

**TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOVIET TOP- ELITE
IN ITS LAST DECADE
(1981-1991)**

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ABSTRACT

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOVIET TOP-ELITE IN ITS LAST DECADE (1981-1991)

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This thesis focuses on the developments in the Soviet top-elite dynamics from 1981 to 1991. It claims that a careful examination of particular characteristics of the Soviet *nomenklatura* as a form of top-elite can give us important hints on how the intra-*nomenklatura* tensions that had been accumulating since its inception aggravated in the last decade of the USSR and contributed substantially to the Union's drive to the end. Hence, the main argument of this thesis is that when the Soviet top-elite lost its confidence on the elite-preserving capacity of Gorbachev, it started searching for alternatives, one of the most notable of which was the market economy option advocated by Boris Yeltsin at that time. This shift in the preferences of the Soviet *nomenklatura* played a considerable role in the dissolution process.

Keywords: Soviet top-elite, elite transformation in the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the USSR, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, Gorbachev, nomenklatura, Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Politburo, Secretariat of the Central Committee of CPSU.

ÖZ

SON ON YILINDA SOVYET ÜST-ELİTİNİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ (1981- 1991)

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Bu tez 1981-1991 yılları arasında Sovyet üst-elitinin dinamiklerine odaklanmıştır. Bir üst-elit biçimi olarak Sovyet nomenklaturasının belirli özelliklerinin analizinin, oluşumundan bu yana biriken nomenklatura içi gerginliklerin SSCB'nin son on yılında nasıl arttığını ve sonunda Birlik'in yıkılışına nasıl önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunduğunu anlamamıza imkan vereceği iddasındadır. Bu çerçevede, bu tezin temel savı Sovyet üst-elitinin Gorbaçov'un eliti koruma becerisine olan inancının yıkılmasıyla yeni alternatif arayışları içine girdiğidir. Bu alternatiflerden en belirginlerinden biri, Boris Yeltsin tarafından savunulan piyasa ekonomisi idi. Sovyet nomenklaturasının tercihlerinde yaşanan bu kayma çözülüş sürecinde de önemli bir rol oynamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sovyet eliti , Sovyetler Birliği'nde elitin dönüşümü, SSCB'nin çözülüşü, Brejnev, Andropov, Çernenko, Gorbaçov, nomenklatura, Sovyetler Birliği Komünist Partisi (SBKP), Politburo, SBKP Merkez Komitesi Sekreteryası.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Main Argument

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was one of the most significant events of the end of the 20th century. While there had been numerous studies in the West made on the USSR since its establishment in 1917, none of the Sovietologists could predict its “unaccepted” and bloodless end in 1991- *de facto* after the August *coup d’etat*, but formally in December 1991.

Once it dissolved however, possible reasons of this historic event has been examined from different perspectives on the basis of complex political, economic, social and international dynamics. This thesis aims to underline the importance of top-elite dynamics in the disintegration of the Soviet Union without an overview of these other explanations- not because it neglects the significance of them, but because such an overview requires a comprehensive research effort that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this thesis will focus on the developments in the Soviet top-elite dynamics from 1981 to 1991, and claim that a careful examination of particular characteristics of the so-called Soviet *nomenklatura*¹ as a form of top-elite can give us important hints on how the intra-*nomenklatura* tensions that had been accumulating since its inception aggravated in the last decade of the USSR and contributed substantially to the Union’s drive to the end. Hence, main argument of this thesis is that when the Soviet top-elite lost its confidence on the elite-preserving capacity of Gorbachev, it started searching for alternatives, one of the most notable of which was the market economy option advocated by Boris Yeltsin at that time, and this shift in the

¹ *Nomenklatura* (from Latin ‘*nomenclatura*’) consisted of (1) the list of positions which the Party regarded as important and which required Party assent to be filled; (2) the list of persons capable of filling these positions.

preferences of the Soviet *nomenklatura* played a considerable role in the dissolution process.

In brief, it can be maintained that with the dethroning of the Brezhnev-style elite after 1981, a new generation of elite had started to be formed in the last years of Brezhnev and the preceding short tenures of Andropov and Chernenko. This new elite saw the increase of its political power gradually from 1981 to 1985, and much more rapidly in the first years of Gorbachev, though after 1989 Gorbachev reforms made future quite unpredictable for them. Having continuously destabilized the political and economic conditions in the USSR, Gorbachev's *perestroika*² and especially *glasnost*³ forced both Gorbachev and the new elite to re-consider their political attachments. Such a quick de-alignment of the leader from the elite was rather unordinary for conventional Soviet politics. Having felt threatened with the possibility of losing their status and privileges, the new elite quickly disintegrated among various political alternatives of the time that ranged from trying to re-establish the old system and to radically transform the system to a market economy. As a matter of fact, some of them had already converted their power into property by the help of Gorbachev reforms.

In order to understand better the behavioral patterns of the *nomenklatura* in the disintegration process, it is necessary to look at the developments within the Soviet top-elite historically with a particular emphasis on its last decade. For such an analysis, focusing on the last ten years of the USSR seems appropriate as this period represented the gradual empowerment of not only the new elite but also Gorbachev himself. This period was also important in the Soviet top-elite history as it comprised attempts to overcome the elite degeneration experienced during the Brezhnev period. The Soviet *nomenklatura*'s concern for stability for itself had been perfectly satisfied with Brezhnevite clientelism and nepotism at the cost of increasing corruption and a chronic

² *Perestroika* – (from Russian means “reorganization”, “reconstruction”) announced in 1985. *Perestroika* was Gorbachev's main slogan after his election as General Secretary of CPSU in March 1985. The representatives of top-elite interpreted *perestroika* in their own way. Generally it was the half-baked revolution from above finalized with the transformation of Soviet top-elite.

³ A key element of the Gorbachev's reforms, which involved openness in economic and political decision-making and the open discussion of all questions and freedom of information.

problem of aged leadership in the USSR.⁴ As Afanasyev noted, clientelism⁵ of the Brezhnev period had had both social and political bases that generated obstacles for Gorbachev's reforms later.⁶

Studying the historical dynamics of the Soviet *nomenklatura* has been very popular in the West and in the former Soviet Union though Western and former Soviet/Russian researches seem to be little informed of each other with the exception of some seminal works like Voslensky's on Soviet *nomenklatura*.⁷ By providing an overview of some Western and former Soviet/Russian studies on Soviet top-elite, this thesis aims to cement together the debates developed in these two rather separate research paths. Hence, besides some important Western studies on Soviet *nomenklatura*, works produced by the former Soviet and Russian researches, official documents of the USSR, and some TV and radio programs in the contemporary Russian media will be selectively covered.

It has to be underlined that the top-elite analysis made in this thesis will be limited with the analysis of some important personnel flows at the top of the Soviet political hierarchy -namely in the Politburo, the Central Committee and the Central Committee's Secretariat of the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)* - which intensified crucially at times of Soviet leader changes. Different Soviet leaders' relationship with the Soviet top-elites that had occupied these posts will be investigated on the basis of the degree and conditions of their dependence to each other. The question of how changing compositions of these top-institutions were related with different economic and social factors in the USSR will be consciously avoided as this goes beyond the limited scope of this thesis.

⁴ The negative consequences of Brezhnev's tenure are widely shown in e.g. Baranov, Nikolay, D'Agostino, Anthony, 1998, p.62, Tompson, William, 2003, p.25.

⁵ Clientelism (Clientele- the French expression from Latin- "*clientela*"), which means patronage) in this work refers to the corrupt elite practices of the Brezhnev period.

⁶ See: Afanasyev M.N. Klientelizm i rossiyskaya gosudarstvennost' (Clientelism and Russian Statehood) Moscow, 1997. p. 3.

⁷ Mikhail Voslensky analyzed the foundation of the Soviet elite critically in the 1970s and 1980s and defined it as a 'class of *nomenklatura*'. See Voslensky, Mikhail S., *Nomenklatura: Gospodstvuyushchiy Klass Sovetskogo Soyuza (The Nomenklatura: A Ruling Class of the USSR)*, Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya and MP Oktyabr, 1991.

In the Soviet administrative structure, there were two main bureaucracies, those of the CPSU and the Soviet government, of which the former had been evidently dominant over the latter until Gorbachev's futile attempts to reverse this relationship in 1991, as will be discussed later. As Lane and Ross explain,

At the apex of the Communist Party was the chief decision-making body, the Politburo, and its executive body, the Secretariat of the Central Committee. With the assistance of the Secretariat and its twenty or so departments, the Politburo formulated policy. The Secretariat was charged with overseeing the implementation of party policy in lower level party organs and USSR government ministries and other state institutions. The party apparatus closely paralleled that of the government, though it was much smaller in size and had fewer departments. ... An important role of the Secretariat was to control and guide the activities of the government bureaucracy which operated through a hundred or so USSR ministries and state committees. The Secretariat was a parallel or shadow government.⁸

Due to its crucial role in the Soviet political hierarchy, the CPSU is defined by Kolesnichenko as the “fourth power” besides the legislative, executive and judiciary where in fact even the latter three had been closely supervised by the fourth.⁹ Within such a political structure in which the CPSU had seemingly monopolized the power to decide on all economic and political matters, focusing on the personnel changes at the top of its hierarchy would help one to make sense of important stability and/or instability tendencies at work in the USSR.

1.2. Defining and Conceptualising the Soviet Top-Elite, “the *Nomenklatura*”

The term of “nomenklatura” has entered into common usage in the West, particularly among journalists, as a synonym for the Soviet elite. This is not strictly correct. In its strictly correct usage, *nomenklatura* does not refer to people or a group of people but to a list of positions over which the Party reserves the right to supervise appointments and dismissals. In the USSR, no one could have been appointed to or

⁸ Lane, David and Ross, Cameron, p.341.

⁹ Kolesnichenko, Z.P., http://www.ibci.ru/konferencia/page/statya_k20.htm .

dismissed from a position on a *nomenklatura* list without the permission of the Party organization. There were “accounting” *nomenklatura* lists as well, which were made up of less important positions for which the Party was simply informed. As Rigby identifies however, the term can also be defined with its socio-political implications as a system. As he noticed, the *nomenklatura* system was one

under which the Communist Party apparatus controls the choice of personnel for hundreds of thousand of posts, a large proportion of them formally elective, in every sphere of national life, and at all levels from the central government down to the village soviets, is generally agreed to be one of the basic constituent elements of the Soviet sociopolitical order. The essence of this order has been the attempt to manage every area of socially relevant activity, outside a closely circumscribed private sphere, through an array of hierarchically structured formal organizations, all coordinated and directed at the center and at successively lower levels by the apparatus of the Communist Party.¹⁰

Hence, the transformation of the technical meaning of *nomenklatura* had also a historically valid basis.

In contemporary Russia, the study of elites as a separate field of research has been conducted under the title of ‘elitology’ within political philosophy.¹¹ One of the prominent figures of elitology, Ashin, argues that

elite is a social group supervising the big share of material, symbolical and political resources of a society. Elite members hold the supreme posts in hierarchies of the status and the authorities received them by ordered status or according to earned merits. The elites include those people who take the supreme imperious positions, supervise the most part of the property and have the best prestige. ... the mechanism of social balance operates normally when the periodical elite renovation is provided, which prevents the degeneration of ruling elite.¹²

¹⁰ Rigby, Thomas H, 1990, p. 73.

¹¹ The elitology studies are currently taught in Moscow State International Relation University (MGIMO) by Professor Ashin, see Ashin, G.K. Spetskurs Elitologiya (Elitology), Moscow. MGIMO Academy. http://www.mgimo.ru/kf/docs/course_elitology.htm .

¹² Ibid, http://www.mgimo.ru/kf/docs/course_elitology.htm .

Ashin further maintains that “the elite study field- elitology is a ‘science about the elite, and about the bases of society’s differentiation, describing the main criteria and legitimacy of this differentiation”.¹³ It is evident that the unique composition and powers of the Soviet top-elite in comparison with the top-elite structures in other countries requires one to rethink on these points within the context of the USSR. As private property was not allowed in Soviet socialism, the reflections of status and power for the Soviet *nomenklatura* were the material privileges they enjoyed within the limits of the system.

In her works on Soviet *nomenklatura*, sociologist Kryshtanovskaia divides this elite group, which she also defines as political elite, into two: the ‘real’ and the ‘official’ elites. The ‘real elite’ were included in the structure of the top-CPSU and they were different than those who were formally included into the lists of USSR Supreme Soviet and Cabinet of Ministers members. Kryshtanovskaia named the latter ‘pseudo-*nomenklatura*’.¹⁴ As she argues, in order to show the full participation of Soviet people into “the building of socialism”, there was a formal layer of representative posts, which was filled with workers and peasants. Actually the real management of Soviet state was in the hand of a small group inside Party top-managers, who also combined their posts with the state posts. Actually, this was a right given to the CPSU by the Constitution as the sixth clause of the Soviet Constitution determined the Party as the “ruling and guiding power” in the country.¹⁵

1.3. History of the Soviet *Nomenklatura* and the Outline of the Thesis

The Soviet Union was ruled by a ruling stratum, which based its legitimacy on resource shortages in the management of the economy and the demagogic slogans of pseudo-equality, socialism and communism in politics. During the Stalin period, the

¹³ Ibid, http://www.mgimo.ru/kf/docs/course_elitology.htm .

¹⁴ See for details: Kryshtanovskaia, Olga, The New Russian Elite, *Sociological Research*, Vol. 34, No 3, May-June 1995 and Kryshtanovskaia, Olga, Transformation of the Old Nomenklatura into a New Russian Elite, *Sociological Research*, Vol. 34, No 6, Nov-Dec.1995 and other articles in Russian and English.

¹⁵ Mau, B., Regional’niye politiko-ekonomicheskiye elity (The regional political economic elites), Moscow, March 2001, <http://www.iet.ru/usaid/elita/elita.html> .

formation of the Soviet *nomenklatura* acquired momentum and Stalin promoted the most devoted members of the CPSU to key Party and state positions while purging the less obedient and the opponents. During the mass repressions from 1937 to 1939, the cleansing of opponents reached an apogee.¹⁶ The purges were followed with a period of stability though since the terms of the relationship between the leader and the elite had largely been settled. The Soviet *nomenklatura* could largely feel secure in this period as long as it obeyed the orders of the leader.

After Stalin, though not as violent as he had done, periodical renewals of the Soviet top-elite became a legitimate and expected event particularly at times of leader changes. Similarly, an elite expectation also developed on the calming down of waters once a new balance would be reached. It has to be however recognized that none of the leaders after Stalin could be as dominant as him *vis-à-vis* their top-elites. The succeeding leaders had felt themselves bounded with their top-elites -though at different degrees and for different lengths- as there was always some other strong personalities within the Politburo to establish a balance. Hence, a mutual dependence got institutionalized between the leader and the top-elite since one side's survival became largely depended on that of the other's.

The thesis will cover the developments in the Soviet top-elite after Stalin on the basis of such a heritage. *Chapter 2* will examine the tenures of Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev until 1981, and try to identify some new regularities and lessons acquired from this period in terms of top-elite analysis. As V. Mokhov argues, this was a period of 'institutionalization' and 'routinization' throughout which the historical consequences of the above mentioned mutual dependence were experienced.¹⁷ Khrushchev for instance saw his leadership gone in 1964 when he threatened the privileges of the top-*nomenklatura* through various administrative reform attempts and proposals whereas in the Brezhnev period a degenerative stagnation settled as the clientelistic and corrupt relations established between the top-elite and the lower elite strata required the survival of the system without change. Besides corruption, an aged

¹⁶ Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev were the victims of these purges by 1937. See also Baranov Nikolay, <http://nicbar.narod.ru/lekziya5.htm>, Ashin G., http://www.mgimo.ru/kf/docs/course_elitology.htm, Korzhikhina T.P., Figatner Yu.Yu. *Sovetskaya Nomenklatura, Voprosi Istorii*, 1993, no 7.

¹⁷ Mokhov V., <http://elis.pstu.ac.ru/mokhov2.htm> pp.3-5.

nomenklatura and inaccessibility of the younger generations to the decision making processes were other reflections of this stagnation.

Chapter 3 will examine the implications of Brezhnev's 'stability of the cadres' policy in the succeeding tenures of the two quite old members of the Politburo from November 1982 to March 1985. Both the election processes and the courses of both Andropov and Chernenko were expressions of a severe succession crisis in the USSR. Andropov could not complete his reformist aims due to his 'expected' death, and Chernenko saw his tenure to turn into an education ground for the future Soviet leader, Gorbachev.

Hence, the succeeding two chapters of the thesis will cover the Gorbachev period in the USSR. *Chapter 4* will examine the relatively conventional steps taken by Gorbachev in his early years. He substantially intervened in the top-elite cadres in his first three years in office in order to consolidate power firmly in his hands. *Chapter 5* will try to question the elite-motivated aspects of the USSR's drive to end in reaction to Gorbachev's radical economic and political reforms. As it will be argued having felt insecure by the possibility of losing their newly-acquired privileges, the Gorbachev elite quickly transformed its preferences into different options, one of the most appealing of which was the possibility of re-establishing their authority on an economic basis within a market economy.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOVIET TOP ELITE BEFORE 1981

2.1. Introduction

The Soviet top-*nomenklatura* had been formed mainly in the 1920-30's from the representatives of Communist Party elite, who strove for power and privileges. The Soviet top-elite consisted of the members of the CPSU's Central Committee: more specifically the leading decision-makers of the Communist Party, the *Politburo* and the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, leaders of different branches of the Central Committee of the CPSU, heads of the regional committees of the CPSU, different ministers, heads of power structures, top diplomats and heads of different organizations (like youth, trade-union, and art-culture unions). If the political structure of the USSR is compared with the Western models, the party top-elite used to have the same function as the executive power though its power was absolute and concentrated in the hands of the CPSU's Central Committee.¹⁸

During Josef Stalin's tenure after 1922, the Party elite had seen substantial interventions in its cadres. The top-leaders of the Bolshevik revolution had been gradually replaced by more obedient, but not bright officials who later constituted the kernel of the Stalinist cadres. The secret police had become a key institution in determining the fate of many individual members of the *nomenklatura*. It can be argued that it had been during the Stalinist period that the Soviet top elite started to play a conservative rather than a revolutionary role in Soviet politics by concerning with its own security more than anything else. Thus the cadres' policy of the Soviet top- leader became the indicator of the successes and failures in top-Party and top-state management.

Although the Stalinist period is one of the most important cases of investigation in Soviet politics, this already well-researched topic will not be examined in detail in this

¹⁸ For a schematic examination of the Soviet top-elite see Armstrong, p. 74.

chapter. This is largely due to the exceptionally coercive character of Stalin's rule in comparison to those of the succeeding leaders. It is of course true that Stalin's specific association with his own cadres had defined the general framework of top elite-leader relationship in the USSR. For instance, all leaders after Stalin formed their "own" elites at the highest Party level on the basis of personal obedience just like Stalin did. On the other hand, despite some general similarities as such, the terror-like character of Stalin's rule made a big difference that radically differentiated his tenure from others.

Due to this reason, this chapter aims to start its historical investigation on top elite developments in Soviet politics by examining the Nikita Khrushchev period. It is believed that in order to understand the specificities of top-elite transformation in the last years of the USSR that substantially contributed to its collapse, it is necessary to scrutinize the conditions and patterns of top elite formation in Soviet politics since Khrushchev's rise to power. Hence, in an attempt to launch such an investigation, this chapter will examine the dynamics of top elite formation in the whole of the Khrushchev period (*section 2.2.* below) and the bulk of Leonid Brezhnev's tenure (*section 2.3.* below).

2.2. Nikita Khrushchev: The Unexpected Reformer

After the death of *nomenklatura's* founder Stalin in 1953, the Soviet top-elite faced a hard task of determining their new leader among several options. At the beginning, a collective style of management was established under the formal leadership of Georgiy Malenkov, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, who ruled with his deputies, Lavrentiy Beria, Vyacheslav Molotov, Nikolai Bulganin and Lazar Kaganovich. In the post-Stalinist leadership struggle, besides Malenkov, Klim Voroshilov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium, and Communist Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev were the other candidates. In the July 1953 Plenum of the CPSU, Beria was overthrown from his position due to his repressive practices during Stalin's rule. The Party elite withdrew their support from Malenkov soon with concerns that he was too strong and dominant that he was not easily manageable for the top-Party

nomenklatura.¹⁹ Under these conditions, Khrushchev became the number one option, and having secured the support of the Secretariat and the Central Committee, he was elected as the new Soviet leader.

As a matter of fact, Khrushchev's victory over other candidates represented a substantial transformation of power in the Soviet elite from security organs to the Party functionaries, two powerful groups that had struggled vigorously against each other during the Stalin period. After World War II, Josef Stalin had to give priority to the task of sustaining the USSR as a superpower and this policy had important consequences for the top-elite formation in the USSR. When we look at the composition of the top-elite cadres during the dynamic post-war period, it will be noticed that the specialists of the time - namely the professionals who won the war - had acquired a relatively powerful position vis-à-vis the over-obedient and diligent party functionaries in the administration of the country. Following the death of Stalin, this latter group attempted to monopolize power in their hands by launching an offensive against the members of the security organs. Hence, the minister of interior Beria's and the head of the government Malenkov's elimination from the leadership struggle one by one can be evaluated as a systematic attempt of the Party apparatus to dominate over the security interests and to put an end to the Stalinist terror which had had severe consequences for their own well-being besides the ordinary Soviet people. In this way, the Soviet security organs were transformed from being the mysterious monster of the state into one of the powerful components of the "party apparatus", as Voslensky explained in his 'Nomenklatura'.²⁰

Hence, as many sources and memoirs also confirm, Khrushchev got support from the top-CPSU *nomenklatura* within such a historical context in order to ensure their rehabilitation after the Stalinist pressure and terror.²¹ His victory as the weakest and easily manageable candidate represented the Party *nomenklatura*'s attempt to keep authority under their own control.

¹⁹ Lichman B.V. *Istoriya Rossii. Teorii Izucheniya. Kniga Vtoraya. Dvadtsatiy Vek* (The History of Russia. Theory of Research. Second Book. Twentieth Century) (Russia: Yekaterinburg, SV, 2001). (Nomenklatura: genesis, razvitie, smert (1923-1989), Chapter 1, Chto takoye nomenklatura? <http://lichm.narod.ru/Part24/310.htm#-ednref1>).

²⁰ Voslensky, M. 'Nomenklatura', pp.135-137.

²¹ See Baranov, Nikolay, <http://nicbar.narod.ru/lekziya5.htm> and Kara- Murza, Sergey, p.32-33.

The Party *nomenklatura*'s successful performance in ensuring Khrushchev's victory had had implications for the new leader's relationship with them. The early Khrushchev years passed with Khrushchev's struggle for absolute control over the powerful Party and state management. For this purpose, just like his predecessor, he tried to replace all his opponents by obedient officials, who served as his aides in different periods. The 1956 Twentieth Congress of the CPSU had been a turning point in Khrushchev's relations with the Party elite. In this Congress, he finally displayed a powerful attitude by openly declaring the harms of Stalin's "cult of personality" policy and methods of building socialism.²² This initiative destroyed the ideological unity, hence internal cohesion, of the top-elite and split them on the question of how to reform the country. All these contributed to Khrushchev's consolidating power in his hands, and by steadily defeating his major opponents until 1957, Khrushchev had finished his team building by then.

As it is known, Khrushchev's name had been identified with the post-Stalinist reforms, defined as 'thaw' in all spheres of Soviet life. Khrushchev's famous reformist activities took place after his powerful rise in the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU discussed above, and due to this reason the Party *nomenklatura* could not have full control over the reforms launched. It is true that Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization had focused more on criticizing reprisals against the Soviet top-elite, rather than reprisals against ordinary Soviet people. During the Khrushchev period there was no serious or tragic repression on the top-*nomenklatura*. However, this did not mean guaranteed privileges for the Party elite, since the periodical rotations and managerial experiments continued, resulting the instability of the middle and top of elite. But at the same time, Party leaders in top-*nomenklatura* started to play the dominative role and suppress the influence either top-military and security organs or top-governmental personalities.

²² See Khrushchev's speech in <http://www.kulichki.com:8105/moshkow/MEMUARY/HRUSHEW/kult.txt>.

Furthermore, as part of his attempts to reform the party-state management, Khrushchev revealed plans for term-in-office amendments during the Plenum of Central Committee in October 1961. He tried to introduce a restriction over the term-in-office for the top-managers for a maximum period of 12 years. By introducing such a rotation of the party cadres, Khrushchev aimed to change a quarter of the Central Committee of the CPSU's staff at every Congress, which took place every four years. Besides this there was also a compulsory rotation practice for a third of the staff in *obkoms*, *gorkoms* and *raikoms*²³ of the Party at every following election.²⁴

Khrushchev's attempt to bring mobility to Party cadres created a noticeable discontent among the *nomenklatura*. It was argued that he was dismissed from leadership in 1964 not due to the failures of the agrarian reforms or the bloody suppression of the ordinary population's protests in Novocherkassk but due to the reforms in the top-management of the USSR he attempted.²⁵ He threatened the privileges of the top-*nomenklatura* through such administrative reform attempts and proposals and this reinforced *nomenklatura*'s opposition to Khrushchev.

One of the important consequences of Khrushchev's power struggle with the Soviet top-elite was the quantitative expansion of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. Khrushchev and the elite group around him actively expanded the cadres and the number of economic and Communist Party top-officials between 1956 and 1964. Therefore, as it had shown in many sources, in this period the number of top-*nomenklatura* members (highest party and economy appointees) and the quality of the life, the amount of the privileges effectively increased.²⁶

²³ *Obkom*, *gorkom* and *raikom* are the regional, city and district committees of the Communist Party.

²⁴ Tompson, William J. (1995), p. 221 and Rybas, Syatoslav, (2002) <http://www.respublika.ru/docs/respublika/rybas/97.html> .

²⁵ See the interview with Sergei Khrushchev, Sergei Leskov, "Chtoby podnyat' ekonomiku, Rossiya dolzhna kogo-to ograbit" (In order to develop its economy, Russia had to rob somebody) <http://www.izvestia.ru/person/article39051> .

²⁶ Baranov, Nikolay A., <http://nicbar.narod.ru/lekziya5.htm> .

2.3. The Brezhnev Period: To a Dead End for Elite Stability

Leonid Brezhnev, the successor of Khrushchev, spent more efforts for top-elite consolidation in comparison to his predecessors though he managed to do so without the destructive and path-breaking incidents that Stalin and Khrushchev had faced. The caution with which Brezhnev moved to stabilize his position was no doubt a reflection of the balance of forces in the Party's highest policy-making body – the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee (renamed the *Politburo* in 1966).

As a matter of fact, Brezhnev's rise to CPSU leadership had resembled in many respects to that of Khrushchev. During the internal struggle for power after the overthrow of Khrushchev, Brezhnev strengthened his premiership vis-à-vis other possible candidates like Aleksandr Shelepin and Mikhail Suslov for he was considered to be easily manageable. As the prominent political writer Roy Medvedev noted and had been cited, "the majority of the apparatus feared the appearance of a strong leader like Shelepin, but did not sympathize with a dogmatist and ascetic person like Suslov - that is why the top-party elite preferred Brezhnev's candidacy".²⁷ The historian Semanov furthermore noticed that "Brezhnev stood out among the top-leaders with his relatively weak and benevolent character, so he became the supporter of the 'stability of cadres' principle."²⁸ The academician Georgiy Arbatov's expressions in the Semanov's book also emphasize that Leonid Brezhnev barely had control over the issues and seemed as easily governed."²⁹

Writers like Leon Onikov, Vadim Medvedev and Georgiy Shakhnazarov stressed the growth of enthusiasm during the disposal of Khrushchev and the election of Brezhnev in 1964.³⁰ Cadres in the Central Committee and the top-elite expected shifts in policy preferences as well as an acceleration of reforms after the latter's election. After

²⁷ Semanov, Sergey in pp. 113-114 cited the viewpoints of Roy Medvedev.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 137.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 138.

³⁰ Shakhnazarov, Georgiy, p.569.

the overthrow of Khrushchev, in spite of hard ideological pressure, a period of ‘*intelligentskoye svobodomyслиye*’ (which means *intelligentsia* free-thinking) was seen. Evidently it was linked with the increased level of education and the improvement of life standards of the Soviet elite in the aftermath of the World War II.³¹

In such a political atmosphere, Brezhnev was appointed in the 1964 Plenum as the head of a temporary collective leadership, which consisted of himself, Aleksey Kosygin, Suslov and Nikolay Podgorny. Although people like Shelepin and Vladimir Semichastny, who had been among the plotters of the unsuccessful anti-Khrushchev plot in 1957 and finally initiated Khrushchev’s removal from office in 1964, were also powerful figures, they knew from their own experiences that the majority in Presidium (or *Politburo*) without support from the Secretariat and the Central Committee, which included regional leaders as well, was not sufficient to upset general balances at the top of the Soviet hierarchy.³² Due to the skilful manipulations of the apparatus - specifically the Secretariat - Brezhnev gained the support of the majority in the Central Committee though the powerful opposition of Shelepin and his supporters prevented him from ensuring secure authority over the Party elite immediately.

Due to this delicate balance of power at the top of the Soviet hierarchy, the first five years of Brezhnev’s tenure had passed in a participatory political atmosphere throughout which the leader’s decisions were largely determined by the discussions at the Central Committee Plenums.³³ Hough and Fainsod defined this period as a good example of ‘institutional pluralism’.³⁴

On the other hand, the period is also identified by Brezhnev’s efforts to eliminate Shelepin’s opposition through the promotion of his own cadres (like Konstantin Chernenko, Andrey Kirilenko, Viktor Grishin, Suslov and Vladimir Shcherbitsky) to the

³¹ Kara- Murza, Sergey, pp. 334-335, the portraits of CC members in different periods of the USSR is provided in Mawdsley, Evan and White, Stephen, e.g. pp.145-152 and 176-186.

³² Semanov, Sergey, p.94.

³³ Vert, Nicolas. pp. 440-443.

³⁴ Hough, J.and Fainsod, M., p.443.

top-elite. If it would be expressed objectively, Kosygin was successfully neutralized³⁵ while the most 'dangerous' personalities (like KGB Chairman Semichastny and Moscow Gorkom Chairman Nikolay Yegorychev) were replaced by his aides. Brezhnev also weakened the power of possible candidates for competition to the top-Party posts by changing their positions (like Andropov, who shifted from the Secretariat to the *KGB* in 1967). The closest ally of Brezhnev, "Kirilenko replaced Podgorny, who was removed from party secretaryship in 1965 and promoted to the presidency."³⁶

Many of these new people were Brezhnev's close friends which he met during his long Party career in Dnepropetrovsk, Moldova, Kazakhstan and then in central CPSU posts. Brezhnev, like Khrushchev in his early years, steadily promoted a growing number of former subordinates like Chernenko, Semyon Tsvigun, Nikolay Schelokov and Trapeznikov to key positions at the center. Former second secretary in Zaporozhye and his successor in Dnepropetrovsk, Kirilenko, entered the Secretariat and took over responsibility for cadres (personnel) policy. Schelokov, who had served under Brezhnev in Dnepropetrovsk and Moldavia, took up the position of USSR Minister for the Preservation of Public Order (later renamed Minister of Internal Affairs) in 1966, remaining in post until Brezhnev's death. Konstantin Chernenko, Brezhnev's favorite and virtual 'shadow' since Brezhnev's work in Moldavia, was appointed in early 1965 as the head of the Central Committee's 'General Department'. The General Department functioned as the Party leader's *de facto* chancellery and largely controlled the flow of classified information within the upper echelons of the party *apparatus*. Many other former Brezhnev subordinates were installed in key positions in the *KGB*, the government bureaucracy and the diplomatic service. The rise of these people was the evidence of Brezhnev's ascendance in the Party. But unfortunately, nearly "all persons, including Brezhnev himself, proved to be the relatively incompetent personalities in the Politburo and the Central Committee"³⁷.

³⁵ Semanov, Sergey, p.234.

³⁶ Mitchell, Judson, p.27.

³⁷ Semanov, Sergey, p.60-61.

Brezhnev's cadres, who found a way to the top-elite between 1964-1969 solidified their positions in the 1970s. Once this happened, there were no real changes in the composition of the top-nomenklatura until the death of General Secretary Brezhnev. Many Sovietologists explained the reasons of this stability by Brezhnev's steady but effective grasp of authority until 1976. Young members of the elite had been left with few means to replace the team of "Brezhnev's gerontocracy" in other words the rule of the aged.³⁸ Therefore it was possible to talk about the control of the old Party members in Kremlin by the end of 1970's. We need to add to this picture the favorable financial conditions ensured by the increase in world oil prices, a development which postponed the need for economic reforms for some time more. In such a political and economic environment, Brezhnev's reforms in the 1970's were of a cosmetic character.³⁹ Due to all these reasons, elite flow and renovation in the top nomenklatura almost stagnated until the end of Brezhnev's tenure. Vert called that period "the oligarchy of the aged".⁴⁰

Stagnation in the top-elite can also be explained by the very rationale that brought Brezhnev to power in 1964. According to Tompson, Brezhnev had become a party leader largely because of the "party elite's hostility towards Khrushchev's frequent reorganizations and even more frequent redeployment of subordinates" (as mentioned above).⁴¹ On replacing his former chief, Brezhnev promised that he would 'stick up for cadres'. He kept his word. 'Trust in cadres' and 'stability of cadres' became key themes of his leadership, and he never openly fought against anyone in the Politburo or the Central Committee. Personnel turnover in the top party and state bodies declined dramatically, the result being that the country's political elite had started aging steadily. Inefficiency grew, and due to this reason that period of tenure was described by the most historians, and evaluated by Gorbachev, as a '*zastoi*' (stagnation). This had clearly

³⁸ Tompson, William J., pp.23-24.

³⁹ Vert, Nicolas, The History of Soviet State, Moscow, Ves mir, p. 447.

⁴⁰ Baranov, p.5 and Vert N., p.482. To glance to the list of the 1981 Congress of the CPSU would display the extent of stagnation in the cadres: many of the old top-cadres appointed at the beginning of Leonid Brezhnev's long tenure preserved their positions. See also: <http://praviteli.narod.ru/politburo/politburo.htm>.

⁴¹ Tompson, William, p. 21.

reduced the scope for the introduction of new people to the top nomenklatura - and hence new ideas - and created greater opportunities for corruption than had previously existed, particularly in the republics with long-serving leaders.

As Tompson argues 'retention rates rose above 70per cent' in the Brezhnev period. He indicates that 'only 17per cent of the members of the 1961 Committee still living in 1966 were replaced - and most of those were close associates of Khrushchev'. Retention rates in the Central Committee elected by the Twenty-fourth (1971), Twenty-fifth (1976) and Twenty-sixth (1981) Party Congresses were 73, 80 and 78 per cent respectively. As with elites aging, the retention rates for surviving Central Committee members reached 81 per cent in 1971 and 89 per cent in 1976.⁴² It is necessary to emphasize that the Central Committee was not the only institution to experience a remarkable degree of stability. The Politburo had become also subject to extremely low rates of turnover. Therefore it can be argued that the Soviet politics had faced a chronic problem of top-elite stagnation in the Brezhnev period, which was directly related to the long-term tenures of Soviet leaders.

An inevitable implication of this elite-stability problem was the hidden struggle between representatives of the different teams, which represented the level of influence of the Soviet top-leaders. The unchanged cadres inside the team of the 18-year ruled General Secretary Brezhnev became the reason of the struggle in top-Soviet *nomenklatura*. As the members of the top-elite tended to behave generally like their coevals did, it became very hard for younger generations to express their views in Soviet politics.

To remark the exceptional cases inside top-management, journalists Solovyev and Klepikova comment on the promotion of younger party leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev to the Secretariat and the *Politburo* at the end of 1970's as exceptional practices.⁴³ According to them, the official central promotion of 47-year *obkom* First Secretary Gorbachev had "begun at the meeting of Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko

⁴² Tompson, William, p. 23.

⁴³ Solovyev, Klepikova, <http://koapp.narod.ru/hudlit/politics/book40.htm> .

with him on station Mineralnye Vody.⁴⁴ Andropov, the Chief of the KGB, met Brezhnev and his nearest aide Chernenko and presented Gorbachev as the prospective candidate for promotion. In the region where Gorbachev executed his duties, Andropov had taken his anti-corruption measures, which were directed at first at the most apparent violations done by Brezhnev's clients.⁴⁵ That is how after the tragic death of Fyodor Kulakov, who was responsible for agriculture in the Secretariat, and also compatriot and mentor of Gorbachev, the latter was promoted to the high position of the former. Due to the power intrigue of others and the stagnation in top-elite renovation, the obedient young careerist from the periphery became easily the real candidate for the top-leadership in the mid-1980's as will be examined later. That brief history of career of one top personality showed how promotion in the Soviet top-elite was directly related to personal affiliations.

As Brezhnev's rule became more personal through the solidification of his cadres in the top CPSU institutions, the institutional pluralism of the early years disappeared. In the 1970s, although the Central Committee of the CPSU preserved its importance as an organization where the different bureaucratic structures of the Soviet state were represented, its capacity to affect Brezhnev's decisions declined substantially. Brezhnev's style of personal rule after then was most apparent in his full control over the Secretariat, where he had previously discussed and confirmed all subjects on important issues before the Politburo meetings and Central Committee plenums. After the institutional expansion of the CPSU Central Committee with the inclusion of the Chairman of the KGB, along with the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in April 1973, the impact of Brezhnev's personal domination over the Secretariat expanded as well. This change ensured the Party's control over KGB and meant the

⁴⁴ The history of this meeting in Mineral'niye Vody was narrated also by Gorbachev in Savik Shuster TV program in March 2005. See also Pravda, September 21, 1978; Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, vol.1, pp.23-25.

⁴⁵ Brezhnev's system of patronage, nepotism, assistance, protectionism and promoting of clients was the basic mechanism of the General Secretary's authority. For a critical review of Brezhnev's relations with the top-elite, see e.g. Lichman, B.V. *Nomenklatura: genesis, razvitie, smert (1923-1989)*, Chapter 1, *Chto takoye nomenklatura?* <http://lichm.narod.ru/Part24/310.htm#-ednref1>.

“fusion of the Party with power ministries.”⁴⁶ In other word, this could be interpreted as one of Brezhnev’s successful initiatives to preserve stability in the top-*nomenklatura*.

This “compact” political mechanism which ensured a long elite stability throughout the 1970s had however worked to produce a devastating political stagnation as well as corruption towards the end of the decade. In order to ensure their further stay in their posts, Brezhnev’s appointees in the Politburo and the Secretariat had expanded the amount of aides around them in a rather ineffective way. That’s why, as Lapina emphasized, the turnover of the cadres had speeded up in the 1970-1980’s.⁴⁷ On the other hand, as Brezhnev’s health deteriorated, corruptive activities of the local leaders, who extended their authorities in their regions, had also intensified. The legal investigations launched by Andropov against Medunov, a local Party boss, in 1979 created a big shock as he was also one of Brezhnev's closest friends. The seriousness of the abuses forced Brezhnev to finally dismiss Medunov from *Obkom* Secretaryship; he was made the deputy minister of a minor ministry- Ministry for Fruit and Vegetable Processing Industry.

The worsening of these problems together with Brezhnev’s deteriorating health after 1976 led to a deep management crisis by the beginning of 1980’s. In order to prevent this crisis to threaten the stability of the cadres, other members of the top-elite increased their influence over the administration. Grechenevsky argued that due to the risk of Brezhnev’s replacement by an unexpected new leader, KGB Chief Andropov spent enormous efforts to keep Brezhnev in his post until his death.⁴⁸ It can be argued that this further aggravated the problem of top elite stagnation in the last years of Brezhnev’s tenure. According to Gromyko, ‘during the last 2-3 years (1979-1982) Brezhnev was actually passive in his position of top-elite chief.’⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Voslensky M., p.137.

⁴⁷ Lapina N., p.6.

⁴⁸ Grechenevsky Oleg, Andropov Forever, *Predislovie k perestroike (The Preface for Perestroika)*, *Zavtra*, # 42 (568) 14 October 2004, <http://zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/04/569/61.html> .

⁴⁹ Gromyko, Andrey, *Memoirs*, New York, 1989. See also Semanov, p. 253.

2.4. Conclusion

This short examination of top elite formation processes in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods displays the key role played by the leader as well as the highest CPSU organs in this process in Soviet politics. It can be argued that the collective leadership practice observed at the start of the tenures of both leaders had increased their experiences of eliminating their opponents through various tactics. Once they replaced all their opponents by obedient officials, who generally served as their aides in different periods before, the real quality of their leadership became apparent. In this sense, Khrushchev was proved to be a strongly reformist leader whereas Brezhnev's priority was to ensure top elite stability as long as possible despite various problems emerged like aged officials and corruption.

As the elimination of Khrushchev from leadership indicates Soviet nomenklatura did not fond of seeing interventions in its own authority. This dislike led them even to prefer impotent leaders than powerful ones despite the risks of inefficiency in state management. Due to this reason, after Stalin's death until the early 1980's a gradual deceleration in the renovation of the elite at the top of the Soviet hierarchy was observed. This development had negatively affected the coordination within the top-elite. The level of bureaucratization substantially increased. It was true that the coercive power of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (NKVD) and the KGB over the top-nomenklatura, a Stalinist heritage to Soviet politics, was reduced later on, but that liberation did not increase the efficiency of state management. Just the contrary, together with Brezhnev's obsessive elite stability concerns, this development made the top-elite authority in the USSR impotent but limitless.

As will be emphasized in the next chapter, the clientelist relations of mutual dependence between Brezhnev's top-*nomenklatura* and the lower strata of the Soviet elite guaranteed the vitality of gerontocracy. Crucial problems that emerged due to these corruptive relations between the elite's upper and middle strata were what forced the transformation of elite preferences starting with the last years of Brezhnev's tenure. The last years of Brezhnev as a leader of the Communist Party would be a good point to

starting the analysis of transformation in top-elite.⁵⁰ At that point of the Soviet history the serious reformations in Party and state top-*nomenklatura* became inevitable.

⁵⁰ For a comparative lists of top-elite see: Chernev A.D. 229 kremlyovskikh vozhdely. Politburo, Orgburo, Sekretariat TsK Kommunisticheskoy partii v litsakh i tsifrah (229 Kremlin's Leaders. Politburo, Orgburo, Secretariat of CPSU Central Committee). Spravochnik, Moscow: the journal Rodina, Scientific Centre 'Rusika', 1996 and Sostav rukovodyashchikh organov Tsentral'nogo Komiteta partii- Politburo (Prezidium), Orgburo, Sekretariata TsK (1919-1990) (The List of Central Committee- Politburo (Presidium), Orgburo, Secretariat of Central Committee). Izvestiya TsK KPSS, 1990, Number 7.

CHAPTER 3

SOVIET TOP-ELITE DURING THE INTERLUDE PERIOD (1981-1985)

3.1. Introduction

This chapter, starting with the last years of Brezhnev's tenure, will cover the period between 1981 and 1985. The tenures of two succeeding old Soviet top-leaders- Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko- will be covered briefly in an attempt to understand better the dynamics of pre-Gorbachev politics in the USSR.

Many contemporary studies on Gorbachev tend to relate his reformist tide to that of Andropov, who represents a vigorous leadership in the midst of the Brezhnevite stagnation in the USSR. While this is the case, the existence of the old-fashioned Chernenko's leadership between the two is rarely problematized. This neglect however seems to downgrade the implications of a long-lasting succession crisis in the USSR before Gorbachev's coming to power. As will be discussed in the following sections, while the short tenures of almost half-paralyzed Andropov and Chernenko were the crude expressions of this crisis, inevitable and necessary cadre changes, the inclusion of some young people to the top-elite and the steady rise of Gorbachev to top leadership were its other important aspects.

3.2. Brezhnev's Impotence and Andropov's Rise to Power

Brezhnev's policy of the cadres' stability gave most of the representatives of the Politburo and the Secretariat, including the key members of the Central Committee, a stake in not challenging the status quo in the top-elite. Consequently, until aged and sick General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev began openly supporting his aide Konstantin Chernenko as his successor after 1980, there was not any concern to determine who would be the next after Brezhnev. As a matter of fact, there seemed to be no

immediately available candidate other than Chernenko as well due to various reasons, summarized briefly by Farmer⁵¹:

In the late 1970s, Andrei Kirilenko was regarded as a likely successor, but he did little to tout himself as such. Suffering a debilitating heart attack in the spring of 1982, he was effectively out of the running, whatever his chances might otherwise have been. Mikhail Suslov was 79 years old and not interested in the post. Arvid Pel'she was a non-Russian token member of age 83. Viktor Grishin, Moscow gorkoms first secretary, had aspiration for the successions but was not on the Secretariat and had no foreign affairs experience. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Minister of Defense Dmitriy Ustinov would play a role in choosing the successor, but neither had the power base in the Party to push his own candidacy. Vladimir Shcherbitsky was non-Russian, not on the Secretariat, and isolated from the Moscow scene. Exactly the same was true of Kazakhstan first secretary Dinmuhammed Kunaev. Although a Russian, Grigory Romanov was also isolated in the traditionally suspect Leningrad Party organization. Chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikolai Tikhonov was too old (age 77) and had no Party power base. Central Committee secretary for agriculture Mikhail Gorbachev was too young and too inexperienced in Moscow to have a viable hope. KGB chairman Yuri Andropov was not on the Secretariat [until May 1982] and was also seemingly tainted by association with the secret police.

This highly silent political environment changed however fundamentally once Brezhnev started backing Chernenko openly as his successor. This development, by making intra-*Politburo* conflicts apparent, launched a process that brought ultimately the chief of KGB Yuri Andropov to power. Besides Brezhnev, Chernenko had the support of Tikhonov, Shcherbitsky, Pel'she, Kunayev and possibly Grishin in the top Soviet elite although Suslov, the second influential member in the *Politburo* after Brezhnev, considered Chernenko as too mediocre to become a leader. Suslov's alternating support for Kirilenko led to nowhere but the latter's apparent fall from Brezhnev's favor. The remaining *Politburo* members (Andropov, Gorbachev, Romanov, Gromyko, and Ustinov) were determined not to allow the succession to fall by default to Chernenko, whom they also considered to be incompetent. Moreover, they thought that Chernenko's general secretaryship would have just prolonged Brezhnevite stagnation. For this latter

⁵¹ Kenneth C. Farmer, p.254-255.

group, the problem of finding a viable alternative was overcome by the end of 1981 as they all settled on Andropov as the prospective leader.

It has to be reminded that besides this political environment, some other practical events also cleared the ground in favor of Andropov. The death of Suslov in January 1982 made him the potential candidate for the position of second secretary in the CPSU.⁵² As a matter of fact, there were several other possibilities in solving the problem of Suslov's succession. It was also possible that his responsibilities could be divided into two or more categories so that his key role in the *Politburo* could be downgraded. Suslov had been occupying a critical position as Brezhnev used to consult with him personally in all important decisions. Hence, when the Central Committee met in May and selected Andropov as the *de facto* second secretary to the place of Suslov, this practically meant Andropov's becoming also the apparent heir after Brezhnev. This attack on the so-called Brezhnevites had been coordinated in fact by the troika consisting of Andropov, Ustinov and Gromyko.⁵³ The Central Committee Plenum in May 1982 strengthened Andropov also indirectly when it appointed Vladimir Dolgikh as a candidate member of the Politburo. Although the appointment of Dolgikh can be evaluated as a sop to the Brezhnevites, this development also confirmed the decline of Kirilenko's authority in the Central Committee. Apparently Dolgikh was assigned general supervisory responsibilities over the civilian industry in which Kirilenko had established a power base during Brezhnev's incompetent years.

A detailed analysis of different Central Committee members' preferences in the May Plenum would help one understand better changing balances within the Soviet top-elite. To start with the backing of Gromyko and Ustinov, who later assumed highly prominent roles in Andropov's leadership, Mitchell argues that "lacking a firm base in the party, Andropov was dependent within the Politburo on Gromyko and Ustinov and on party figures who had been closely associated with Brezhnev or Suslov".⁵⁴ On the

⁵² For a detailed analysis of this struggle inside the top-elite, see the book excerpts written by Solovyov V. and Klepikova Ye., and article of Grechenevsky O.

⁵³ Tolz, V., "Time Differences", Glavniy Proyekt, Radio Svoboda, 1999.

⁵⁴ Mitchell Judson R, p. 93.

other hand, the pro-Andropov stand of Gromyko and Ustinov, who had both been close to Brezhnev in earlier years, has to be also explained with their unwillingness to assist anymore Brezhnev's crony rule. As it is known, Andropov had chosen corruption as the most significant problem on his rise to power.⁵⁵

Mikhail Gorbachev, who was from Stavropol like Andropov, was a certain supporter of the latter. Andropov was also favorably impressed with Gorbachev in return and this close association continued without problem during Andropov's formal tenure as well. What linked Andropov and Gorbachev to each other was their common reformist attitude, and that's also why many of Brezhnev's closest men associated with the *Politburo* attempted to block Gorbachev's rise to power later.⁵⁶

Another candidate for the top-leadership, Grigoriy Romanov, would have had nothing to gain from Chernenko's selection and would not have achieved dual Politburo-Secretariat membership in 1983 had he opposed Andropov's consolidation of authority as the Second Secretary. There were also strong indications that Politburo members like Shcherbitsky and Kunayev changed their preferences from Brezhnev and gave their adherence to Andropov.⁵⁷

Once appointed as the Second Secretary, Andropov quickly asserted his primacy within the central apparatus after May 1982. Mitchell argues that the dismissal of Sergey Medunov as regional secretary in Krasnodar and his replacement by Vitaliy Vorotnikov was a clear indication of Andropov's increasing authority. Vorotnikov was a known with his combat against on corruption and had been sent to Cuba for exile during Brezhnev's early years. On the other hand, Medunov was a favorite of Brezhnev, and his dismissal also showed that Andropov was acquiring power at the expense of the CPSU leader.⁵⁸ In 1982, Brezhnev could not protect his old friend and the nearest assistant Andrei Kirilenko from Andropov's political attacks and the latter practically prevented

⁵⁵ Mitchell, Judson, p. 82; in 1979, the attempt to unseat Brezhnev's friend Sergey Medunov in Krasnodar had backfired. Now, in far more serious challenge to the aging leader, the KGB had no compunction about pressing an investigation that would touch Brezhnev's own family.

⁵⁶ see Ligachev, Yegor 1993, Chapter 1.

⁵⁷ Mitchell Judson R, p. 91.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp.86-87.

Kirilenko's participation in the sessions of the Politburo. Later Andropov also attracted the cadres of Kirilenko's clan and further strengthened his power.⁵⁹

It can be argued that Andropov's move towards leadership put its stamp on Brezhnev's last years in office as the most important development. In this period, due to the significant shift of alliances within the Politburo, Yuri Andropov possessed certain advantages for accession to the top-leadership. According to Mitchell, "The vacuum at the party center had provided the opportunity for an 'outsider' to come to power" and, as will be discussed below, Andropov was going to take advantage of this vacuum during his own tenure as well.⁶⁰

3.3. The Andropov Period

As a sign of Andropov's relentless and successful move to power, the Central Committee convened only 24 hours after Brezhnev's death in November 1982 and elected Andropov as his successor.⁶¹ Like the May Plenum of the same year, the majority in the Central Committee supported Andropov, whereas Chernenko's supporters seemed to be limited to D. Kunayev, N. Tikhonov and V. Grishin. By that time, as mentioned before, Kirilenko was no longer a major force in the Politburo.⁶²

Once becoming the new CPSU leader, Andropov started consolidating power in his hands. Several factors helped him to fulfill this task. Firstly, the power vacuum in the Politburo created by the gradual departures of Brezhnev, Suslov, Kosygin, and Kirilenko left him relatively free to move as he wanted. Secondly, the aging process associated with the "stability of cadres" policy of Brezhnev had reached to a point that many aged officials were easily forced to retire, or they did this voluntarily. And finally,

⁵⁹ For the details of Andropov's relations with Kirilenko's team, see Hough, Jerry, pp.86-90.

⁶⁰ Mitchell Judson R, p. 91.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.90.

⁶² Farmer, p.256.

Andropov's control of the KGB freed him of the organization's possible pressure over any new general secretary.⁶³

On the other hand, Andropov seemed to ensure somehow the support of both the top Soviet elite and its periphery. The top elite were probably confident of their capability to accommodate themselves to changing conditions. Moreover, Andropov promised them a vigorous and effective leadership as well as some unspecified degree of reform. These were quite attractive qualities after the soporific final years of Brezhnev. Andropov was also respected by the military and by people like Gorbachev at the top of the hierarchy as a leader who would reinvigorate the Party. As Hanley and others emphasize, the periphery of the *nomenklatura* was in favor of reform as well for they were "frustrated by stalled promotions, anxious about their constant vulnerability to replacement, and demoralized by their own corruption".⁶⁴

It can be argued that corruption was the issue that brought Andropov to power as well as constitute his primary concern in his short stay in power. As Vert underlines

being the Chairman of the KGB, Andropov had all the information about the semi-legal and illegal deals of the highest party-state representatives. The level of nepotism, embezzlement and corruption that emerged in the Periphery rose especially after the middle of the 1970's. All spheres of economic activities were "infected" by the underground economic relations. And the Central Committee of the Party in Andropov's period had adopted special measures for fighting against the corruption.⁶⁵

Andropov's plan was to seize control of those levers of command by established processes and then to reactivate them.⁶⁶

At the same time, Andropov had some important handicaps. Firstly, he was at the age of 68, and had serious illnesses such as kidney and heart ailments. Due to this

⁶³ Mitchell Judson R, p. 91.

⁶⁴ Hanley, Eric; Yershova, Natasha; Anderson, Richard, Russia - Old Wine in a New Bottle? The Circulation and Reproduction of Russian Elites, 1983-1993, p.646.

⁶⁵ Vert, Nicolas, p.446 .

⁶⁶ Mitchell, Judson R p.88.

practical trap, Andropov could stay in power only for 15 months. Secondly, coming from a foreign affairs and security career, he lacked the necessary organizational talents to manage and balance the Party's centre and periphery.⁶⁷ These problems *a priori* limited Andropov's ability to intervene in the stagnant Soviet system.

Despite these limitations however, immediately after Andropov came to power, Moscow was abuzz with rumors of a widespread purge which may have been initiated by his supporters. Andropov was said to be dissatisfied with generally poor performance in the system, and intend to install KGB officials, and perhaps some military men, in key posts in the party and in industry to promote greater discipline and efficiency. David Kotz, in his book 'Revolution from Above', summarizes very well what Andropov could manage at the end:

When Brezhnev died in November 1982, his successor, Yuri Andropov, sought to instill new life in the system. As former head of the KGB, the Soviet intelligence agency, he was well aware of the accumulating problems of the Soviet system. He called for a campaign to root out corruption and increase discipline and efficiency. He authorized experiments with new methods of economic management intended to improve work incentives and hasten technological innovation. Perhaps most importantly, he encouraged a relatively open debate about the economic problems of the system.⁶⁸

As part of his reform attempts, Andropov made substantial changes in the Soviet cadres during his short rule on the basis of necessity as well as corruption. At the beginning, some former KGB officials were put in charge of two pressing domestic problems. Heydar Aliyev was given the command of the overloaded and disorganized railroads. Vitaliy Fedorchuk was moved to the post of minister of internal affairs, replacing Brezhnev's crony Nikolai Schelokov. Viktor Chebrikov was promoted from first deputy chairman to chairman of the KGB in December 1982.⁶⁹

It is however notable that, after the ousting of Kirilenko, no other member of the upper elite was dropped. This suggests either that Andropov had the broad consensual

⁶⁷ Mitchell, Judson R, p.91.

⁶⁸ Kotz David, p.53.

⁶⁹ Mitchell Judson R p.94.

support of the entire Politburo, or that he lacked sufficient political clout to begin a housecleaning of top officials. In the former case, he presumably would have consolidated his power more quickly.

In his appointments to the top elite, Andropov showed a marked preference for technocrats. Nikolai Ryzhkov (first deputy chairman of *Gosplan*⁷⁰) was appointed to the Secretariat at the November plenum. By advancing Ryzhkov, Andropov blocked the rise of some younger Brezhnev appointees such as V. Dolgikh.⁷¹ Ryzhkov had appeared as a highly effective factory manager in Kirilenko's fiefdom of Sverdlovsk and was obviously a client of the latter. Ryzhkov was also made the head of the newly created Economics Department and was put in charge of economic planning in the Central Committee.

At the June 1983 plenum, Grigory Romanov, a Politburo member and Leningrad *obkom* first secretary, was brought into a secretaryship in the Central Committee in Moscow.⁷² Romanov subsequently assumed the role of party overseer of the defense industry, an assignment that was probably not welcomed by the defense minister Ustinov, who for more than four years had been able to dominate the defense industry. Additionally, Medvedev and Kruchina replaced Brezhnev's appointees Trapeznikov and Pavlov in the Central Committee.

Romanov's transfer produced a new balance in the Secretariat. With two young supporters of Andropov- namely Romanov and Gorbachev- occupying dual *Politburo*-Secretariat posts, Chernenko was clearly outflanked. The move to the *Politburo* also put Romanov into the game as a possible prospective leader besides Gorbachev. As early as these years however, the latter had already established a strong position in Moscow as Lev Zaikov's appointment to the post of the mayor of Leningrad - an event that was supervised by Gorbachev - indicated.⁷³ Gorbachev was gaining recognition as a

⁷⁰ Gosplan refers to State Planning Committee.

⁷¹ Solovyev V., Klepikova Ye., <http://koapp.narod.ru/hudlit/politics/book40.htm> .

⁷² Farmer, Kenneth C., p.257.

⁷³ Mitchell, Judson R. p.97.

substitute for Andropov and was broadening his responsibilities beyond the narrow field of agriculture.

Hence, as Andropov's health deteriorated, despite Chernenko's formal status as the second secretary, Gorbachev started fulfilling his duties. He had now had a general oversight in matters of party organization and began to take some responsibilities in foreign affairs. By the end of 1983 Andropov was still unable to attend the regular meetings of the Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet, and Gorbachev was reportedly charged with the task of conveying Andropov's instructions to the Central Committee. At the end of the year, during the Central Committee plenum on December 26, additional cadre replacements in line with Andropov's policy were realized: Mikhail Solomentsev and Vorotnikov were promoted to full membership in the *Politburo*, and Chebrikov was named a candidate member. Andropov did not forget the military wing of his supporters and promoted two generals, Sergey Akhromeyev and Vitaliy Shabanov, to full membership in the Central Committee. Moreover, Ligachev, became a member of the Central Committee Secretariat as the head of the Party Organizational Work Department. In the next several years, the appointment of Ligachev played an important role in the top-elite transformation as well as in the replacement of midlevel party elites.⁷⁴ Andropov also ordered Gorbachev and Ligachev to deal with the corruption problem in the *nomenklatura*.⁷⁵

At the lower levels, people from Andropov's cadre continued to fill the available positions in the top-elite. After Vorotnikov's appointment to the premier position in the RSFSR, he was succeeded in Krasnodar by Georgiy Razumovsky, who had been a friend of Gorbachev, when the latter had served as a first secretary in the neighboring Stavropol region.

⁷⁴ Mitchell Judson R. p.98. Travin also supports these ideas about the crucial roles of Gorbachev and Ligachev during Andropov's tenure.

⁷⁵ Hanley, Eric and others, p 646.

Mitchell stresses the competition between Gorbachev, Romanov and Chernenko in such lower level appointments, through which they tried to consolidate their political position.⁷⁶ Still,

the overall outcome was fully in accord with Andropov's aims to introduce younger officials and cadres more experienced in the economy into leadership positions. On the government side, more than one-fourth of the members of the Council of Ministers were newcomers, most of them former deputies of previous incumbents. Of signal importance for the long-run resolution of the succession crisis was the fact that, among Andropov's lieutenants, Gorbachev was clearly the principal beneficiary of the changes. So at the beginning of February 1984, though, the revolution was definitely incomplete. And the overwhelming majority of the members of the Central Committee were officials who had gained their present party or government positions under Brezhnev and were not beholden to Andropov or any of his associates.⁷⁷

Despite these far-reaching appointments, Andropov could not have time and sufficient organizational power to initiate major changes. Even his moderate suggestions for reform could not find a support in August, and by then it became obvious that Andropov's tenure would be rather brief.⁷⁸

This time, however, the problem of succession seemed to be a harder one in comparison to Brezhnev's last years as there was no healthy and immediately available candidate in view. Moreover, Andropov seemed to consolidate crucial powers in his hands, as he had assumed in the meantime another leading position, the chairman of the Defense Council.⁷⁹ It can be argued that on the bases of these positions, Andropov accomplished two important goals during his short tenure: the restoration of the strength of the party apparatus, which had been deprived of vigor by Brezhnev's personnel policies and the organizational power vacuum of his later years, and the establishment of a firm base within the party. In the absence of these conditions, even his apparent

⁷⁶ Mitchell Judson, p.101. See also Travin, <http://www.idelo.ru/356/21.html>.

⁷⁷ Mitchell Judson R. p.102.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.106.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.96.

dominance of the KGB would not be sufficient to make the above mentioned appointments and to control non-party institutions such as the economic bureaucracy and the military. The only but crucial problem was that Andropov's authority in the Party was dependent on himself personally. As Solovyev & Klepikova argue:

For 15 months of the rule, the better part of which he had to spend in hospital, Andropov had time to enter into the limited number of members of the Kremlin elite sufficiently loyal to him to provide the unconditional majority in the Politburo and the Secretary, two supreme bodies of the party. However, Andropov did not take into calculation that not only the majority in the Kremlin management, but also the unity of his group was provided only with him and no one else: he was the key-person of the structure and the one who controlled everyone else. Without him that system must break up, and immediately did. Indeed, his people were not connected among themselves by any obligations. The struggle for authority took place between them, instead of between "young" and "old men," as the majority of western observers fondly believed. By the way, "old men" appeared among themselves more compliant than the "young."⁸⁰

3.4. Gorbachev *versus* Romanov during the Chernenko Period

Among the possible candidates for the top-position after Andropov, who was seriously ill, were the two *Politburo* members, Gorbachev and Romanov.⁸¹ While Andropov was still capable to rule the top-elite, Gorbachev and Romanov mutually supplemented each other. When Andropov was ill and bed-ridden, they replaced him together. The older representatives in the top-elite, Gromyko, Ustinov, Tikhonov and Chernenko could have agreed on the leadership of one of these young members if one of them would powerfully make himself accepted.

As a matter of fact, the winds were blowing towards Gorbachev shortly before the leader's death. Andropov had assigned to his fellow countryman Gorbachev the additional authority to change the Party staff - an appointment that critically influenced Gorbachev's advancement over Romanov. However, when Andropov died in early 1984, neither Gorbachev nor Romanov could gain a foothold in their struggle for leadership. Although the details of their struggle are unknown, it was evident that none

⁸⁰ Solovyev V., Klepikova Ye, <http://koapp.narod.ru/hudlit/politics/book40.htm> .

⁸¹ This was mentioned in A. Gromyko's memoirs. See V.Tolz, *Glavniy Proyekt*.

of the Andropovite "youngsters", namely Aliyev, Vorotnikov, Nikolai Ryzhkov, Yegor Ligachev and the chief of KGB, Viktor Chebrikov, could enable a compromise between Gorbachev and Romanov. None of them pulled back. According to Solovyev and Klepikova:

Both defended their uncompromising positions but not personal ambitions, and high ideals: Romanov under the popular banner of neo-Stalinism, national chauvinism and the imperial idea, while Gorbachev, being ideologically neutral, suggested to strengthen the empire - with the help of modest, palliative economic reforms, in part memorable to him from rough Khrushchev's times, and in part borrowed by him from his mentors - Fyodor Kulakov and Yuri Andropov.⁸²

Hence within such an environment, Chernenko's election as the new General Secretary should be explained more by the "patience" of the old generation in the Politburo than the defeat of the young.

With the assignment of Chernenko as the General Secretary, the struggle between Gorbachev and Romanov for the top-Soviet position did not end, but intensified. During Chernenko's short rule, his oldness kept the succession question always in the agenda paving the way for the persistence of struggle between Gorbachev and Romanov for the position of prospective General Secretary. Gorbachev was the deputy chairman of Politburo meetings and had real chance to be elected as the new Secretary General after Chernenko. Romanov, on the other hand, had supporters among military officials and periodically appeared in official meetings as the second person in the Politburo.

The question was whether in this struggle Gorbachev received advantage at the last moment in a head saving idea to transfer authority to Chernenko who was old and ill and had been put on the Kremlin throne by pure chance. It was obvious that Gorbachev was going to serve as the second after Chernenko in the Central Committee sessions. Rather than entering into a destructive struggle with Romanov, Gorbachev could have pragmatically chosen to strengthen his power base in the top-elite as the powerful second man in a condition in which the first one was rather weak.

⁸² Solovyev V., Klepikova Ye, <http://koapp.narod.ru/hudlit/politics/book40.htm> .

Intra-*Politburo* balances seemed to serve to the fulfillment of Gorbachev's expectations. Inside the *Politburo* no coalition existed. Although the majority in either the Politburo of the Central Committee consisted of members elected during Brezhnev, they were unwilling to risk their positions by entering into dangerous alignments. They preferred to comply with Chernenko's weak leadership strengthened by the youngsters. The old Brezhnevites Shcherbitsky and Kunayev, "*Dnepr Mafia*" member Tikhonov, and Grishin were all supporters of Chernenko in different degrees. On the other hand, the Politburo also included the powerful and very independent Gromyko and Ustinov, as well as the young Andropov-supported members like Aliyev, Vorotnikov, and Solomentsev other than Gorbachev himself. In such a political environment, Gorbachev judiciously assessed the situation and made no frontal challenge to Chernenko. He was quickly recognized as the *de facto* "second secretary" with a broad range of responsibilities. Romanov's public activities indicated that he had also gained new functions in regard to the military (probably as supervisor of the Main Political Administration) in addition to his role as overseer of the defense industry. He reportedly also took on duties as the Politburo supervisor of the police, with the Department of Administrative Organs under his jurisdiction.

As a matter of fact, strengthening his position in the army, the police and among the Brezhnevites was a strategy - though failed - that had been pursued by Romanov since Andropov's times. In 1983, Romanov had tried to strengthen his power by using the growing influence of Marshal Ogarkov, minister of defense and chief of the staff. Ogarkov's disagreements with Ustinov and Chernenko in the early 1980s had been quite public and not easily forgotten. He had also crossed swords with Gromyko in the foreign affairs issues. Ogarkov's relations with Chernenko, Ustinov, and Gromyko deteriorated during Chernenko's rule and he had to leave his military duties in 1984. This development, besides serving to Gorbachev's interests at the expense of Romanov, also meant that the military's influence would be much diminished in the approaching next round of the succession crisis. In December 1984 Marshal Ustinov's sudden death and the nondescript Marshal Sokolov's appointment as the new minister of defense further

reduced the political influence of the military top-elite – representing a trend that continued in 1984 and 1985.⁸³

This trend led to the intensification of the struggle between Gorbachev and Romanov in September-December 1984.⁸⁴ Although the Central Committee displayed contradictory attitudes on different issues, in the early 1985 it was announced that Gorbachev -but not Romanov- would head a delegation of the Supreme Soviet on a visit to Great Britain. This decision, which was arranged largely by Gromyko, increased Gorbachev's popularity in the top elite. In the meantime "Gorbachev and his wife conveyed the image of a quite Westernized couple and were marked by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's euphoric expressions of approval".⁸⁵ The researcher Travin points out that the mediator between Gorbachev and Gromyko on the eve of Chernenko's death was Gromyko's son⁸⁶ and this alliance was going to be very effective later in Gorbachev's ensuring the votes of Chebrikov, Aliyev and Solomentsev in his election as the General Secretary. According to Solovyev & Klepikova, Gorbachev had also an advantage as a ranking Party secretary; he had the strong support of Ligachev, who was in charge of cadres, and Ryzhkov, who was responsible from the domestic economy. Beyond the Secretariat, Gorbachev could surely rely on fully two-thirds of the key regional organizations in the Russian Republic. On the other hand, the only alternative candidate with membership in the Secretariat, Romanov, had been unable to form the coalition that he needed. Lacking solid personal organizational support, Romanov depended on the forging of alliances, and many of these were proved to be ineffective.⁸⁷

It can be concluded that Gorbachev's ultimate victory was a product of the cadre renewal initiated by Andropov in 1982 and accelerated later in the period of December

⁸³ Mitchell Judson R. p.124 , N. Vert, pp.488-489.

⁸⁴ Hough, Jerry, pp.76-77, Solovyev and Klepikova, <http://koapp.narod.ru/hudlit/politics/book40.htm> .

⁸⁵ Mitchell Judson R p.130.

⁸⁶ Travin, Dmitriy, Perestroika dvadtsat' let spustya (Perestroika after the twenty years), 1985-Moskovskaia vesna (1985-Moscow spring), 'Delo' weekly journal, 24/1/2005 <http://www.idelo.ru/356/21.html>- 2005 May.

⁸⁷ Solovyev & Klepikova, <http://koapp.narod.ru/hudlit/politics/book40.htm> .

1983- January 1984 by the sense of urgency arising from Andropov's physical decline. Cadre renewal had slowed down during the rule of Chernenko, but Gorbachev had been able to use his position as "second secretary" to further consolidate his power base. Gorbachev's pragmatic and calm strategies in the middle of a chronic succession crisis in the USSR were what brought him to power. "Gorbachev was able to provide vigorous, decisive leadership from the start and gave promise of rescuing the Soviet system from its depression".⁸⁸

Hence, Gorbachev's leadership had been prepared in such a successful way that only four hours after Chernenko's death announcement, Gorbachev's pictures as the new leader appeared in media.⁸⁹ There are different claims however on the conditions of Gorbachev's election. Evans and Novak in the *Washington Post*⁹⁰ informed that the *Politburo* endorsed Gorbachev by a narrow vote of five to four, while one member, Shcherbitsky, was absent on a trip to the United States. Authors endorsed the supposition that pro votes included Gorbachev, Gromyko, Solomentsev, Aliyev and Vorotnikov, and the opposition were composed of Tikhonov, Grishin, Kunayev, and Romanov. These suppositions were claimed to be wrong later and it was emphasized that according to the top-secret protocol of the *Politburo* read in the program of Vladimir Tolz, Gorbachev was unanimously elected as the Secretary General. There had been no objections delivered in the *Politburo* after the approving speech of Gromyko. In his interview to Savik Shuster, Gorbachev narrated the details of his half-hour secret talk with Gromyko before that *Politburo* meeting.⁹¹ Whatever the election conditions were, Gorbachev's leadership was welcomed by many people in the USSR as a long-awaited fresh start. His rise to power put an effective end to Brezhnev's "stability of cadres" policy, the implications of which had continued even after Brezhnev's death.

⁸⁸ Mitchell Judson R p.133.

⁸⁹ Solovyev, Klepikova, <http://koapp.narod.ru/hudlit/politics/book40.htm>.

⁹⁰ *Washington Post*, 12 March 1985.

⁹¹ *Strasti po Gorbachevu*, Savik Shuster, NTV, March 2005, the detail of Gorbachev election also explained in Hough, pp.76-77.

3.5. Conclusion

It can be argued that one of the most important implications of Brezhnev's stability of the cadres policy was the top-leaderships of the two quite old members of the Politburo from November 1982 to March 1985. The elections of Andropov and Chernenko to Soviet leadership were hence clear expressions of the accompanying succession crisis. However, the period also led to the emergence of some clear alternatives, one of the most significant indications of which was the election of Gorbachev as the new Soviet leader in 1985.

As the discussion in this chapter illustrates, the weak top-leadership that characterized the interlude period in the USSR had in a sense helped educate the second men in the *Politburo* to leadership. Andropov during the Brezhnev period and Gorbachev during the Andropov and Chernenko periods were examples of this. Besides, the whole period can also be examined as Gorbachev's early experiences in the Soviet top-elite. Gorbachev was included to the *Politburo* in the Brezhnev years by the support of Andropov and then steadily increased his powers through pragmatic policies. The next two chapters will examine the question of how he utilized these experiences during his own leadership.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST STAGE OF GORBACHEV'S TENURE (1985-1988)

4.1. Introduction

The election of Gorbachev in March 1985 put an end to the long-lasting succession crisis in the USSR. As usual for Soviet politics, the dominant expectation afterwards was his replacing the adverse personalities in the top-elite and building of his own team. This was exactly what happened in the first three years of Gorbachev's tenure. As will be discussed below, the extent of cadre changes realized between 1985 and 1988 far-exceeded those in the previous periods. This chapter aims to overview the content of these cadre changes.

The focus on only the first three years of Gorbachev's tenure is no coincidence here. As will be shown in the following sections, despite his reformist attitude, Gorbachev's early cadre policies did not substantially diverge from his predecessors. He probably had faced the necessity to play the game realistically within a political structure in which all the power was still concentrated in the leader and his close circle. What Gorbachev could not calculate however was the possibility of his close aides' becoming his rivals at some point, when they saw their own interests threatened by the extent of reforms. This started to happen partly after 1987, but more extensively after 1988, and understanding the conditions of this change requires a much concentrated effort in a separate chapter. Hence, this chapter will shed light on the developments in Gorbachev's first three years in which he pursued a more or less classical Soviet style in management, and the rest of his tenure will be examined in the next one.

4.2. Extensive Cadre Changes

In the early Gorbachev period, there was a spectacular turnover in personnel at the top. Although the cadre changes made since Brezhnev's death under Andropov already reduced the number of aged personnel substantially, the remaining elites at or near retirement age provided an opportunity to legitimize these changes at the lower levels of the hierarchy. As Mitchell pointed out,

there was no comparable period in Soviet history with such extensive turnover in the Politburo and Secretariat. Of the 20 members of this elite other than Gorbachev in March 1985, only 10 had survived. Among the 21 *Politburo* members, full and candidate, other than Gorbachev in November 1987, 14 (two-thirds) were newcomers since March 1985, and 19 of 27 had been added to the broader elite group since the earlier date.⁹²

At other levels, 82.2 percent of *obkom*, *kraykom* and republican first secretaries were replaced from 1986 to 1989. That was not simply the re-deployment of top-cadres but “the destruction of the old top-elite's staff”.⁹³ Hence, by appointing the most obedient people to command positions during the first years of his tenure, Gorbachev aimed to strengthen his authority.

According to Mitchell, one of the important reasons that forced Gorbachev to urgent personnel changes immediately after his coming to power was the approaching 27th CPSU Congress in March 1986 in which the composition of the new Central Committee will be determined.⁹⁴ As a matter of fact, the present Central Committee was the one that named Gorbachev the General Secretary. Its age average was relatively lower than that of the Politburo and it would not in principle create much trouble for Gorbachev. In the coming elections, 60 per cent of this Central Committee would be

⁹² Mitchell, Judson p.145.

⁹³ Rybas, Svyatoslav, <http://www.respublika.ru/docs/respublika/rybas/97.html>; also Pikhoya, Rudolf, p.357.

⁹⁴ Mitchell, Judson , p.148.

preserved and as Hough noted this 60 per cent would constitute the core of Gorbachev's support in the top elite.⁹⁵ However the content of the 40 per cent of new comers was still important for Gorbachev as they would further strengthen or weaken Gorbachev's authority.

Turnover rates in the government fully matched with those in the party. 30 new ministries and chairmen of state committees were appointed in Gorbachev's first year and 26 more by June 1987. Overall, nearly two-thirds of the members of the Council of Ministers had been displaced on the short period after March 1985. The entire Presidium was new since Ryzhkov's appointment as premier in September 1985.⁹⁶

If we look at the details of this process, it can be argued that Gorbachev started establishing his team in the April 1985 Plenum of the Central Committee, in which he affirmed his adherence to Lenin's course and underlined the successes achieved since the Andropov period. He also announced his aim of "*uskorenie*" (acceleration) in technological development and the efficiency of production.⁹⁷ It became also apparent in the Plenum that "*uskorenie*" would be accompanied by extensive cadre changes. Mitchell lists and evaluates these appointments in the following way:

KGB chief Chebrikov moved up from candidate to full membership on the *Politburo*. Inclusion of KGB in the post-succession distribution of power always posed problems for the party's recovery of its "leading role" and for the consolidation of power by a new party leader. KGB chief's inclusion in the ruling body still contained the potential of trouble for Gorbachev in the early phase of his leadership. Central Committee secretaries Ligachev and Ryzhkov moved directly to full membership without having gone through the candidate stage. While both had been supervised by Gorbachev, they were more nearly Andropov's men than Gorbachev's. Ligachev's status as "second secretary" was subsequently confirmed when he succeeded Gorbachev as chairman of the Council of the Union's commission on foreign affairs. Ryzhkov's appearance was related with his former protector - Kirilenko. Nikonov was named to fill

⁹⁵ Hough, Jerry, F. (2002), p.78.

⁹⁶ Baturin V.Yu., Irkutsk, 2000, www.referat.ru .

⁹⁷ Pikhoya, Rudolf, p.408.

Gorbachev's former place as the Central Committee secretary for agriculture, and Marshal Sokolov was added as a candidate member of the Politburo.⁹⁸

Of the new appointees, Yegor Ligachev, who was appointed as the second man after Gorbachev, was an older man who had spent years as party first secretary in Tomsk in western Siberia. He had a reputation for being honest, incorruptible, and hard working. His traditional party style and cautious approach helped ensure support for Gorbachev's reforms from the party apparatus. Contrary to the impression of some observers, Ligachev did not oppose reform, but he preferred it to be slow and cautious.⁹⁹ He played a crucial role during Gorbachev's tenure as he was appointed to deal with the staff policy. Aleksandr Yakovlev was perhaps the most influential of Gorbachev's close associates. He was promoted to the post of the Central Committee Secretary in charge of ideological matters, which included the job of appointing the heads of the mass media.¹⁰⁰ Unlike the others, Yakovlev was an intellectual who thought about revising and updating Marxist theory.¹⁰¹ Aleksandr Yakovlev is said to be the architect of Gorbachev's domestic and foreign policy after the summer of 1985.¹⁰²

In the next Central Committee Plenum in July 1985, Gorbachev's main opponent Grigoriy Romanov was dismissed as expected. It was remarkable how quickly Gorbachev disposed of his main rival. Shevardnadze, who moved up from candidate membership, filled Romanov's place in the Politburo.¹⁰³ Romanov's duty in the Central Committee Secretariat as the head of military industry was filled by Lev Zaikov, whose role in Gorbachev's team was evaluated differently by different writers. Mitchell called

⁹⁸ Mitchell, Judson, p.138.

⁹⁹ See Stephen Cohen's introduction to Ligachev's memoirs in Ligachev (1993, pp. vii-xxxvi).

¹⁰⁰ Ligachev, 1993, p. 95-96. Yakovlev's background was in ideology, and he had been the acting head of the Central Committee Propaganda Department in the early 1970s. Later he had served as Ambassador to Canada. In 1983, when Gorbachev visited Canada, he abandoned the official program and "spent hours talking with Yakovlev about the future of Russia" (Grachev A.S, p.140).

¹⁰¹ See Kotz, p. 54.

¹⁰² Hough, 1997, p. 146-148.

¹⁰³ Pravda, 2 July 1985.

him “the key figure in Gorbachev’s camp”, but Travin interpreted Lev Zaikov as “a casual person in Gorbachev group”.¹⁰⁴ What is more important for future was that Gorbachev also included Boris Yeltsin into the Secretariat as the person responsible for construction.

Besides these, when the Supreme Soviet elected Andrei Gromyko as the Soviet President, Gromyko’s place was filled by Eduard Shevardnadze again, who was totally inexperienced in the field of foreign affairs. Shevardnadze was more experienced in internal affairs. This practically meant that Gorbachev intended to take personal control of the foreign policy.¹⁰⁵

At this point, it might be interesting to identify an important staff appointment tactic used by Gorbachev very effectively in his first years in office. Appointing unexpectedly some selected lower officials to high positions inside his team, Gorbachev could secure the full obedience of these new appointees. Especially when that newly appointed official slightly underestimated his abilities and had the unconditional habit of obeying his protector, all last decisions would be done by Gorbachev himself. Similar tactics of appointment had been employed during Shevardnadze’s (1985) and Dmitriy Yazov’s (1987) appointments. For example, Yazov was appointed to the highest post of defense minister from the position of Commander of the Far East military district, where Gorbachev met him during his visit in 1986. That appointment was to the surprise of even Yazov himself and during his first years in his post Yazov obediently executed his ministerial duties.

In October 1985, the Premier Tikhonov submitted his long-expected resignation and was succeeded by Ryzhkov. Two weeks after this replacement, head of *Gosplan* Baybakov was replaced by Talyzin, the former minister of communications. In the meantime, structural changes in the economy led to the fusion of some ministries into super-ministries, one of which was the super-ministry for agriculture. Gorbachev appointed to the head of this super-ministry Vsevolod Murakhovsky, the former regional secretary. As a symbol of Gorbachev’s dedication to fight against corruption, one of his

¹⁰⁴ Travin, Dmitriy, 24/1/2005, <http://www.idelo.ru/356/21.html> .

¹⁰⁵ Baranov, Nikolay A, <http://nicbar.narod.ru/lekziya5.htm>.

opponents, Viktor Grishin, was ousted from his post of Moscow party chief and replaced by Central Committee secretary Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin had started his career in Sverdlovsk in the Ural region, where not Gorbachev, but his team maker Ligachev had been dominant. He had been also close to Ryzhkov.¹⁰⁶

When we look at Gorbachev's staff policy in the following year, in January 1986, he reasserted party supremacy over the KGB by replacing Fedorchuk, the minister of internal affairs, with his longtime associate, Aleksandr Vlasov.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, in the special Central Committee plenum in February 1986, Gorbachev called to make final preparations for the 27th CPSU Congress, elected Yeltsin as a candidate *Politburo* member, and dropped Grishin from the ruling body's ranks. Brezhnev's close associate Rusakov was forced to resign.

The 27th CPSU Congress strengthened Gorbachev's leadership in an important extent. Zaikov, who was identified by Mitchell as Gorbachev's stalwart, substituted in Secretariat for Grishin. At the same time two elderly candidate members, Ponomarev, and Gromyko's deputy Kuznetsov, were dropped from the *Politburo*. Vadim Medvedev, who later became one of Gorbachev's devoted aides, replaced another member of the *Politburo*, Rusakov. The other important developments of the Congress were Yakovlev's and Georgiy Razumovsky's advances in the elite hierarchy. Gorbachev brought Yakovlev to break up entrenched cliques in the foreign policy establishment. Mitchell noticed that Yakovlev's improving duties "served to undercut both Ligachev and Gromyko. During the year 1986, he would spearhead the carrying out of glasnost', the policy of openness, and would also assume an influential role in foreign affairs".¹⁰⁸ Georgiy Razumovsky joined the Secretariat as the youngest member of the top elite and was given the duty to supervise personnel matters in the CPSU- a duty which used to be handled by Ligachev as well.¹⁰⁹ Mitchell informs that "there were some indications that

¹⁰⁶ For a detailed analysis of Yeltsin's biography see Breslauer, George W., Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders, (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁷ As is known, the office of that ministry was actually the arm of the secret service (KGB).

¹⁰⁸ Mitchell, Judson, p.141.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.143, (main source- TASS, 18 Dec. 1986; Associated Press, 19 Dec.1986).

cadre supervisor Razumovsky reported directly to Gorbachev rather than to Ligachev, at least after the Central Committee Plenum of January 1987.”¹¹⁰

Gorbachev’s attempt to strengthen his position against Ligachev can be evaluated as an early sign of an emerging unrest within the Gorbachev clique. Hence, it is not a surprise that the next CC Plenum in January 1987 did not yield an enthusiastic endorsement of Gorbachev’s domestic policies. In return, Gorbachev responded with a renewed process of staff changes. The former Kazakh Communist leader Kunayev was dropped from the Politburo, Zimyanin finally retired on pension, and Marshal Sokolov, as a potential opposition to Gorbachev reforms, was dropped as a candidate Politburo member.¹¹¹ To assist Gorbachev’s line, Slyunkov was called from Byelorussia to fill Ryzhkov’s old role in the Central Committee as the head of economic planning. Gorbachev’s old acquaintance, Anatoliy Lukyanov, was also promoted to Central Committee secretary. At the same time the protégé Yakovlev as well as Nikonov were promoted to elevated to full membership in the Politburo¹¹²

The General Secretary’s personnel replacements continued in 1987. During the next Central Committee meeting in October 1987, the resignation of Heydar Aliyev was announced. Aliyev had reportedly been at odds with Gorbachev over the major principles of the general secretary’s domestic program. In any case, frequent criticism of those governmental sectors for which Aliyev was responsible had indicated growing tension between him and Gorbachev’s strongest supporters.¹¹³ These events interestingly indicate that unlike any of his predecessors, Gorbachev started revising his own team in the second year of his leadership. It is important to examine possible reasons of this change in top-elite dynamics as after this date some members of the top nomenklatura

¹¹⁰ Mitchell, Judson, p. 147.

¹¹¹ For Marshal Sokolov’s dismissal see Richard Sakwa, p.332.

¹¹² Pravda 29 Jan. 1987.

¹¹³ The negative attitude of Gorbachev’s team in the top-elite towards Aliyev had been reflected in his interview to V.Tolz, where a former Politburo member underlined that during his stay at an elite hospital in Moscow after a sudden heart attack, nobody from his colleges from the Central Committee had visited Aliyev, or even called and asked about his condition (Vladimir Tolz, Third Radio Program, Radio Svoboda, Time Difference, 1999).

started declaring openly their sharp opposition against Gorbachev. For example, Boris Yeltsin demanded his resignation and blamed Gorbachev and his team for delaying reforms. Unlike Yeltsin however the majority of the top-elite was critical of Gorbachev's intensifying reforms, and as many researchers noticed, "by midyear of 1987, Gorbachev had evidently become convinced that the party itself was the most important inhibitor of reform, surpassing even the economic bureaucracy in that respect".¹¹⁴

Besides reflecting simply a reaction to the content of reforms, it can be also argued that the wind of change in the top Soviet elite was also due to their feeling of insecurity. Shakhnazarov for instance argues that Gorbachev's cadre selection in his early years was not successful¹¹⁵ and when he tried to correct these mistakes later, this led to an intra-elite anxiety towards the leader.¹¹⁶ It was hence evident that Brezhnev's "stability of cadres" policy had created similar expectations in the new Gorbachev elite. In Gorbachev's eyes, however, the old top party-state elite had turned into an extremely inefficient mechanism to pursue reforms with. That is why after 1987 Gorbachev decided to shift the absolute power of top-party organs towards the Soviets (local Councils) by calling for competitive elections for the party cadres. As McCauley noted this was promoted as an attempt to eliminate the alienation between the central and local Party bodies¹¹⁷ though maybe at the expense of Gorbachev's own alienation from his short-lived team. As former Central Committee member Otto Latsis mentioned in his interview to V. Tolz, 'the party apparatus revolted in 1989 when the first alternative election to the Supreme Soviet was realized and top-party bosses from Moscow and Leningrad understood that they might not obey party discipline and the General Secretary'.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Mitchell, Judson, p.180.

¹¹⁵ Shakhnazarov, Georgiy, p.497.

¹¹⁶ See for example Shakhnazarov, p.489 and Medvedev, p. 108.

¹¹⁷ McCauley, Martin, p.92.

¹¹⁸ V.Tolz, Raznitsa vo Vremeni, Svoboda, 4th Program.

Gorbachev's attitude towards the regional elites did not also create a sense of confidence in the latter. As Mitchell noticed,

the new appointees were on notice that they would have nothing resembling the tenure guarantees of the Brezhnev era, and that their retention would depend on performance. Although the urgent demand for an infusion of new blood precluded a general "packing" of the regional leadership, Gorbachev did hold on tenaciously to those organizations, which had served as a major base for his rise to power. During Gorbachev's first year as general secretary 23 regional secretaries (30 percent) had been replaced in *RSFSR* [Soviet Socialist Russian Federation]. When added the substantial turnover at this level under Andropov and Chernenko, this meant that a solid majority of regional party chiefs in the *RSFSR* had been installed under Gorbachev's supervision.¹¹⁹

Moreover, in contrast to previous general secretaries, Gorbachev undertook several regional visits and showed that he would deal with the regional affairs with greater effort. Due to these initiatives, the regional aggregations of power associated with Brezhnev's "stability of cadres" policy had been largely dissolved and threatened. Cadre changes in the regions were so extensive that some assurance of re-stabilization was maybe desirable.

4.3. Conclusion

It can be argued that Gorbachev's rise to power and the initial steps he undertook were in line with the conventional line of politics in the USSR since Stalin's time. He substantially changed the top-elite cadres in his first three years in order to consolidate power firmly in his hands. Consequently, all the important departments in the Central Committee - Administration of Affairs, International, Liaison with Ruling Communist Parties and Party Organizational Work - started to be administered by men personally selected by Gorbachev.

It has to be recognized that many of Gorbachev's new appointees were from the middle strata. Under these circumstances, conflicts between the old and the new were inevitable and the new Gorbachev elite had to struggle against the old top-nomenklatura. Simultaneously, there was also an internal competition for positions and privileges.

¹¹⁹ Mitchell, Judson p.152.

Unlike the previous periods, however, a sort of top-elite stability could not be reached. The emergent conflicts and continuing cadre changes by Gorbachev in the mid-1987 indicated that there were some new dynamics in play in Soviet top-elite politics that constantly produced conflicts within the elite, but most importantly between Gorbachev and his own elite. These conflicts and their destructive consequences for the USSR will be investigated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE LAST STAGE OF GORBACHEV'S TENURE (1988-1991)

5.1. Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, Gorbachev's first two years in office (1985-1987) passed with his attempts to generate a new team of top-party managers for the realization of economic and political reforms. By 1987 however, it became apparent for him that the transformation in the cadres was still not deep enough to ensure a reformist process. That is why probably during the last three years of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev "had continued his policy of cadre renovation and started the deeper reformations of Soviet political establishment, having the highest dominance over the party and state institutions".¹²⁰

This chapter will examine these developments in order to understand how Gorbachev lost his authority within the top-elite in a very short time. This decline of authority was a historical one as it had destructive consequences not simply for Gorbachev himself but for Soviet socialism.

5.2. Against the Bureaucratized Mentality

After 1987, Gorbachev continued to exchange old cadres for more obedient persons at different levels of the Soviet elite. In order to ensure political support from the periphery, many Party first secretaries in union republics were replaced during the first half of 1988. The newly appointed leaders of union republics (like Pugo, Valjas, Vezirov, Arutunyan and others) could not attain however appropriate authority in the republics and prevent the rise of discontent against Gorbachev's perestroika.

¹²⁰ Mitchell, Judson, p.162.

The Gorbachev's authority in Kremlin was also exposed in the first quarter of 1988. In April 1988, one of the most important top-elite changes took place when the Politburo "ordered Ligachev to take a vacation and turned over his portfolio to Aleksandr Yakovlev for the period of his absence".¹²¹ This was a reaction to the conservative opposition of the *nomenklatura* which Ligachev started to be the voice of. Ligachev's dismissal from the management of media and ideology had important implications for Gorbachev's relations with the CPSU since the reformist tone appropriated by the state media after 1988 led to increasing concerns in the Party apparatus. In his memoirs, Ligachev blamed Yakovlev, whom Gorbachev had named secretary of the central committee in charge of ideological matters, for appointing editors who were hostile to the Communist Party.¹²² Ligachev implied that Yakovlev had a plan to undermine socialism, naming anti-Communists to key editorial positions to further this plan, while Gorbachev inexplicably turned a blind eye to this process. It was true that Yakovlev eventually in 1991 resigned as an advisor to Gorbachev and became a critic of socialism.¹²³ In the same period, Gorbachev aides Yuri Maslyukov and Georgiy Razumovsky were promoted to *Politburo* for further support for the leader.¹²⁴

At the 19th Party Conference in July 1988, a conservative opposition to Gorbachev in the top-elite made its dissatisfaction open. The Conference approved measures for the transfer of some power to popularly elected soviets with elected soviet officials, who could also hold party offices, acquire authority in direct economic activity in localities and regions. The Conference also called for competitive elections for party offices.

¹²¹ Mitchell, Judson, p.158.

¹²² Ligachev, pp. 95-97.

¹²³ During 1990-1991 Yakovlev shifted his views dramatically from his initial support for the reform of socialism. At a Party Congress in 1990, Yakovlev remarked to a group of delegates, "I have made my choice. I am in favor of joint-stock capital". In the summer of 1991 he resigned as a senior advisor to Gorbachev and publicly renounced Marxism and socialism (see Kotz p.65, also see the interview with Yakovlev entitled "Why I'm Giving up on Marxism", originally published in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 3 August 1991, p. 1, reported in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. 43, no. 31, 1991, p. 11.

¹²⁴ Mitchell, Judson, p. 159.

September 1988 meetings of the Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet brought new shocks to the Soviet top-elite. Having called these meetings on an extremely short notice and made the preparations by himself, Gorbachev turned them into new attacks against his opponents. The Central Committee Plenum carried out a sweeping reorganization of the Central Committee and aimed to provide Gorbachev with near-total control over the top-elite. As Mitchell informs,

Gromyko's and Solomentsev retirement was announced and Ligachev and Chebrikov were shifted to the posts that clearly meant their demotions. Gorbachev appointed his associates—Yakovlev, Razumovsky and Medvedev on advantage positions, where Ligachev, Slyunkov and Chebrikov had gained the hard fields of chairmanship in the Central Committee. Ligachev had received the commission for agriculture; Chebrikov lost his direct control over the KGB. The 'retirements' of Gromyko and Solomentsev had been presaged by open criticism of Gorbachev at the 19th Party Conference in June 1988 [nobody opposing the Secretary General of the CPSU]. Despite his successful pre-positioning, Gorbachev had been heavily dependent on other members of the leadership at his accession. For the most part, these men had been in a position to feel that Gorbachev was indebted to them, rather than the other way round. Now almost all of these figures having some degree of independence were ousted or demoted at one fell swoop. The dropping of Dobrynin from the Secretariat left Yakovlev without competitors in the party agencies concerned with foreign policy. Brezhnev's appointee Vladimir Dolgikh was finally dismissed from the Secretariat and Politburo candidacy. Another name, Piotr Demichev, was sacked from the post of *Politburo* candidate and first deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet.¹²⁵

As it is seen from these developments, Gorbachev completely abandoned the old top-elite representatives who in 1985 supported him in his election as General Secretary. Although Mitchell evaluates this as a remarkable consolidation of power¹²⁶, this view has to be taken cautiously. Gorbachev's initiatives in late 1988 can be better understood as attempts to manage the elite in a somewhat hopeless manner rather than to ensure control over them. If we look at the actual level of trust in Gorbachev among the top-elite, the decisions of his nearest cronies and appointees show that Gorbachev mostly failed in building an effective team top-leadership. As the Russian historian Pikhoya

¹²⁵ Mitchell, Judson, p.160.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.161.

concluded, Gorbachev himself could not really cope with the top-party apparatus and during his tenure always tried to reduce its authoritative power.¹²⁷ Hence, his election to the highest state position as the Chair of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, a development examined in the next section, was an attempt to get out of this deadlock.

5.3. From Party Leadership to the State Presidency

Increasing instability within the top-elite seemed to affect negatively Gorbachev's management style, and he was engaged in various contradictory acts. For example in the January 1989 Plenum of the Central Committee, contrary to his democratic rhetoric he determined the list of hundred future Congress of People's delegates without voting. Only a formal approval was asked from the Central Committee. Such examples led to the evaluations that Gorbachev in fact was not as the full format reformer but an old-style party bureaucrat.¹²⁸ Whatever the reasons would be, after mid-1988 there emerged a mutual distrust between Gorbachev and other Party bosses. In search for a securer base for his leadership, Gorbachev decided to shift from the General Secretary position to the state leadership position. Murray argues that

as early as January 1988, using the advice of his associate A. Yakovlev, Gorbachev had mused about creating an executive presidency to avoid the fate, which befell Khrushchev [in 1964]... In the months before the 19th Party Conference all Gorbachev's thinking had been directed toward the goal of weakening the grip of party secretaries, not in order to create the foundation of a multi-party system, but to reinforce his own power.¹²⁹

During his last appointments in the second half of the 1988, Gorbachev almost depleted his cadre reserves that he needed to go on with the same group of people and centralize power more in his own hands after then. With these concerns in mind, while

¹²⁷ Pikhoya R, p. 537.

¹²⁸ For a detailed discussion, see Pikhoya R., pp. 496-497.

¹²⁹ Murray, Donald, p.33.

he succeeded Gromyko in the presidency he also made Lukyanov move from the Secretariat to the position of first deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium.

Gorbachev's dependency on a small number of people as his close circle forced him to oversee their activities carefully. He was engaged in long critical conversations with them in order to ensure a common stand in reforms. That specific style of management brought Gorbachev more opponents in the top-party elite than supporters.

At the same time the policy of *glasnost* (which meant 'openness' in Russian), guarded by Gorbachev's aide Yakovlev and the worsening of the economic conditions seriously damaged the general authority of the Communist Party. Deteriorating prestige of the CPSU was evident in the results of the elections in March 1989. As Murray noted, "by 26 March 1989 the shape of the revolt [against Party top-leaders] had become clear. Soviet voters rejected thirty-four of the 157 Communist regional party leaders running".¹³⁰

In general, 2895 candidates competed for 2250 seats in the elections and most high party bureaucrats from Moscow and Leningrad were defeated. The results of the elections proved Gorbachev's inability or disregard to protect top-*nomenklatura* in the eyes of the latter.¹³¹

Next Plenum of the Central Committee (on 25 April 1989) immediately after the elections further strengthened top-elite's feeling of distrust for Gorbachev. In this Plenum, Gorbachev applied the method of 'collective resignation' and purge-like dramatic changes were introduced in ranks of the Central Committee. Nearly a quarter of the full Central Committee membership - 74 out of 301- "resigned", as did 24 candidate members and 12 members of the Party auditing commission. At the same time, twenty-four candidate members were promoted to full membership. At the Plenum Gorbachev's policy was sharply criticized. Noticeable criticism came from the members of the Central Committee, who were mostly afraid of further cadre dethronements. In that critical situation, Gorbachev "allowed the speeches of the Plenum to be printed in

¹³⁰ Murray, Donald, p.39.

¹³¹ V.Tolz, interview with V. Zagladin, *Raznitsa vo vremeni*, Radio Svoboda, 1999.

the media, so that the event became the sacrifice of Party conservatives and found support from the society”.¹³² That Plenum, which took place between the elections of People’s Deputies and the Congress of People’s Deputies, added to the increasing tensions in the top-elite.---

At the Plenum of the Central Committee on 22 May 1989, Gorbachev proposed the following candidates to the most important state posts: himself as Chairman, A. Lukyanov as deputy chairman, N. Ryzhkov as the Chairman of the Ministry Council. In the meantime, the role of the Politburo and the top-party elite sharply decreased. The statistics of Politburo meetings show that

...after 1988, the *Politburo* sessions were conducted less often. While in 1985 38 meetings of Politburo had taken place, in the following years the numbers were these: in 1986 - 40; in 1987 - 38; in 1988- 33; in 1989 - 22; in 1990 - 9. The Secretary practically ceased to work as a collective body. On a background of constant staff replacements, the reduction of CPSU activity led to a fall in prestige of the top party management.¹³³

On this issue *Politburo* member Yegor Ligachev wrote in his memoirs that Gorbachev’s reorganization “buried the Secretariat... The Party was deprived of an operating staff for its leaders”.¹³⁴

The Party’s declining role in Soviet politics was evident in the fact that “the subject of privileges for the party nomenklatura was actively criticized in the media”.¹³⁵ This was a change that had never happened in the previous periods as the Party’s central role in Soviet politics and economics was one of the fundamentals of the USSR system. The question of whether the space emptied by the Party would have been successfully filled by the soviets, or the people, or the limited Gorbachev elite was however one that could hardly be answered positively.

¹³² Pikhoya, R., p. 500.

¹³³ Hahn, 2002 p.299-300, additional information given in Hough, 1997, p.250.

¹³⁴ Ligachev, 1993, pp. 109, 110.

¹³⁵ Pikhoya p. 504 and p.512.

5.4. Simultaneous Break up of Gorbachev's Team and the Soviet State

It is significant to stress the increasing contradictions within Soviet politics after 1989 due to the radicalization of public debates and the top elite's immediate reaction of defense in return. By 1990, "after only five years of glasnost, the *intelligentsia* had been thoroughly radicalized, and their voices were widely heard in the print and electronic media".¹³⁶ This was a rather unknown situation for the Soviet top-elite however that forced it to completely shift its preferences in an attempt to find a new defender of their interests. This is the vital break point in relations between the top-elite and its General Secretary. Mitchell summarizes the problems that Gorbachev faced after then as follows:

Gorbachev obviously envisaged keeping the ultimate power in his hand and was attempting to serve as leader of both government and opposition, a difficult feat that surely could not be long sustained. Gorbachev was the ultimate arbiter of the system, having amassed by the introduction of political reform even more personal power than expected. The political instability in summer of 1989 affected the tensions in top-elite: when the Central Committee met on July 18, much tension was evident in top leadership. Stung by the rebuffs in the congressional elections, Ligachev and Zaikov struck back. These two *Politburo* members denounced the loss of party prestige, with Ligachev blaming the liberated media for this result. Vitaliy Vorotnikov called Gorbachev's economic program a failure and urged that it be scrapped. Premier Ryzhkov warned that the party was losing control of the increasingly independent legislature. The answer to these problems, according to Ryzhkov and Gorbachev, was the speeding up of reform in the party.¹³⁷

In December 1989, Gorbachev had to face political demands for the abolition of the Article 6 of the Constitution which proclaimed the monopoly of the Communist Party. Gorbachev refused to this demand at the beginning but under heavy political pressure, the article had to be abandoned in February 1990 Plenum of the Central Committee. The opposition to Gorbachev from the "democratic" (i.e. "radical") wing

¹³⁶ Kotz p. 71.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.188.

had organized two big rallies where they demanded the resignation of Gorbachev and the elimination of the CPSU as a political authority.¹³⁸

In his Politburo speech on 7 March 1990, it was evident that Gorbachev was losing his patience and the trust of his close colleagues and associates. Gorbachev's assistants Razumovsky and Lukyanov, as well as his adviser Frolov and KGB Chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov "sharply criticized Gorbachev's policy of passive reaction to the political changes. Today's analysis of the top-elite for the beginning of 1990 shows that inside the CPSU, the counter-elite groups tried to use the newly emerged Russian political structures for fighting against each other and against Gorbachev and his team".¹³⁹

The political developments in 1990 led to the appearance of two main political blocks in Moscow- the positions of Soviet and newly emerged Russian Presidency institutes. The old foe, Boris Yeltsin, had successfully climbed to the post of Chair of the Presidium of the *RSFSR* Supreme Soviet, and then in summer 1991, Boris Yeltsin had been elected to the post of the Russian President.

Within such a political atmosphere, the final stage of Gorbachev's perestroika was characterized by a futile attempt to re-consolidate authority in his hands. The establishment of the Presidential Council in the third extraordinary Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR in March 1990 was one such attempt. At this Congress, two ruling bodies, namely the Council of Federation that included the top officials of the republics, and the Presidential Council, were established.

The Presidential Council looked very much like the substitute of the Communist Party *Politburo*. The members of the Presidential Council were divided in three categories: the first group was represented by the Prime Minister and Heads of the main departments (Ryzhkov, Bakatin, Kryuchkov, Maslyukov, Shevardnadze, Yazov, and later Gubenko), the second group included members of the Council's staff who did not occupy state positions (A.Yakovlev, Primakov, Revenko, Boldin and Medvedev), and the third was consisted of persons who were employed on a voluntary basis alongside

¹³⁸ Pikhoya, R. p.514.

¹³⁹ Pikhoya, R. p.519.

their main duties (Shatalin, Osipyan, Rasputin, Kauls and Yarin).¹⁴⁰ The content of the Council again reflected the inability of Gorbachev to create a really working institute. Nevertheless, as seen above, under the supervision of Gorbachev, the most important state officials – the prime minister, the ministers of foreign affairs, of defense, and of internal affairs, and the chairman of the KGB – left the *Politburo* for the Presidential Council after the 28th Communist Party Congress in July 1990.

As a matter of fact, as also Kotz underlines,

as a result of his democratizing reforms, by 1990 Gorbachev had risked the loss of his original base of support in the party-state elite and also had destroyed his original apparatus for exercising power in the country. As the old strict discipline of the party dissolved, there was no assurance that the party-state elite would continue to support Gorbachev and his reform plans. Establishing a new base of support in the population would not be easy, in the chaotic and difficult conditions produced by radical economic reform. Furthermore, no effective new means of exercising power had been created to replace the party”.¹⁴¹

In the meantime, the Party top-management re-elected Gorbachev to the General Secretary post during the 28th Communist Party Congress undertaken in 2-13 July 1990. But when we look to the situation in the top-Party elite, the Party was no more an important institution in the governing of the country. Thus, on party level, Gorbachev and his team had taken only formal steps to regulate the political situation. The persons elected to top Party positions in this Congress realized that CPSU had lost its real influence in Soviet society, therefore several resignations from the top-regional Party leaders (especially from the Baltic States) were observed during the Congress.¹⁴²

Gorbachev’s deteriorating relations with his close associates became once more apparent in December 1990 when he supported Gennady Yanayev rather than Shevardnadze or any other closest associate to the post of the Soviet Vice-President.

¹⁴⁰ Medvedev, p.196.

¹⁴¹ Kotz p.107.

¹⁴² Pikhoya,R. pp.524-526.

Gorbachev lost another aide when Shevardnadze resigned due to this choice.¹⁴³ Gorbachev's choice Yanayev was known as a "non-charismatic executor of the orders".¹⁴⁴ Gorbachev also replaced the Premier: As a result of an heart attack in December 1990, Ryzhkov left his premier post to Valentin Pavlov in January 1991. In the Congress, the cancellation of the Presidential Council was also declared, and reflecting the instable atmosphere of the period a Security Council was established instead.

As is known, what accelerated the drive to the end was the re-evaluation of the USSR treaty alliance in the early 1991. Gorbachev met with the nine republics leaders in April 1991 and signed the so-called Novo-Ogarevo Agreement for the reformation of center- periphery relations in the Soviet state. That agreement threatened the statute of top-Soviet leadership and as Musskiy argues there were grounds for the perception of such a threat. According to him,

Mikhail Sergeyevich held the secret meeting with the leaders of the two biggest republics- Russian Federation- Boris Yeltsin and Kazakhstan- Nursultan Nazarbayev. During that secret meeting held in 30 June 1991 in Gorbachev's dacha in Novo-Ogarevo, three leaders agreed upon the swiftly held new elections just after the signing of the new treaty and the new Cabinet of Ministers would be headed by Nursultan Nazarbayev. The previous state top-representatives should be stepped down.¹⁴⁵

While Gorbachev was organizing secret meetings, his opponents were also doing the same however. On the 5th of August, while Gorbachev was in holiday, the Chairman of KGB, Vladimir Kryuchkov, met with the highest Soviet leaders such as the Minister of Defense Dmitriy Yazov, the Secretary of the Central Committee Oleg Shenin, the Deputy Head of the USSR Defense Council Oleg Baklanov, and the head of the

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.539.

¹⁴⁴ Pikhoya,R., p.540.

¹⁴⁵ Musskiy, I.A., Sto Velikikh Zagovorov I Perevorotov (The Hundred Big Conspiracies and Coups), Moscow, Veche, 2002, p.457-458.

Presidential Secretariat, Valeriy Boldin.¹⁴⁶ These people, who were highly concerned about Gorbachev's ousting them from their posts, were among the initiators of the August coup d'état together with Vice-President Gennadiy Yanayev and the Prime-Minister Valentin Pavlov.

August coup d'état was a turning point in both the USSR's and Russia's history as it practically ended the former and led to the rise of the latter in the capacity of their top-elites. The state of emergency (*GKChP*) initiated by the above mentioned group of opponents failed in three days (from 19th to the 21st of August) due to the better counter-actions of the Russian leadership as well as the passive attitude of the Soviet military. The heads of the military forces, General Yevgeniy Shaposhnikov and the Commander of Air-Landing Troops Pavel Grachev, who were responsible from the isolation of the Parliament during the coup d'état, did not hasten to carry out the orders of the rebellious commanding officers. In fact, they contributed to its failure by not arresting Yeltsin and the Russian top- parliamentarians, who led a resistance in the name of democracy.¹⁴⁷ Hence, it is not surprising that after the failure of the coup and *de-facto* victory of the top-Russian elite, they were rewarded by top-military positions. The attempted coup d'état served ultimately to Russian President Yeltsin's becoming the *de facto* new leader of Kremlin.

As a Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev lost his power during the August events. His team divided into the several political groups, which supported or rejected the August coup d'état. Gorbachev's formal end came when a new alliance agreement, Belovezh Agreements, was signed between Russian leader Yeltsin and other two Presidents of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. This agreement made Gorbachev the President of a non-existent state, hence he signed his resignation.

¹⁴⁶ Boldin was in fact a close aide of Gorbachev and Musskiy also informs that he attended Gorbachev's secret June meeting as the fourth person (Musskiy I, p.458).

¹⁴⁷ Musskiy I., p.461-462.

5.5. Conclusion

As the developments above indicate, the initiator of the most far-reaching reforms of the USSR, Gorbachev, lost his control over politics due to his own initiations. He tried to make reforms in the Communist Party, but faced a firm opposition that came from the highest level of bureaucracy. The implementation of political reforms decreased the influence of the top-Party elite, but as Gorbachev failed to build an alternative structure of authority, there emerged a dangerous power vacuum in Soviet politics, which was soon filled up with conservatives and radicals in Soviet politics. Finally, David Kotz expresses well the somehow continuing role of the party-elite in this process:

Another facet of this process [disintegration] was the shift by members of the party- state elite, during 1989-1991, from support of Gorbachev to support for Yeltsin. With this switch, they typically announced their disillusionment with socialism and Marxism and their new belief that private property and free markets were the only future for Russia.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Kotz, p.115.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis, which focused on the developments in the Soviet top-elite dynamics from 1981 to 1991, tried to indicate that the aggravating intra-*nomenklatura* tensions in the last decade of the USSR contributed substantially to the dissolution of the Union. As it is underlined in the last chapter when the Soviet top-elite lost its confidence on Gorbachev as a unifying leader, it started searching for alternatives. If a return to the old order was one of these alternatives, the other was the market economy option advocated by Boris Yeltsin. The August coup resolved that the latter radical option would be victorious over the previous conservative one.

As discussed in the thesis, behavioral patterns of the Soviet *nomenklatura* had been set since Stalin years and the succeeding Soviet leaders' tenures were marked by various top-elite conflicts as these established patterns had been in some way violated. It was argued in the thesis that the key role played by the leader in ensuring the top-elite stability was one of the most important characteristics of Soviet politics. As the elimination of Khrushchev from leadership indicated Soviet *nomenklatura* was not willing to see interventions in its own authority. This dislike led them even to prefer impotent leaders than powerful ones at the expense of inefficiency in state management.

This pattern had acquired its most corrupt form during the long tenure of Brezhnev (1964-1982) due to the leader's insistent "cadre stability" policy. The clientelist relations of mutual dependence between Brezhnev's top-*nomenklatura* and the lower strata of the Soviet elite guaranteed the vitality of gerontocracy in this period. Due to the corruptive relations between the elite's upper and middle strata, crucial problems such as aging leadership, stagnation emerged leading to a need for transformation in elite preferences.

In the last years of Brezhnev, as the leader lost its ruling capability, a new generation of elite had started to be formed under the influence of Andropov, and this

trend continued during the preceding short tenures of Andropov and Chernenko. The new elite saw the increase of its political power gradually from 1981 to 1985. Meanwhile, the weak top-leadership that characterized this interlude period in the USSR had in a sense helped educate the second men in the Politburo to leadership. Andropov during the Brezhnev period, and Gorbachev during the Andropov and Chernenko periods were examples of this. Besides, the whole period can also be examined as Gorbachev's early experiences in the Soviet top-elite. Gorbachev was included to the *Politburo* in the Brezhnev years by the support of Andropov and then steadily increased his powers through pragmatic policies.

Gorbachev's rise to power and the initial steps he undertook were in line with the conventional line of politics in the USSR. He substantially changed the top-elite cadres in his first three years in order to consolidate power firmly in his hands. Consequently, all the important departments in the Central Committee started to be administered by men personally loyal to Gorbachev.

Unlike the previous periods, however, after this expected hollowing out, a sort of top-elite stability could not be reached. The emergent conflicts and continuing cadre changes by Gorbachev in the mid-1987 indicated that there were some new dynamics in play in Soviet top-elite politics that constantly produced conflicts within the elite, but most importantly between Gorbachev and his own elite. Having continuously destabilized the political and economic conditions in the USSR, Gorbachev's reforms forced both Gorbachev and the new elite to re-consider their political attachments. Such a quick de-alignment of the leader from the elite was rather unordinary for conventional Soviet politics. Having felt threatened with the possibility of losing their status and privileges, the new elite quickly disintegrated among various political alternatives of the time that ranged from trying to re-establish the old system and to radically transform the system to a market economy. As a matter of fact, some of them had already converted their power into property by the help of Gorbachev reforms.

Finally, the initiator of the most far-reaching reforms in the USSR, Gorbachev, lost his control over politics due to his own initiations. He tried to make reforms in the Communist Party, but faced a firm opposition that came from the highest level of bureaucracy. The implementation of political reforms decreased the influence of the top-

Party elite, but as Gorbachev failed to build an alternative structure of authority, there emerged a dangerous power vacuum in Soviet politics, which was soon filled up by Boris Yeltsin, thanks to the opportunities opened up by the unsuccessful conservative August coup d'etat. The failure of the coup prevented a return to the past, but could not prevent the dissolution of the USSR.

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APPENDIX 1. BIOGRAPHIES OF TOP SOVIET LEADERS

- Aliyev, Heydar (Geidar) Ali Riza ogly (1923-2003), first secretary, Communist Party of Azerbaijan, 1969-1982; first deputy Chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1982-1987; member of Politburo, 1982-1987; Too conservative for Gorbachev; President of Azerbaijan (1993- 2003).
- Andropov, Yuri Vladimirovich (1914-1984), chair of the KGB, 1967-1982; general secretary of the CPSU, 1982-1984; chair of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet (head of state), 1983-1984; member of the Politburo, 1973-1984.
- Bakatin, Vadim Viktorovich (1937-), first secretary, Kirov Party obkom, 1985-1987; first secretary, Kemerovo Party obkom, 1987-1988; USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, 1988-1990; member of USSR Presidential Council, March 1990; chair of the USSR KGB, 1991; bottom of poll in Russian presidential election, June 1991; chair of the inter-republican Security Service, 1991-1992.
- Baybakov, Nikolay Konstantinovich (1911-2004), member of CC, the Head of Gosplan (the State Planning Committee) 1977-1985
- Beria Lavrentiy Pavlovich (1899-1953), the Deputy Chairman of NKVD (later Ministry of Internal Affairs-MVD) in 1938, after the dismiss and execution of his chief was appointed by Stalin to the Chairman post (1938-1953), was removed from his high post after the death of Stalin from the top-party elite and executed for the mass repressions of Soviet top-elite.
- Boldin, Valeriy Ivanovich (1935-), adviser to Gorbachev on agriculture, 1985-1987; head of the general department, Party CC, 1987-1990; Gorbachev's Chief of Staff, 1990-1991; member of the Presidential Council, March 1990; one of the conspirators, August 1991.
- Brezhnev, Leonid Ilich (1906-1982), first secretary, then general secretary of the Communist Party, 1964-1984; chair of the Presidium, USSR Supreme Soviet (head of state), 1960-1964 and 1977-1982; member of Politburo, 1957-1982.
- Bulganin, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1895-1975), chair of USSR Council of Ministers, 1955-1958; chair of council of national economy; supported the anti-Party group, June 1957, and this led to his dismissal as Prime Minister, 1958.
- Chazov, Yevgeniy Ivanovich (1929), personal doctor of general secretaries, 1967-1987; leading cardiologist in the Soviet Union; awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, 1985; Minister of Health, 1987-1990.
- Chebrikov, Viktor Mikhailovich (1923-), chair of the KGB, 1982-1988; secretary, Party CC, 1988-1989; member of the Politburo, 1985-1989.
- Chernenko, Konstantin Ustinovich (1911-1985), general secretary of the Party, chair of the Presidium, USSR Supreme Soviet (head of state), 1984-1985; member of the Politburo, 1978-1985.
- Chernyaev, Anatoliy Sergeevich (1921-), adviser to Gorbachev on foreign affairs, 1986-1991; then moved to Gorbachev Foundation.

Dobrynin, Anatoliy Fedorovich (1919), Soviet ambassador in Washington, 1962-1986; secretary, Party CC, 1986-1988, and head of the international department; this was a demotion since Shevardnadze wanted to cut his direct links to the foreign ministry; he was invited to retire from the CC in October 1988, completing Shevardnadze's demolition of his career.

Fedorchuk, Vitaliy Vasil'evich (1918-), chair of the Ukrainian KGB, 1970-1982; chair of the USSR KGB, 1982; Minister of Internal Affairs, 1982-1986.

Frolov, Ivan Timofeyevich (1929- 1999), editor-in-chief, *Voprosy filosofii*, 1968-1977; of *Kommunist*, 1986-1987; of *Pravda*, 1989-1991; member of Politburo; adviser to Gorbachev.

Gidasov, Boris Veniaminovich (1933-), first secretary, Leningrad Party obkom, 1989-1990; secretary, Party CC, 1990-1991.

Grishin, Viktor Vasil'evich (1914- 1992), first secretary, Moscow Party gorkom, 1967-1985; member of Politburo, 1971-1986; popularly known as the Moscow godfather because of corruption.

Gromyko, Andrei Andreyevich (1909-1989), USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1957-1985; chair, Presidium of USSR Supreme Soviet (head of state), 1985-1988; member of Politburo, 1973-1988.

Ivashko, Vladimir Antonovich (1932-1994), second secretary, 1988-1989, first secretary, Communist Party of Ukraine, 1989-1990; chair of Ukrainian Supreme Soviet (head of state), 1990; deputy general secretary, Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1990-1991.

Kaganovich, Lazar Moiseyevich (1893-1991), the nearest associate of Stalin (1922-1939), Deputy prime-minister (with off and on between 1938-1957), was claimed in "anti-party" plot by Khrushchev and was dismissed from CPSU in 1961.

Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeyeovich (1894-1971), first secretary, Party CC, 1953-1964; chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1958-1964; member of Politburo, 1939-1964.

Kirilenko, Andrei Pavlovich (1906-1990), secretary, Party CC, 1966-1982; member of Politburo, 1962-1982. Ousted just after the appointment of Andropov.

Kolbin, Gennady Vasil'evich (1927-), first secretary, Ul'yanovsk and then Communist party of Kazakhstan, chair of the people's control commission, 1986-1989.

Kosygin, Aleksei Nikolaevich (1904-1980), chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1948-1952, 1964-1980; member of Politburo, 1960-1980.

Kryuchkov, Vladimir Aleksandrovich (1924-), head of foreign intelligence, USSR KGB, 1974-1988; chair of KGB, 1988-1991; member of Politburo, 1989-1990; leader of conspirators, August 1991.

Kulakov, Fedor Davydovich (1918-1978), first secretary, Stavropol Party kraikom, 1960-1964; secretary (agriculture), Party CC, 1965-1978; member of Politburo, 1971-1978. His sudden death provided Gorbachev's acceleration to the Central Committee and Secretariat.

Kunayev, Dinmukhammed Akhmedovich (1912- 1993), first secretary, Communist party of Kazakhstan, 1960-1962, 1964-1986; member of Politburo, 1971-1987.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilich (1870-1924), leader of Bolsheviks, 1917; chair of Sovnarkom (government), 1917-1924.

Ligachev, Yegor Kuz'mich (1920-), first secretary, Tomsk Party gorkom, 1965-1983; secretary (personnel, ideology, agriculture), Party CC, 1983-1990; second secretary to Gorbachev, 1985-1988; member of Politburo, 1985-1990.

Lukyanov, Anatoliy Ivanovich (1930-), head of general department, Party CC, 1985-1987; secretary, Party CC, 1987-1988; first deputy chair, USSR Supreme Soviet, 1988-1990; chair, USSR Supreme Soviet, 1990-1991; one of conspirators, August 1991.

Maslyukov, Yuri Dmitrievich (1937-), deputy chair, 1985-1988, first deputy chair, USSR Council of Ministers, and chair of Gosplan, 1988- 1991, member of Politburo, 1989-1991.

Medvedev, Vadim Andreyevich (1929-), rector, Party Academy of Social Sciences, 1978-1983; head, department of science and education, 1983-1986; head, department for liaison with communist and workers' parties of socialist countries, Party CC, 1986-1988; secretary, Party CC, 1986-1988; member of Politburo, 1988-1990; he lost all his positions at 28th Party Congress, July 1990; member of Presidential Council, July 1990; adviser to Gorbachev and moved to Gorbachev Foundation.

Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich (1890-1986), Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1939-1949, 1953-1956; first deputy chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1953-1957; member of Politburo, 1926-1957; member of anti-Party group defeated by Khrushchev in June 1957.

Murakhovsky, Vsevolod Serafimovich (1926-), first secretary, Stavropol Party gorkom, 1970-1974; first secretary, Karachai-Cherkessia Party obkom, 1975-1978; first secretary Stavropol Party kraikom, 1978-1985; first deputy chair, USSR Council of Ministers and USSR State Agro Industrial Committee (Gosagroprom), 1985-1989.

Ogarkov, Nikolai Vasil'evich (1917- 1994), USSR Marshal, the Commander in Chief of Joint Staff (1977-1984), the first deputy minister of Defense (1974-1984), after 1984 worked in different high positions in Ministry of Defense.

Podgorny, Nikolai Viktorovich (1903-1983), first secretary, Communist Party of Ukraine, 1957-1963; chair (head of state), Presidium, USSR Supreme Soviet, 1965-1977; member of Politburo, 1960-1977.

Primakov, Yevgeniy Maksimovich (1929), director (Arabist), Oriental Institute, USSR Academy of Sciences, 1977-1985; director, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, 1985-1989; chair, Soviet of the Union, USSR Supreme Soviet, 1989-1990; director, Russian foreign intelligence service, 1991; personal Gorbachev envoy to Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War; Russian foreign minister, 1996 and prime minister, 1998.

Prokofyev, Yuri Anatolyevich (1939), first secretary, Moscow Party gorkom, 1989-1991; member of Politburo, 1990-1991.

Pugo, Boris Karlovich (1937-1991), chair, Latvian KGB, 1980-1984; CHAIR, cpsu Central Control Commission, 1990-1991; Soviet Minister of Internal Affairs, 1990-1991; one of the conspirators, August 1991; committed suicide.

Razumovsky, Georgiy Petrovich (1936-), first secretary, Krasnodar Party kraikom, 1983-1985; secretary (personel), Party CC, 1986-1991.

Romanov, Grigory Vasil'evich (1923-), first secretary, Leningrad Party obkom, 1970-1983; secretary (defense industry), Party CC, 1983-1985; MEMBER OF Politburo, 1976-1985.

Rutskoi, Aleksandr Vladimirovich (1947-), Vice President of Russia, 1991-1993.

Ryzhkov, Nikolai Ivanovich (1929-), secretary and head of industry department, Party CC, 1982-1985; chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1985-1991; member of Politburo, 1985-1990.

Schelokov, Nikolay (1910-1983), Minister of Internal Affairs (until 1982), his name was associated with the growing corruption and embezzlement during the Brezhnev's tenure

Shakhnazarov, Georgiy Khosroyevich (1924- 1999), aide to Gorbachev, 1988-1991; USSR people's deputy, 1989-1991; member of Gorbachev Foundation.

Shcherbitsky, Vladimir Vasil'evich (1918-1990), chair, Ukrainian Council of Ministers, 1961-1963, 1965-1972; first secretary, Communist Party of Ukraine, 1972-1989; member of CPSU Politburo, 1971-1989.

Shenin, Oleg Semenovich (1937-), first secretary, Krasnoyarsk Party kraikom, 1987-1990; secretary for personnel, Party CC, 1990-1991; member of Party CC permanent commission on renewal of activities of primary Party organizations, 1990-1991, one of the conspirators of August putsch in 1991.

Shelepin, Aleksandr Nikolaevich (1918- 1994), first secretary of VLKSM, 1952-1958, Head of KGB, 1958-1961; secretary of CC, 1961-1967, member of Politburo, 1964-1975

Silayev, Ivan Stepanovich (1930-), Soviet Minister of Civil Aviation, 1981-1985; deputy chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1985-1990; chair, Russian Council of Ministers, 1990-1991.

Slyunkov, Nikolai Nikitovich (1929-), first secretary of Byelorussia CP (1983-1987), member of CC (1986-1989), member of Politburo (1987-1989), in 1988 the chairman of CC's Economic Social Policy Commission.

Solomentsev, Mikhail Sergeevich (1913-), chair, Russian Council of Ministers, 1971-1983; chair, Party Control Commission, 1983-1988; member of Politburo, 1983-1988.

Stalin, Josef Vissarionovich (1879-1953), general secretary, CPSU, 1922-1934, secretary, 1934-1953; chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1941- 1953; member of Politburo, 1919-1953.

Suslov, Mikhail Andreyevich (1902-1982), secretary (ideology), Party CC, 1947-1982; member of Politburo, 1952-1953, 1955-1982.

Talyzin, Nikolai Vladimirovich (1929-), deputy chair, USSR Council of Ministers and Soviet representative to COMECON, 1980-1985, 1988-1989; first deputy chair, USSR Council of Ministers and head of Gosplan, 1985-1988.

Tikhonov, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1905-1997), chair, USSR Council of Ministers, 1980-1985; member of Politburo, 1979-1985.

Ustinov, Marshal Dmitriy Fedorovich (1908-1984), Soviet Minister of Defense, 1976-1984; member of Politburo, 1976-1984.

- Vlasov, Aleksandr Vladimirovich (1932-), first secretary, Rostov Party obkom, 1984-1986; USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, 1986-1988; chair, Russian Council of Ministers, 1988-1990.
- Vorotnikov, Vitaliy Ivanovich (1926-), chair, Russian Council of Ministers, 1983-1988; chair (head of state), Presidium, Russian Supreme Soviet, 1988-1990; member of Politburo, 1983-1990.
- Yakovlev, Aleksandr Nikolayevich (1923- 2005), Soviet ambassador to Canada, 1979-1983; director, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, USSR Academy of Sciences, 1983-1985; secretary (propaganda, culture, foreign policy), Party CC, 1986-1990; member of Politburo, 1987-1990; adviser to Gorbachev, 1990-1991.
- Yanaev, Gennady Ivanovich (1937-), secretary, 1986-1989, deputy chair, 1989-1990, chair, All-Union Central Council of Trades Unions, 1989-1990; secretary, Party CC, member of Politburo, 1990-1991; USSR Vice-President, 1990-1991; one of the conspirators, August 1991.
- Yazov, Dmitriy Timofeyevich (1923-), Marshal, Commander –in- Chief, Central Asian military district, 1980-1984; Far East military district, 1984-1986; USSR Minister of Defense, 1987-1991; one of the conspirators, August 1991.
- Yegorychev, Nikolay Grigoryevich (1920-), the First Secretary of Moscow City Committee (1962-1967), after the hard critics of Soviet top-management, was appointed to the post of Ambassador in Denmark (1970-1984). That appointment was the first sign of Brezhnev’s authority strengthening.
- Yeltsin, Boris Nikolayevich (1931-), first secretary, Sverdlovsk Party obkom, 1976-1985; head of construction department, Party CC, secretary, Party CC, 1985; first secretary, Moscow Party gorkom, 1985-1987; first deputy chair, USSR state committee for construction (Gosstroy), 1987-1989; chair (speaker, head of state), Russian Supreme Soviet, 1990; President of Russia, 1991-1999.
- Zaikov, Lev Nikolayevich (1923- 2002), first secretary, Leningrad Party obkom, 1983-1985; secretary (military- industrial complex), Party CC, 1985-1990; first secretary, Moscow Party gorkom, 1987-1989; member of Politburo, 1986-1990.
- Zimyanin, Mikhail Vasil’evich (1914- 1995), secretary of CC (1976-1987), first secretary of Mogilev obkom, ambassador in Vietnam and Czechoslovakia, the Editor in Chief of Pravda (1965-1976), retired in 1987.
- Zamyatin, Leonid Mitrofanovich (1928-), Director of TASS, member of CC, Chairman of CC Information Department, Ambassador in Great Britain.