly to the party's vanguard role. These trends will be accentuated in the 1990s, when, moreover, it will coincide with a marked reduction in the pool of young adults from among whom new members may be chosen. It will therefore make sense to continue recruitment at established levels while the pool remains relatively large.

Table 4.2

AGE STRUCTURE OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Age	Percentage of Membership in			
	<u>1967</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1981</u>
Up to 25	5.0	5.7	5.8	6.5
26-30	} 46.5	7.4	10.8	11.1
31-40		31.0	25.9	21.2
41-50	25.6	26.8	26.4	26.1
51-60	} 22.9	16.3	18.1	20.8
Over 60		10.4	13.0	14.3

Sources: PZh no. 19, 1967, p. 16, no. 14, 1973, p. 19, no. 14, 1981, p. 18; Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika. Vypusk 18: 1978, p. 382

Brezhnev made no fresh policy statement on the desired social orientation of party recruitment, but highlighting the fact that 59 per cent of those admitted since 1976 were drawn from 'the best representatives of the working class' he implied continued endorsement of the line maintained throughout his General Secretaryship of building up the number of manual workers in the party. The only relevant figures included in his report consisted of breakdowns of the current membership and of post-1975 recruits by 'social position', i.e. their basic occupation at the time of joining the party, and something may be learned from placing these in historical perspective, as attempted in Table 4.3

Table 4.3

'SOCIAL POSITION' OF RECRUITS AND CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

A. 'Social Position' of Candidates Admitted

	Per Cent			
	<u>In 1962-65</u>	<u>In 1966-70</u>	<u>In 1971-75</u>	<u>In 1976-80</u>
Workers	44.7	52.0	57.6	59
Peasants	15.0	13.4	11.3	10
White collar groups	40.3	34.6	31.1	31

B. 'Social Position' of all Members and Candidates

	Per Cent			
	<u>1966</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1981</u>
Workers	37.8	40.1	41.6	43.4
Peasants	16.2	15.1	13.9	12.8
White collar groups	46.0	44.8	44.5	43.8

Sources: PZh No. 10, May 1976, pp. 14-15,
Pravda 30 March 1966 and 24 February 1981.

The developments indicated by these figures can be better appreciated if we remind ourselves of the main considerations determining the social composition of the party, considerations that can be most simply expressed in terms of the purposes for which the party needs members. Broadly there are four such purposes: 1) to staff positions which the regime seeks to reserve to persons subject to party direction, indoctrination and discipline; 2) to maintain a strong party presence among occupational groups enjoying relatively high status or influence; 3) to provide a party voice as well as party eyes and ears in all work-groups and organizational units; 4) to help legitimize party rule by reflecting in its membership the claim to be drawn from the 'best representatives' of all social groups, but with special links to the workers.

The first of these purposes makes primarily for recruitment among those in command positions in the administration, armed forces, police, industry, the mass organizations etc 95; the second for recruitment among technical and professional groups; the third for recruitment among the more active and ambitious in all occupational strata; and the fourth primarily for recruitment among manual workers. While in the course of the

party's history changing political circumstances have brought now one, now another of these purposes to the fore as determinants of recruitment policy, it can be argued that the order in which they are listed here corresponds, at least in the short run, with the order of their indispensibility. This means that in periods of very restricted recruitment officials form a much larger proportion of those admitted, followed by professional and other high status groups, while blue collar workers and peasants supply few recruits and, since there is a tendency for them to earn promotion into white collar positions after joining the party, the party representation among the 'broad masses' rapidly dwindles, to the detriment of purposes 3 and 4.

This is precisely what happened in the late Stalin era, and the dictator's successors, concerned to strengthen the popular base of their regime, set out under Khrushchev to remedy it. The level of admissions was sharply accelerated, with a marked increase in the proportion of worker and peasant recruits. As the Khrushchev period also saw a big expansion of the technical and professional intelligentsia, it was necessary for the party to recruit heavily in these groups too if it was not to weaken the party's influence among them; and this in turn necessitated even higher rates of worker and peasant recruitment in order to improve their relative representation in the party. These factors help to explain the extraordinary rates of party growth achieved by the early sixties, rates which aroused concern about the party's capacity to properly assimilate and indoctrinate the newcomers and to avoid placing its vanguard role at risk. We have already noted the resulting curb in recruitment launched by Khrushchev's successors and facilitated by demographic changes. What should now be noted is that the Brezhnev regime has achieved the feat unprecedented in party history of reducing the numbers of candidates admitted while at the same time increasing the proportion of manual workers among them. Their level of success in this is not quite as great as the figures might suggest. To a considerable extent the 'workers' have grown at the expense of the 'peasants' and this in turn is largely an artefact of the continued transformation of many collective farms (kolkhozy) into state farms (sovkhozy) which automatically confers on the ex-kolkhozniki the formal status of workers. Some low-grade white collar categories have also been reclassified as workers. It should also be stressed that many of those classed as workers by 'social position' are no longer employed in manual jobs. Nevertheless there seems little doubt that there has been a significant increase in the party's presence among the urban workers in the Brezhnev period, and it is worth asking why the regime has so consistently striven to achieve this.

One factor, often alluded to by official spokesmen, is the growing number of relatively well-educated and highly skilled workers, who are not only better equipped to serve as party members but also, because of the influence they are capable of exerting in the workplace, call for relatively high membership levels on the basis of our membership function 2. A more basic factor, however, is the reduced level of coercion in the post-Stalin era, which has required the party to place greater reliance on organizational and symbolic manipulation for maintaining its authority over the population. Overt manifestations of worker dissatisfaction in the USSR and Eastern Europe, and especially in Poland since 1970, must have brought home to the Soviet leaders the dangers of taking the continued docility of the Soviet workers for granted. In its symbolic aspect, the CPSU's

increased recruitment of workers is clearly aimed at refurbishing its tarnished claim to be, at least in some residual sense, first and foremost a workers' party. In its organizational aspect, the party incorporates its own version of an 'aristocracy of the proletariat', drawn not only from the most highly skilled but from those who will cooperate in setting their fellow-workers exemplary performance standards, and who are rewarded with more favourable work conditions, higher earnings, preference in allocation of housing and other services in short supply, as well as with enhanced opportunities for social advancement. While some observers consider that worker resentments in the USSR are currently running at a fairly high level, such efforts to contain them by dividing the working class and 'coopting' its more ambitious and assertive elements may prove more successful there than they have been in Poland.

Before leaving this point, we should note the evidence in Table 4.3.A. that the increased recruitment of workers was tapering off by the later 1970s, despite a substantial overall rise in admission levels, which suggests that the party may be reaching the limits of the possible in this direction. The proportion of worker-communists in factory organizations may continue to rise somewhat (depending on how many are syphoned off into white collar jobs) but workers will still be a minority in the 'party of the working class'.

This is not the place to consider the occupational distribution of party members in close detail, as recent years have seen little change in the earlier patterns which have been adequately reported elsewhere. (9) Over four fifths of the membership are employed in the civilian workforce, the rest consisting mainly of armed servicemen, police, students, housewives, and a growing number of pensioners. Of those in the civilian workforce about three quarters are employed in 'material production' (industry, agriculture, transport, communications, construction, trade) and one quarter in non-productive spheres' (the government and other bureaucracies, education, science, health, welfare etc.). These ratios have remained virtually static throughout the Brezhnev period, (10) although there has been discernible change as between certain sub-categories, mostly reflecting trends in work-force composition, e.g. some growth in the proportion of communists working in industry at the expense of those working in agriculture, an increased proportion working in science (now about one in 25 of all CPSU members), etc..

Recent changes in other aspects of the party's membership also continue well-established trends. This applies notably to the rise in educational levels, which since 1966 has reduced the proportion of communists possessing only 4-7 years of schooling from 51 per cent to 28 per cent, while raising the proportion of graduates of tertiary-level institutions from 16 per cent to 28 per cent. (11) Soviet citizens with tertiary qualifications are still three times as likely as secondary school graduates to be in the party and thirteen times as likely as those with only elementary education. (12)

The trend to higher female representation has also continued: women grew from 20.6 to 26.5 per cent of the CPSU membership between 1966 and 1981. (13) Given the substantially lower number of males in the adult population, however, men are still more than three times as likely as women to be in the party.

To a substantial degree recent changes in the party's ethnic composition can also be explained in terms of changes in the population at large. This applies, in particular, to the reduction in the proportion of Great Russians in the party from 60.9 per cent in 1973 to 60.6 per cent in 1976 and to 60.0 per cent in 1981, and the rise in the proportion drawn from the major Turkic-speaking nationalities from 8.7 to 9.4 per cent between 1976 and 1981. (14) This is not the whole story, however, for in the case of some ethnic groups the rate of change in their representation in the party has failed to keep pace with that in the population at large, while in other cases it has outrun it, thus altering the level of 'over'- or 'under-representation' of these nationalities in the party. For instance the 'over-representation' of Great Russians, which declined substantially under Khrushchev and stabilized in the early Brezhnev period, has begun to rise again, increasing from 14 per cent to 17 per cent between 1976 and 1981. Meanwhile the level of 'under-representation' of Ukrainians and Belorussians has continued to decline and has now virtually disappeared. Thus party recruitment has perceptively 'favoured' the Slavic population of the USSR in recent years, although this is unlikely to reflect deliberate Central Committee policy. By contrast, Jewish representation, though still, at twice the average for the Soviet population at large, far more favourable than that of any other ethnic group, has continued to slip back, and this relative decline may have accelerated recently: Jews formed 1.9 per cent of the CPSU membership in 1976 and only 1.5 per cent in 1981. (15) While demographic and socio-economic factors help to explain this development, discriminatory policies may also have played a part. (16)

The Central Committee

The Central Committee (CC) of the CPSU is frequently (and not inappropriately) identified with the 'political elite' of the USSR. While its brief twice-yearly meetings probably have some significance in the Soviet political process, and the CC can always assume major importance at times of critical confrontation within the leadership, its main continuing functions are the symbolic ones of serving as a formal source of executive authority in the party and a register of political standing within its leading circles. These remarks apply both to the (voting) 'members' and the (non-voting) 'candidates' of the CC and to the members of the Central Auditing Commission (CAC - Tsentral'naia Revizionnaia Komissia), now numbering respectively 319, 151 and 75. As a rule the distinction between those with and those without voting rights is probably as much devoid of practical significance as is the implication that the members of the Auditing Commission actually engage in checking the party's accounts (they will hear a brief uninformative report on party finances and correspondence at the next Congress five years hence). The distinction primarily serves to register who is in the first level, the second level, and the third level of the party elite. It is true that they each contain a handful of highly decorated shock workers and lower level officials and executives, affording token representation to different societal groups, but such manifest 'anomalies' scarcely conceal the pattern that links membership of these bodies to position held within the various hierarchies (party, government, military, etc.) through which the country is ruled. Thus, alongside the obvious question of what kinds of people gain appointment to these positions and thereby an appropriate standing in the country's

political elite, considerable political interest attaches to which positions are registered as carrying a certain level of elite status and what is the relative representation of different categories of officials. These observations apply with particular force to the 'full' members of the CC, and it is on these, therefore, that the following analysis will be mainly concentrated.

But first let us note some more general characteristics of the changes in CC-CAC membership. Observers have frequently noted the constant increase in their numbers from congress to congress, a fact which probably reflects a political process involving different top leaders and different categories of officials, the details of which we can only guess at, but which issues in incremental growth and marginal shifts in relativities in the allocation of this much prized resource. This growth has continued throughout the Brezhnev period, but at a relatively modest and declining rate, a fact that has been little noted. It is true that the 'full' members have increased by 64 per cent (from 195 to 319), since 1966, but the combined membership of the CC-CAC has grown by only 24 per cent (from 439 to 545) in this fifteen year period, as compared with 38 per cent in the previous fourteen years. Furthermore, the percentage increase has been slightly less with each recent CC-CAC election (ranging from eleven per cent in the first post-Khrushchev CC-CAC in 1966 to seven per cent in the current CC-CAC). This trend is in keeping with the general preference of the Brezhnev regime for minimizing institutional change. Continued growth even at this reduced rate is not without long-term significance for the actual and potential political role of the Central Committee. But the salient development in the post-Khrushchev period has been not the growth (or put another way the dilution) of this institutionalized elite but rather the changing balance within it, as positions have been promoted from the third to the second level and from the second to the first. We shall consider the most important fresh developments of this kind below, but at this point merely note that the net result of these 'promotions' has been to change the ratio of CC members to candidates to CAC members from 2.4:2:1 in 1966 to 4:2:1 in 1981.

Table 4.4 summarizes changes as between the 1976 and 1981 CC-CAC, showing the numbers retained at the same level, retained at changed level, added and dropped. It reveals a remarkably high overall retention rate (over three quarters) reflecting the policy of 'stability of cadres'. Furthermore, the higher the level within the CC-CAC, the higher the retention rate. One reason for this is the greater number of 'token' members elected at the lower levels: these tend to serve one term only and then make way for others. But it is evidently also due in part to a somewhat higher positional turnover at the lower levels. The figures on those retained but at changed levels show the importance of the candidates as a source of recruits to CC membership and of the CAC as a source of recruits to candidate's status, reflecting the weight now attached to seniority and experience in personnel policy. At the same time it is still possible to gain 'accelerated' promotion, as it were, outstripping one's erstwhile superiors: nearly half of the new CC members gained this status without first serving as candidates or CAC members.

Table 4.4

CHANGES IN CC-CAC 1976-1981

	<u>Members CC</u>	<u>Candidates CC</u>	<u>Members CAC</u>
Number elected 1976	287	139	85
Re-elected same level	231	60	30
Re-elected at changed level			
(total)	(+47)	(-19)	(-28)
Promoted to mem. CC	+48	-42	-6
Promoted to cand. CC		+22	-22
Demoted to cand. CC	-1	+1	
Not re-elected to CC-CAC			
(total)	(56)	(37)	(27)
of whom:			
Died in office	25	6	5
Formally retired	16	10	3
Lost position or			
standing	9	13	6
'Token' mems/cands			
not re-elected	5	8	13
New to CC-CAC	40	68	45
Number elected 1981	319	151	75

Once attaining full CC membership there is currently a very good chance that you will keep it till you die or retire. The number removed for political reasons is very small, although somewhat larger than the table reveals, because some of those publicly stated to have retired on pension for reasons of health or advanced age were probably as fit to carry on as a Brezhnev or a Suslov, and there is good reason to suspect considerations of a political nature behind the official formulas (Brezhnev's predecessor as President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Podgornyi is a good example). Of the nine shown as having 'lost position or standing', six were demoted to positions not normally carrying CC-CAC status and the other three retained their positions, but there is good reason to believe their standing has declined and they will soon move down or out of significant office. While there could be argument over individual cases it is clear that scarcely more than five per cent of the 1976 CC members and perhaps ten per cent of the candidates and CAC members have since lost their positions and thereby their elite status as a result of having become an obstacle to Brezhnev or other top leaders or of losing their confidence.

The combination of a low attrition rate and greater stress on seniority and experience in making high level appointments has led to a rapid aging of the CC-CAC elite, which has been scarcely less marked than the oft-noted aging of the Politburo. Table 4.5 compares the age distribution of the CC full (voting) membership in 1981 with its distribution in 1976, in 1966 (first congress under Brezhnev) and 1961

(last congress under Khrushchev). As we see, Khrushchev bequeathed his successors a relatively youthful political elite but the aging process has proceeded apace ever since his removal.

Table 4.5

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CC MEMBERSHIP

Percentage of full CC members aged:

<u>CC Elected in</u>	<u>Up to 45</u>	<u>46-55</u>	<u>56-65</u>	<u>Over 65</u>	<u>No info.</u>
1961	19	50	27	4	
1966	7	43	43	7	
1976	3	28	44	25	
1981	1	23	36	37	3

Sources: biographical data published in official Soviet publications, principally the Ezhegodniki of the Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia and successive issues of Deputaty Verkhovnogo soveta SSSR.

Over the last twenty years the proportion aged up to 55 has fallen from over two-thirds to about a quarter, while those who have passed the normal retiring age of 65 have grown from four per cent to over a third of all members.

Only eight women were elected as full members of the CC in 1981. The persistently small female representation in the CC-CAC elite reflects the fact that, while women predominate in the 'helping' professions and are prominent in symbolic bodies, very few of them win promotion to senior party or government posts. This is one respect in which little significant change is evident: the female 2.5 per cent of the CC members in 1981 may be compared with the 2.8 per cent in 1976, 2.6 per cent in 1966 and 2.9 per cent in 1961. There are more women at the lower levels of the CC-CAC elite (10 CC candidates in 1981 and 16 CAC members) but nearly all of these are 'token' members, i.e. symbolic representatives of the masses (and their sex) rather than occupants of higher positions.

The most striking feature of the national composition of the CC membership is the overrepresentation of ethnic Russians in relation to their numbers in the party at large and even more so to their share of the total USSR population. As we see from Table 4.6, this overrepresentation has become considerably more marked over the Brezhnev period, at the expense of both the other Slavonic nationalities and the non-Slavs. Of course many senior officials of non-Russian parentage are more less russified, and there is no way of allowing for this in such a table. Other points worth noting are the continued decline of the 'Christian' Transcaucasians (Georgians and Armenians), which began with the death of Stalin, the underrepresentation of Jews in the CC elite despite their

overrepresentation in the party at large, and the poor position of the largest non-Slavonic segment of the population, the Turkic-speaking, traditionally Muslim nationalities, whose modest representation in the elite has barely maintained itself despite the rapid growth in their share of the Soviet population.

Table 4.6

NATIONAL COMPOSITION OF CC MEMBERSHIP

Nationality	No of CC members		Per cent of CC members		Per cent of CPSU members	Per cent of USSR population
	1966	1981	1966	1981	1981	1979
Russians	112	218	57.4	68.3	60.0	52.0
Ukrainians	36	45	18.4	14.1	16.0	16.2
Belorussians	10	7	5.1	2.2	3.7	3.6
Turkic nats.*	12	20	6.2	6.3	9.4	14.9
Baltic nats.	5	7	2.6	2.2	1.4	1.0
Georgians/ Armenians	5	4	2.6	1.3	3.2	3.0
Jews	1	2	0.5	0.6	1.5	0.7
Others/unknown	14	16	7.2	5.0	4.8	8.6
Total	195	319	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Comprising Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmen, Kirgiz, Tajiks, Azeris, Tatars and Bashkirs. Minor Turkic nationalities are not included here.

Sources: on CC members - as for Table 4.5; on CPSU membership - PZh no. 14, 1981, p. 18; on USSR population - Naselenie SSSR po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi 1979 goda, pp. 23-26.

For many years now it has been virtually impossible to gain promotion to higher party or government office without tertiary educational qualifications and it is no surprise, therefore, that the proportion of CC members possessing such qualifications has hovered around 90 per cent in all the CCs elected under Brezhnev's leadership. There have, however, been two significant trends in the relative representation of different kinds of higher education. CC members whose tertiary qualifications are limited to graduation from a party school have gone down from eleven to five per cent between 1966 and 1981 (though the proportion with higher party school

qualifications in addition to their 'secular' qualifications has increased). And while well over half those with higher education continue to be persons trained in various branches of technology or the natural sciences, the proportion trained in the humanities or social sciences has increased from 16 to 22 per cent over the last 15 years. (17) This trend may turn out to have considerable political significance in the years to come, and without going into the reasons for this suggestion at this point it is worth noting that the Politburo has also seen a decline in the preponderance that technically-trained leaders acquired in the 1950s and 1960s.

We said earlier that the composition of the Central Committee is significant under normal circumstances primarily as a kind of register of the Soviet political elite, and that it is only from time to time, when sharp differences erupt within the top leadership, that it may play a more directly political role. Both in respect to its continuing symbolic significance and its occasional political role it is the pattern of office-holding of CC members that attracts the greatest interest: the relative representation, as it were, of the different bureaucratic hierarchies, the particular hierarchies that are represented, and so on. Let us now turn to this question, concentrating mainly on the voting members of the CC.

Since all the most senior leaders of the various bureaucracies are regularly elected to the CC it would be easy to get the impression that CC membership is determined on an ex officio basis, with the exception of the handful of shock workers and token representatives of different occupational groups. In fact the situation is somewhat more complicated. The only categories of officials that invariably hold voting membership are the members of the Politburo, the CC Secretariat, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and the first party secretaries of the non-Russian union republics. To these we can add the occupants of a few particular posts, like the first secretary of the Komsomol, the chairman of the Trade Unions Central Committee, and the President of the Supreme Court. But that comes to only 50 or so out of more than 300 voting members. It is true that if one is familiar with the established patterns and conventions and has been following current organizational and personnel changes one can predict pretty accurately a large proportion of the rest, but there is a good deal of uncertainty at the fringes, and much political interest attaches to how these uncertainties are resolved, both because of the significance that may attach to particular cases and because it is in this way that incremental changes are effected in the relative representation of different bureaucracies and categories of official. Take the two largest categories of officials in the CC, the members of the central government and the provincial party secretaries in the RSFSR. In both cases the majority of these groups now hold voting membership, but some are just candidate members and a few are mere members of the CAC, and this is something that changes from one CC to the next. The same applies when we look at particular sub-groups within these main categories. Taking government officials, for example, there may be shifts in the representation of such bureaucracies as the State Planning Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the police.

Table 4.7

POSTS HELD BY VOTING MEMBERS OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE CPSU

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1981</u>
Secretaries Central Committee	11	10	11	10
Other central party officials	4	7	6	20
Republic party secretaries	22	23	19	21
Regional/local party secretaries RSFSR	37	46	66	66
Regional/local Party secretaries other republics	10	14	19	20
Officials 'mass organisations'	5	5	6	8
Press	1	1	3	3
Presidium USSR Council of Ministers	12	12	12	15
Ministers and other central government officials	31	47	57	62
Premiers and other republic government officials	8	8	13	12
Regional/local government officials	1	2	5	2
Foreign service	13	12	16	14
Union and republic supreme soviet officials	8	9	9	9
Legal officials	1	1	2	2
Armed forces commanders	12	18	18	24
Academicians, scientists, technologists	5	6	8	10
Writers	2	3	2	2
Industrial executives	5	4	4	3
Industrial workers	3	9	9	15
Agricultural Executives	1	2	1	
Agricultural workers		1	1	1
Retired top officials	3	1		
TOTALS	195	241	287	319

Sources: Compiled from references in Soviet daily press.

Table 4.7 offers a breakdown of the positional composition of the new CC in comparison with those 'elected' at previous congresses since Brezhnev assumed the CPSU leadership. There are, of course, other ways the breakdown might be made, and like these it brings out certain features and developments while obscuring others - some of which we will draw attention to later. (18) In its main lines the positional composition of the Central Committee has shown a remarkable level of continuity in the post-Khrushchev era. It has continued to be dominated to the extent of about 70 per cent by full-time party and government officials and the ratio between party and government has constantly hovered around three to two (foreign service officials are omitted from this calculation for reasons to be explained later). At first glance the military seem to have been improving their position, but in percentage terms their growth has been minimal: in fact at 7.5 per cent it is now the same as it was in 1971 (the Minister of Defence and the head of the Political Directorate of the Armed Forces are both omitted from the category of 'Armed forces commanders', the former being categorised as a member of the central government and latter as a central party official). One area of change has been in the make-up of the 'token representatives' grouped at the bottom of the table, and in particular the increase in the number of blue-collar workers first from three to nine and now from nine to fifteen. This is in line with a whole series of moves, mostly symbolic but some with a measure of practical significance, evidently aimed at lending credibility to the claim that the USSR remains in some sense a 'workers' state'. We have already seen this at work in policy towards party membership. The motivation is probably to be sought in a number of interrelated internal and international factors, and it may be no coincidence that the two leaps in worker representation in the CC occurred in the wake of the Polish worker movements of 1970 and 1980-81.

The most interesting change in the new Central Committee has been the sharp increase in the number of officials of the CC apparatus below the status of secretary. In the past it was unusual for officials at department head level to be accorded voting membership in the CC (18). Now the majority have gained this status, and so have the principal vice-heads of six of the most important departments. This appears to reflect, on the one hand, the increased weight of the central party machine as against the central government machine in recent years, and on the other hand the heightened standing of CC apparatchiki within the upper ranks of party officialdom generally. For a long time now the regional party secretaries have been the main source of recruitment to top positions in the USSR. Perhaps this is changing and the recent advancement of CC General Department Head Chernenko to voting membership of the Politburo may not remain an isolated case.

The picture of foreign service representation given in Table 4.7 calls for some amplification. The fourteen members included in this category comprise twelve ambassadors and two First Vice Ministers of Foreign Affairs, one dealing primarily with the socialist countries and one with the rest of the world. To these we must of course add Foreign Affairs Minister and Politburo member Andrei Gromyko. The ambassadors include those to the U.S.A., France and India, but all the rest are stationed in various socialist countries. All the European socialist countries, including Yugoslavia, have Soviet ambassadors with full Central Committee status, and so do Cuba and Afghanistan (the ambassadors to North Korea,

Vietnam and Mongolia are candidate members while the Ambassador to China is a mere member of the CAC). All the ambassadors to socialist countries are lateral transferees from the party apparatus and the same applies to the Ambassador to France and one of the First Vice Ministers. In other words only four of the fourteen CC members classified as foreign service officials have actually made their careers primarily within the regular foreign service. It seems a reasonable assumption that ambassadors to socialist countries primarily report to and receive their instruction not from the Foreign Affairs Ministry but the CC Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers parties of the Socialist Countries. And this leads to a further point: several of the CC members classified in Table 4.7 as party officials are also responsible for aspects of foreign relations: these comprise CC secretaries Ponomarev and Rusakov, who head respectively the International Department and the Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers' Parties of the Socialist Countries, their two principal deputies, the head of the International Information Department, and Brezhnev's chief assistant for foreign affairs Aleksandrov-Agentov.

The police are not shown separately in Table 4.7, but included among the government officials. Their representation in the CC has always been small, even under Stalin when their role in the political system was considerably greater than it is now. At the beginning of the Brezhnev era only the Minister for Internal Affairs and the Chairman of the KGB had voting membership of the CC, and this remained the situation until the 26th Congress, although a handful of other police officials were meanwhile advanced step by step to the CAC and thence to candidate membership of the CC. In 1981 came the breakthrough: KGB chairman Andropov was joined by his three most senior deputies as voting members of the CC. This must be a source of satisfaction to the KGB as an organization in terms of its place in the power and status structure of the USSR, and it can be related to other developments such as the growing number of KGB officials in the inner leadership of the republics in recent years. (20) But it has another aspect as well, for the three new KGB representatives on the CC were all men with past career links not with Andropov but with another member of the Politburo, namely Brezhnev. (The most senior of them, Semen Tsvigun, who was also said to be related to the General Secretary by marriage, was to die in January 1982.)

This example points up the fact that the political implications of changes in CC membership do not reside simply in the formal organizational affiliations of officials added or dropped, but also in their informal alignments. Unfortunately our information on this aspect is fragmentary and largely speculative, and this is not the place to attempt a systematic analysis of the 1981 Central Committee from this point of view. However, as a further illustration of its significance, it may be worth mentioning some other persons with links to Brezhnev who have been advanced in the new CC-CAC. Successive congresses since 1966 have brought into the CC considerable numbers of officials with earlier career links with Brezhnev, and several of these have moved closer to the centre of the stage in the last couple of years, as we note in the final section of this chapter. At the 1981 Congress several other persons with personal links to Brezhnev have entered the CC-CAC elite or advanced their status within it. Most interesting in this regard are a number of men whose connections with the General Secretary are based on factors other than earlier career links, and these fall into two groups. First there are officials of his Personal

Secretariat: his chief domestic policy assistant Tsukanov has been joined by his chief foreign policy assistant Aleksandrov-Agentov among the voting members of the CC, his assistant Blatov has been advanced from membership of the CAC to candidate membership of the CC, and a further assistant Golikov has entered the CAC. The other group consists of family relations: apart from the case of Tsvigun, mentioned earlier, there is Brezhnev's son Yurii, who was recently appointed First Vice Minister for Foreign Trade and has now been made a candidate member of the Central Committee, and his son-in-law Yurii Churbanov, who has been promoted to First Vice Minister of Internal Affairs and advanced from member of the CAC to candidate member of the CC. And finally we might mention Dr Evgenii Chazov, whose post as Vice Minister of Health would not normally warrant his election in 1981 as a candidate member of the CC, but who happens, it is said, also to be Brezhnev's personal physician.

The Inner Circles

Although it seems generally assumed that the Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Central Committee has served in fact and not just in appearance as the supreme decision-making body in the USSR under Brezhnev, we have little evidence as to how power is distributed within this body, how it makes its decisions, and what its working and power relationships are with other major executive bodies at the centre. This is not the place to consider these matters in detail, but we shall attempt a brief characterization of the Soviet supreme leadership at the time of the 26th Congress and outline the changes occurring in the preceding period.

Between them the Politburo members hold all top positions not only in the party but also in the most important instrumentalities of the state (see Table 4.8). As a general rule Soviet leaders do not hold executive positions in more than one of the major bureaucratic machines through which the country is run (Brezhnev is currently the one exception) and it is by virtue of their collective accumulation and concentration of executive power that their dominance of the political system is exercised. Further, despite the manifest growth of Brezhnev's personal authority in recent years, few observers consider that he has acquired dictatorial powers and his position vis-à-vis the Politburo is perhaps analogous to that of a strong Prime Minister in Britain vis-à-vis his cabinet. Brezhnev reported at the 26th Congress that the Politburo had convened 236 times over the previous five year period, (21) i.e. once a week with the odd break for vacations, and there seems little reason to doubt that most important political and administrative decisions in both the domestic and foreign policy fields were in fact taken at these weekly meetings.

Table 4.8

POSTS HELD BY POLITBURO MEMBERS 1981

Full (voting) members

L.I. BREZHNEV	General Secretary of CC CPSU; Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Soviet; Chairman of State Defence Council
Yu.V. ANDROPOV	Chairman of Committee of State Security (KGB)
V.V. GRISHIN	First Secretary of Moscow City Committee CPSU
A.A. GROMYKO	Minister for Foreign Affairs
A.P. KIRILENKO	Secretary of CC CPSU
D.A. KUNAEV	First Secretary of party CC Kazakhstan
A.Ya. PEL'SHE	Chairman of Party Control Committee
G.V. ROMANOV	First Secretary of Leningrad Regional Committee CPSU
M.A. SUSLOV	Secretary of CC CPSU
D.F. USTINOV	Minister for Defence
V.V. SHCHERBITSKI	First Secretary of party CC Ukraine
K.U. CHERNENKO	Secretary of CC CPSU
N.A. TIKHONOV	Chairman of Council of Ministers
M.S. GORBACHEV	Secretary of CC CPSU

Candidate (non-voting) members

B.N. PONOMAREV	Secretary of CC CPSU
P.N. DEMICHEV	Minister for Culture
V.V. KUZNETSOV	First Vice Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Soviet
M.S. SOLOMENTSEV	Chairman of Council of Ministers of RSFSR
T.Ya. KISELEV	First Secretary of party CC Belorussia
E.A. SHEVARDNADZE	First Secretary of party CC Georgia
Sh.R. RASHIDOV	First Secretary of party CC Uzbekistan
G.A. ALIEV	First Secretary of party CC Azerbaijan

At the same time several other top-level bodies are also closely involved both in the formulation and the execution of policy. To start with, there are the 'commissions' or sub-committees (*komissii*) of the Politburo itself, about which, alas, we know all too little: neither their number, membership, responsibility, mode of operation, duration, nor even whether they are mostly *ad hoc* or standing bodies. The fact, however, that Brezhnev actually mentioned them for the first time in his 26th Congress report, suggests that their significance may have increased in recent years. Remarking that the complexity of many of the problem areas facing the Politburo was constantly growing, he added that 'in certain cases the Politburo has set up special commissions to thoroughly study and draw general conclusions on current developments and also to take appropriate practical measures on an operative basis'. (22) Judging by past Soviet practice such 'commissions' may often include other officials in addition to Politburo members. It may be that much of the Politburo business is now handled by a set of standing commissions responsible for major policy areas, although there is no direct evidence on this. In practical terms the State Defence Council could, however, be seen as such a standing commission of the Politburo. First officially mentioned in 1976, it is chaired by Brezhnev and its membership (never made public) is thought to consist of a core of Politburo members along with other leading officials of the Government (Council of Ministers) and the armed forces.

But the most important bodies through which the Politburo governs remain the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the Council of Ministers and the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Like the commissions of the Politburo these all contain a core of Politburo members but are distinguished not only by their more formal and public status but also by each disposing over its own administrative machine with ramifications throughout the country. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet is easily the least powerful of these bodies, although it is more than simply a ceremonial collective presidency, for it also oversees the hierarchy of soviets as well as enjoying certain supervisory powers vis-a-vis the central government machine, powers which have evidently acquired some modest force in recent years. Brezhnev assumed the Chairmanship of this body in 1977, primarily, it would seem, for the formal standing this gave him within the Soviet state, for he rarely attends its meetings; his First Vice Chairman, Kuznetsov, who usually chairs Presidium meetings and obviously runs its day-to-day business, was made a candidate member of the Politburo in recognition of these responsibilities. (23)

The Council of Ministers, with just over a hundred members, is obviously too large a body to exercise its constitutional role as 'Government' of the USSR. Indeed, press reports of its brief quarterly meetings indicate that as a collective body it contributes relatively little either to the development of policy, to executive decision-making, or to direction of the government machine. (24) However, the inner executive or 'Presidium' of the Council of Ministers is clearly of major importance on all these levels. Meeting frequently (reportedly once a week as a rule) it evidently deals with a great deal of business coming up through the government machine, passing to the Politburo only those issues whose political importance or contentious character require resolution at the highest level, and giving executive guidance on the implementation of policy. Although the Presidium of the Council of Ministers has existed in much its present form since 1953, its formal status remained ambiguous

until promulgation of the new Soviet Constitution in 1977, art. 132 of which provided that it should comprise the Chairman, First Vice Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Council of Ministers, and 'function as a standing body of the Council of Ministers to deal with questions relating to guidance of the economy, and with other matters of state administration'. The fact that the Ministers for Defence and Foreign Affairs and the Chairman of the State Security Committee are not members of the Council of Ministers Presidium but are (since 1973) full members of the Politburo suggests that the former body is not seriously concerned with these policy areas, but concentrates mainly on the administration of the economy and on such fields as health, welfare and education. (25)

If the Presidium of the Council of Ministers is the main instrument of the Politburo for running the government machine, the Central Committee Secretariat is its main instrument for running the party machine. It also meets once a week, (26) and evidently enjoys extensive powers over the personnel and operation of the party hierarchy throughout the country, as well as the supervision of all official organizations and the implementation by them of Politburo policies, referring only the most important and contentious issues to the Politburo itself.

The members of these bodies thus constitute an interlocking directorate, which comprised some three dozen men (and not a single woman) at the time of the 26th Congress (see Table 4.9). It is the full (voting) members of the Politburo who constitute the core of this directorate, and we shall look at these a little more closely.

Table 4.9

COMPOSITION OF THE INNER CIRCLES
AS AT 26TH CONGRESS

<u>POLITBURO</u>	<u>COUNCIL OF MINISTERS</u> (*C of M Presidium)	<u>SECRETARIAT OF CC</u>	<u>PRESIDIUM OF SUPREME SOVIET</u>
<u>Full Members</u>			
Brezhnev		Brezhnev	Brezhnev
Andropov	Andropov		
Grishin			Grishin
Gromyko	Gromyko		
Kirilenko		Kirilenko	
Kunaev			Kunaev
Pel'she			
Romanov			Romanov
Suslov		Suslov	
Ustinov	Ustinov		
Shcherbitskii			Shcherbitskii
Chernenko		Chernenko	
Tikhonov	Tikhonov*		
Gorbachev		Gorbachev	
<u>Candidates</u>			
Ponomarev		Ponomarev	
Demichev	Demichev		
Kuznetsov			Kuznetsov
Solomentsev	Arhipov*	Kapitonov	Georgadze
Kiselev	Novikov*	Dolgikh	
Shevardnadze	Dymshits*	Zimianin	
Rashidov	Smirnov*	Rusakov	Rashidov
Aliev	Baibakov*		
	Nuriev*		+15 Dep Chairmen from republics
	Martynov*		
	Katushev*		
	Marchuk*		+15 others
	Talyzin*		
	Makeev*		
	Kostandov*		
	Antonov*		
	Bodiul*		

We may first note that their composition has been less stable under Brezhnev than is commonly thought, especially in the years since 1973 (see Table 4.10). Turnover, though slower than in the Khrushchev era, has been far more rapid than when Stalin was at the height of his power in 1939-53. We should note, moreover, that well over half the changes are attributable to political causes rather than to the death or incapacity of older members. (27)

Table 4.10
CHANGES IN FULL MEMBERS OF POLITBURO
1971-1981

<u>Members 1971</u> <u>(24th Congress)</u>	<u>Added</u>	<u>Departed</u>	<u>Members 1981</u> <u>(26th Congress)</u>
Brezhnev			Brezhnev
Voronov		Voronov 1973	
Grishin			Grishin
Kirilenko			Kirilenko
Kosygin		Kosygin 1980	
Kulakov		Kulakov 1978	
Kunaev			Kunaev
Mazurov		Mazurov 1978	
Pel'she			Pel'she
Podgornyi		Podgornyi 1977	
Polianskii		Polianskii 1976	
Suslov			Suslov
Shelepin		Shelepin 1975	
Shelest		Shelest 1973	
Shcherbitskii			Shcherbitskii
	Andropov 1973		Andropov
	Gromyko 1973		Gromyko
	Grechko 1973	Grechko 1976	
	Romanov 1976		Romanov
	Ustinov 1976		Ustinov
	Chernenko 1978		Chernenko
	Tikhonov 1979		Tikhonov
	Gorbachev 1980		Gorbachev

Secondly, this relatively high turnover did little to slow down the aging of the Politburo, whose average age advanced from 61 in 1971 to 68 in 1981. By the year of the 26th Congress only two members were aged under 60 (Romanov and Gorbachev), four were in their sixties (Grishin, Kunaev, Shcherbitskii and Andropov) and the rest ranged from 70 to 82.

The predominance of Great Russians in the Politburo has grown markedly in recent years - from 53 per cent in 1973 to 71 per cent in 1981 - a process we also noted in the case of the full Central Committee. The remaining non-Russians are Pel'she (Latvian), Kunaev (Kazakh), and Shcherbitskii and Tikhonov (Ukrainian), of whom the last named is the only one occupying a key position at the centre - and one may reasonably wonder how Ukrainian he is.

Perhaps the most important change, however, is in the balance of educational and career experience represented in the Politburo. In 1971 the majority of Politburo members were men with a technological training followed by a career predominantly in the party apparatus, having spent long years in line generalist (i.e. regional or republic first secretary) positions. (28) This pattern was still well represented in the 1981 Politburo, but its predominance was now considerably reduced. In 1971 there were only three graduates in the social sciences or humanities, in 1981 there were five, whereas the number whose post-secondary education had been limited to technological or agricultural specialisms was reduced from ten to seven. (29) In 1971 there were only two members whose appointment to top leadership positions in Moscow had not been preceded by lengthy service as first secretaries of regional party committees; in 1981 there were five whose path to the top had by-passed this experience. On the other hand, today's Politburo contains more members with substantial experience in various specialized areas. The 1971 Politburo included one man (Kosygin) whose career had lain predominantly in the state economic administration; the 1981 Politburo included two (Tikhonov and Ustinov). The 1971 Politburo contained no career foreign affairs specialist, the 1981 Politburo has not only Gromyko, but also Andropov, who worked some sixteen years in various jobs concerned with relations with East European countries. Substantial experience in specialized staff roles in the party apparatus is also better represented in today's Politburo: Ustinov's eleven-year break from government jobs was to work as CC Secretary responsible for the defence industry, Andropov also worked in 1951-53 and 1957-67 in the Central Committee apparatus, and Chernenko, having served as a party agitprop official for most of his earlier career, gained promotion to the Politburo in recognition of his staff work as head of the latter's 'cabinet secretariat', the CC's General Department. Thus by the time of the 26th Congress the range and depth of specialized knowledge and experience available within the Politburo was greater than at any time in the past, and for anything approaching it one must go back to the early 1950s.

Changing pattern of supreme power

Turning finally to the structure of power within the Politburo, (30) the most obvious recent development has been the increasing dominance of Brezhnev. In the early years of the post-Khrushchev regime status differences within the Politburo seemed to be relatively small, although Brezhnev was clearly primus inter pares and three others, namely Kosygin, Podgornyi and Suslov, quickly emerged as senior to the rest, to be joined after a time by Kirilenko. With Podgornyi's 'demotion' from the CC Secretariat to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (1965), Brezhnev's designation as 'General' (in place of 'First') Secretary (1966) and the increasing authority of the party machine vis-à-vis the government machine,

Brezhnev's seniority to his immediate peers grew more marked and hierarchical differences within the Politburo widened generally. This process was both reflected in and accelerated by a number of membership changes occurring in 1973-76 (see Table 4.10), and in the same period publicity for Brezhnev began to assume the tone and intensity of a real leadership cult more extravagant than that previously enjoyed by any incumbent Soviet leader, other than Stalin at the height of his dictatorship.

Nevertheless in the later 1970s evidence suggesting Brezhnev's failing health and reduced working capacity prompted speculations that his personal power might be more apparent than real, and that he was little more than a 'front man', kept in office by the 'collective leadership' because he was compliant to their wishes and interests and because his departure would be unsettling to the whole power structure.

Developments in the three or four years preceding the 26th Congress are hard to square with this interpretation. The Brezhnev cult has been even further intensified, as we saw in Chapter One. To the position of General Secretary of the CC Brezhnev has added those of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and Chairman of the State Defence Council. While with some straining of credibility these developments might conceivably be fitted into the 'front man' thesis, the latter can scarcely be reconciled with the pattern of recent changes in the Politburo's membership. To start with, Brezhnev's appointment as Chairman of the Presidium did not involve just a boost to his own symbolic status, it also involved the departure of Politburo member Podgornyi, and without even the face-saving fiction of ill-health, thus emphasizing its political character. Whether, as some think, foreign policy disagreements were involved or whether Podgornyi simply objected to Brezhnev's taking his job, the lesson of this incident seems plain: even the most prestigious of the General Secretary's Politburo colleagues had better not oppose him on matters of major importance to him.

The most telling evidence, however, is the character of recent top-level appointments, for the majority of them have involved the advancement of officials better qualified than alternative candidates in only one respect: their long-term association with Brezhnev. For almost a decade after Brezhnev's assumption of the top party position he had only one old crony with him on the Politburo, namely Kirilenko. Then in 1973 he was joined by Defence Minister Grechko, whose links with Brezhnev went back to the Second World War, but Grechko died in 1976. Meanwhile the ground was being laid for a major breakthrough of Brezhnev associates. N.A. Tikhonov, a friend of the General Secretary's of several decades standing, was promoted to be one of the two First Vice Chairmen of the Council of Ministers in 1976, and two years later, when Mazurov retired, was left as the only First Vice Chairman, which, given the limited capacity of the already ailing Chairman Kosygin, gave him enormous influence over government business. In 1979 he became a candidate member of the Politburo and a year later succeeded Kosygin as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, shortly afterwards becoming a full member of the Politburo. His place as the sole First Deputy Chairman was taken by I.V. Arkhipov, who worked in the same plant as Brezhnev in the mid 1930s. (This was followed by a massive shake-up in the Council of Ministers Presidium, five new Deputy Chairmen being appointed, including Brezhnev's Moldavian protégé Bodiul.)

Then there is Konstantin Chernenko, who was Brezhnev's propaganda chief when he was party boss in Moldavia in the early 1950s and headed his Secretariat when he was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet a decade later, was promoted from a mere CC department head in 1976 to the rank of CC Secretary, becoming in 1977 a candidate member of the Politburo and in 1978 a full member. The only recent addition to the top leadership lacking known earlier connections with Brezhnev is Gorbachev. These changes completely altered the configuration of the senior echelon of Politburo members, as manifested by official precedence and other status indices. Whereas previously this had included only one close personal associate of Brezhnev (Kirilenko), it now included three (Kirilenko, Tikhonov and Chernenko). As suggested earlier, one should not conclude from these developments that the oligarchical pattern of rule of the early Brezhnev regime has been replaced by a personal dictatorship. Nevertheless we would argue that this oligarchical pattern has been substantially diluted by the individual authority of the General Secretary-President.

With Podgornyi and Kosygin gone, Suslov was now the only man on this senior echelon enjoying high personal standing independent of Brezhnev's patronage. Suslov's role in the political history of post-Khrushchev Russia awaits adequate evaluation, but his cooperative relationship with Brezhnev was evidently a key factor in the evolving power structure at the top. He was the only 'senior echelon' leader other than Brezhnev to acquire something like a personal following in the Politburo. The most obvious case was his brother-in-law Arvid Pel'she. A second is Andropov, who worked for several years in areas of the CC apparatus for which Suslov bore primary Politburo responsibility before his appointment as KGB Chairman and cooption to the Politburo. Andropov is said to have developed good personal and working relationships with Brezhnev, but the fact that this highly sensitive role was assigned to a man with long-term links with Suslov rather than the General Secretary must be accorded some significance. Chernenko may also have owed his advance partly to Suslov as well as to Brezhnev, for he spent much of his career in the former's agitprop area. The fact that he enjoyed the confidence of both these leaders may have been what gained him appointment as Head of the CC General Department in 1965, a position which, because of the influence it afforded over Politburo agendas and documentation, offered daily opportunities to be of service to his patrons. His subsequent promotions may have reflected their joint satisfaction in his performance of this role. The most speculative case is that of Gorbachev, who made his political career entirely in the Stavropol Territory (krai) before being brought up to Moscow as CC Secretary responsible for agriculture in 1978 (he became a candidate member of the Politburo in 1979 and a full member in 1980). Suslov himself was party First Secretary of the Stavropol Territory in 1939-44, and there are some indications that he may have retained an interest in the area and its leadership, prompting speculation that he had a hand in Gorbachev's promotion to Moscow, even if the final say was Brezhnev's.

Here is not the place to consider the likely future of the Soviet leadership at any length, but since major changes seem probable before the next CPSU congress convenes, some brief remarks may be in order. First, one has only to compare the Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev regimes to realize how widely the structure of supreme power may vary in the USSR and what a vast influence the personality of dominant leaders may exert over

foreign and domestic policies and the conditions of life of the Soviet population. Recent trends towards more institutionalized, less personalized government may mean that future leadership changes will have less of an impact, but we would be rash to assume that such trends must continue. Therefore the question of who assumes the top leadership positions in the next few years, and especially that of General Secretary, and the configuration of power within which the latter operates, is likely to prove of intense importance not only to the citizens of the USSR but to the rest of the world.

Until fairly recently there was a near consensus that Brezhnev's probable successor was his most senior protégé Andrei Kirilenko, whose long-term Politburo-level responsibilities both for the economy and for internal party affairs qualified him ideally for the position. Such an outcome held the prospect of minimal change, since although Kirilenko would not immediately acquire the level of personal authority Brezhnev already enjoyed by the mid 1970s, the similarity of his background and experience to Brezhnev's suggested that his orientations, priorities and methods might differ little from the latter's. In the period between the 25th and 26th Congress, however, this scenario came to seem ever less probable. Kirilenko's age (75 in 1981) implied that if he did outlive and succeed Brezhnev his primacy could be little more than an interregnum. Meanwhile the meteoric rise of Chernenko into the Politburo's 'senior echelon' suggested that he might be emerging as an alternative candidate for the General Secretaryship. This might carry large implications for the development of the Soviet regime and its policies, for Chernenko is cast in a very different mold from that of Brezhnev and Kirilenko: trained as an educationalist rather than an engineer, a long career spent running agitprop activities rather than in generalized (but economically-focussed) party leadership, one might expect him to inject a new pattern of priorities and habits of mind to the role of General Secretary. While his age (he is only five years Kirilenko's junior) and the inertia of the existing system might preclude his effecting major changes in his own lifetime, his impact on personnel and policy decisions might suffice to bequeath substantially different regime orientations from those bequeathed by a Kirilenko 'interregnum'.

Such conjectures are admittedly disputable, and may in any case be rendered irrelevant by intervening changes, e.g. should Brezhnev outlast his putative 'successors' and/or younger leaders such as Romanov or Gorbachev be advanced to the 'senior echelon'. Nonetheless, at the time of the 26th Congress the apparent availability of two prime candidates for succession to the General Secretaryship invited speculation as to what potential support each might enjoy in a leadership crisis, both within the Politburo itself and within the top echelons of the various bureaucracies. As in the past, personalist links based on earlier associations would probably prove a major factor, with those leaders whose links to Brezhnev arose from joint service in the Dnepropetrovsk or Zaporozhe regions going with Kirilenko, and those whose links with Brezhnev arose from joint service in Moldavia going with Chernenko. On the other hand, the 'Suslovites' might be expected to throw their weight behind Chernenko, for reasons we have noted earlier, and this seemed capable of clinching the succession in favour of Chernenko, despite the strong core of 'Dnepropetrovtsy' in the Politburo (Kirilenko, Tikhonov, Shcherbitskii).

This is one of the reasons why Suslov's death within a year of the 26th Congress could have major long-term significance for the development of the Soviet regime.

Whoever proves to be Brezhnev's immediate successor, the Soviet regime seems in for a period of accelerated leadership turnover, and it could be several years before a firm and stable pattern of rule under a strong General Secretary is re-established. Past experience suggests that this could be a period of confusion, inconsistency and irresolution in domestic and foreign policy. At the same time, the accumulation of serious economic and other problems could engender a climate favourable to the eventual emergence of a new leadership differing markedly in style and method from the Brezhnev regime: less consensual, less conservative (though not necessarily more liberal), more personalized, more dynamic, and more willing to face the opposition and the risks of failure attendant on radical solutions. The forces of inertia, however, are very strong, and it is impossible to estimate the probability of such an outcome. (31)

Notes

1. XXVI s'ezd KPSS, vol. 1, p. 88.
2. Partiinaiia zhizn' (abbreviated hereafter to PZh), no. 14, 1981, p. 13.
3. See T.H. Rigby, 'Soviet Communist Party Membership under Brezhnev', Soviet Studies, vol. XXVIII, no 3 (July 1976), pp. 319-22. Party recruitment policies under Brezhnev have been underpinned by two major Central Committee decisions dealing with recruitment activities respectively in the Kharkov Region (see PZh no 15, 1965, pp. 23-24) and Kirgizia (Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, Vypusk 17: 1977, (Moscow: Politizdat, 1977) pp. 356-59). The need to maintain strict standards at each stage of the admission process continued to be asserted in the months following the 26th Congress. See in particular Pravda, 24 April 1981 and 15 July 1981.
4. See Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, How the Soviet Union is Governed (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979) p. 338.
5. Calculated from figures given in I.N. Iudin, Sotsial'naia baza rosta KPSS (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), p. 289. This comparison does not include 'drop-outs', i.e. communists excluded not for offences but for 'losing contact with their party organizations'. The expulsion rate over the last five years has also been substantially less than in the previous five years (300,000 as against 435,000 - see PZh no 14, 1981, p. 19) but the figures are not fully comparable since the expulsions in the 1971-75 period were abnormally inflated by the 1973-74 exchange of party membership cards.
6. See Iudin, op. cit., p. 289.
7. Kommunist, no 17, 1980, p. 14.
8. On deaths as a growing factor in party attrition rates, see also Aryeh Unger, 'Soviet Communist Party Membership under Brezhnev: a Comment', Soviet Studies, vol. XXIX, no 2 (April 1977), p. 308.
9. See Rigby, op. cit., Unger, op. cit., Hough and Fainsod, op. cit., pp. 347-51.
10. See PZh, no 14, 1981, p. 19.
11. ibid., p. 17.
12. Calculated from figures in ibid. and Naselenie SSSR. Po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi 1979 goda (Moscow, 1980), p. 19.
13. PZh, no 14, 1981, p. 18.

14. PZh, no 14, 1973, p. 18, no. 10, 1976, p. 16; Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika. Vypusk 21: 1981, p. 491-2.
15. Sources as for note 14. Everett M. Jacobs has estimated that in 1961 2.9 per cent of CPSU members were Jews (see his 'A Note on Jewish Membership of the Soviet Communist Party', Soviet Jewish Affairs, vol. 6. (1976), no. 2, p. 115.) This would imply a halving of the Jewish proportion of the party membership over the last two decades.
16. See T.H. Rigby, Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917-1967 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 388.
17. See 'The Social Structure of the Newly Elected Central Committee Voting Membership', Radio Liberty Research, RL159/81, 13 April 1981, pp. 7-8.
18. Cf. Boris Meissner, 'Parteiführung, parteiorganisation und soziale Struktur der KPdSU', Osteuropa vol. 31, no. 9-10 (September-October) 1981, pp. 732-60.
19. The Central Committee voting membership as elected at the 25th Congress in 1976 included, apart from four CC secretaries doubling as department heads, only the Head of the Department of Science and Educational Institutions, the Head of the Chief Political Directorate of the Army and Navy and the CC's 'Administrator of Affairs' (Head of Chancery).
20. The key decision-making bodies in the non-Russian republics are the bureaux of their party Central Committees, usually numbering 9-11 full (voting) and 3-6 candidate (non-voting) members. The number of cases in which the republic's KGB Chairman has held membership in bureaux elected since 1966 is as follows:

	<u>Full members</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Total</u>
1966	1	3	4
1971	3	3	6
1976	5	7	12
1981	7	7	14

Thus the KGB chairmen now sits on all republic party bureaux, compared with less than a third of them at the outset of the Brezhnev era. It is reasonable to suppose that the same trend has occurred at lower hierarchical levels, but the relevant data are unavailable to verify this.

21. See XXVI s'ezd KPSS, vol. 1, p. 88. Brezhnev commented that 'the whole of [the Politburo's] activity was concentrated on key issues connected with the practical implementation of the decisions of the 25th Congress of the CPSU and CC plenums and with new developments in domestic and foreign policy'.
22. *ibid.* Meissner (*op. cit.*, p. 764) lists the Politburo commissions presently known to exist as those for ideology, agriculture, transport, and energy.

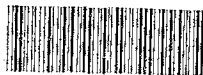
23. In the year preceding the 26th Congress the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet held seven meetings, only two of which were attended and chaired by Brezhnev. See Pravda, 5 March 1980, 7 May 1980, 24 June 1980, 2 September 1980, 22 October 1980, 15 November 1980 and 7 January 1981.
24. The Law on the Council of Ministers (Pravda, 6 July 1978) prescribes that it should meet at least once every three months, and the average has been close to that, with meetings never lasting beyond a day. See e.g. Pravda, 24 April 1979, 21 July 1979, 20 September 1979, 24 January 1980, 19 April 1980, 24 July 1980, 19 August 1980.
25. In June 1981 the Constitution and the Law on the Council of Ministers were amended to permit the inclusion of additional Government members in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers (see Pravda 25 June 1981), but past practice suggests that it is probably such officials as the Ministers for Agriculture and Finance and the Chairman of the People's Control Committee who are envisaged here.
26. It held 250 meetings in the five year period between the 25th and 26th Congress (see XXVI s'ezd KPSS, vol. 1, p. 88).
27. Apart from cases of 'tidying-up' after Khrushchev's removal there have been nine departures from the Politburo under Brezhnev's leadership. Of these, Kulakov and Grechko died in office and Kosygin died two months after resigning on grounds of ill-health; Voronov, Shelest, Shelepin, Polyanskii and Podgornyi are thought to have been pushed out for political reasons; and Mazurov's case is unclear: although health grounds were given for his retirement at the relatively early age of 64, there are indications that political factors were also involved.
28. See T.H. Rigby, 'The Soviet Politburo: a Comparative Profile 1951-1971', Soviet Studies, vol. XXIV, no. 1 (July 1972), pp. 11-12, 15-22.
29. Based on official biographical data. In 1981 there were two members (Gromyko and Gorbachev) with tertiary qualifications both in the social sciences and agriculture. Suslov and Gromyko graduated in the economics area, Pel'she evidently in history, Gorbachev in law, and Chernenko in education.
30. For more detailed discussion of the power changes within the Politburo up to 1978, see T.H. Rigby, 'Personal and Collective Leadership: Brezhnev and Beyond', in Dimitri K. Simes and associates, Soviet Leadership in Transition (Beverly Hills/London: Sage Publications, 1978), pp. 41-58. See also Boris Meissner's valuable chronological survey of Soviet political developments between the 25th and the 26th Congress, 'Die Sowjetunion zwischen dem XXV. und XXVI. Parteitag der KPdSU', Osteuropa, no. 7 (July) 1980, pp. 549-75; no. 11 (November) 1980, pp. 1175-1206; no. 1 (January) 1981, pp. 13-41; no. 2 (February) 1981, pp. 128-48; no. 5 (May) 1981, pp. 392-407; and no. 6 (June) 1981, pp. 466-89.

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31. For alternative views and more extensive analysis and documentation on the matters touched on in this final section, see Bialer, op. cit., Jerry F. Hough, Soviet Leadership in Transition (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1980), Dimitri K. Simes and Associates, op. cit., Dennis Ross, 'Coalition Maintenance in the Soviet Union', World Politics, vol. XXXII, no. 2 (January 1980), pp. 258-80, William E. Odom, 'Whither the Soviet Union', The Washington Quarterly, vol 4, no. 2 (Spring 1981), pp. 30-49.

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