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RISING TO THE OCCASION:

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE KGB AND ITS INFLUENCE IN SOVIET SUCCESSION STRUGGLES 1953-1991

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

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RISING TO THE OCCASION: THE KGB 1953-1991

Abstract

After having reached a level of influence unmatched by any other element of Soviet government under Stalin and Beria, the security organs of the Soviet Union proved difficult to tame. While it has been argued that the KGB was made subservient to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union after the ascent of Khrushchev in the late 1950's, this essay will attempt to show that the security police apparatus was able to maintain a high level of prominence and even autonomy throughout the history of the Soviet Union and beyond. While it may have appeared that the organs were under constraints during periods of unchallenged leadership, the lack of a legislative definition of the KGB's role made the possibility of a coup or putsch a constant threat. During periods of instability, particularly those surrounding the succession struggles, the KGB was able to act independently and was highly influential as to the outcome of these contests. In the latter years of the Soviet era, efforts to alter the system in order to avoid the excesses of previous years revealed the organs to be highly adaptable and cognizant of the need to change to avoid being excluded from the political decision-making process. Through an assessment of the various succession struggles and efforts to place the organs within the confines of legality, the political power of the KGB may be better understood, and placed in a historical perspective side by side with its post-Soviet counterpart, which too is shown to have survived recent upheavals.

Resumé

Après avoir atteint un niveau d'influence inégalé par aucun autre parti du gouvernement Soviétique sous Stalin et Lenin, les organes de sécurité de l'Union Soviétique étaient difficiles à enrayer. Lorsqu'il a été argumenté que le KGB était mis sous le contrôle du Parti Communiste de l'Union Soviétique après l'ascension de Khrouchtchev à la fin des dernières années cinquantes, cette thèse tentera de démontrer que l'appareil de la police sécuritaire était capable de maintenir de l'importance et même de l'autonomie à un haut niveau pendant toute l'histoire de l'Union Soviétique et mème aprés sa chute. Mème s'il semblait que les organes étaient sous contraintes durant les periodes de la direction incontestée, le manque d'une définition législative du rôle du KGB a rendu la possibilité d'un coup ou putsch une menace constante. Aussi pendant les temps d'instabilité, particulièrement celles qui entouraient les luttes pour la succession, le KGB était capable d'agir de façon indépendante et était bien influent quant aux resultats de ces luttes. Durant les derniéres années de l'histoire Soviétique, les efforts pour modifier le système afin d'eviter les excès des années antérieures ont démontré que les organes étaient très souples et conscients de la nécessité de changer pour éviter d'être exclus du processus politique. Par l'entremise d'une évaluation de plusieurs luttes pour la succession et des efforts pour inclure les organes dans les limites de la légalité, la puissance politique du KGB peut être mieux comprise et placée dans une perspective historique vis-à-vis son équivalent post-Soviétique, lequel à démontré avoir survécu aux récents bouleversements.

Note on Transliteration

In transliterating from Russian to English, the author has copied the forms used in the source materials whenever possible; otherwise the system used is that of the Library of Congress.

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Introduction

The Origin of the Security Organs

The role of the Soviet secret or security police, or KGB, as they eventually came to be known, was never clearly defined at any particular time in Soviet Russia. Although this organ's level of influence in government over the 74-year history of Soviet government has been debated by many scholars, it appears that this debate will ensue indefinitely, as the KGB's role was largely a function of each Soviet leader's actual control, or lack thereof, over it. At various times the Committee for State Security encompassed or infringed upon the territory of nearly every aspect of Soviet government, including the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, and most industries. Indeed, the history of the KGB is inextricable from the history of Soviet Russia itself, as the desired direction of the country was often affected by the police network as much or more than by any other element of government throughout the period, from its inception after 1917 to the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and even the attempted putsch of 1993.[1]

The configuration of power in the Soviet Union has always comprised a complex and highly visible hierarchy. The influence of any particular actor in government has at any one time depended on his relationship with the leader and his supporters or with those working in opposition to them. In a system with no set contingency for succession, and generally no appreciation for legislative procedure, the power struggle in Soviet Russia was an interminable and ever-perilous process. Given the inherent instability which this condition brought about, this thesis will explore the level of influence of the KGB after Stalin, taking as its focus the most

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[1]The use of the word police in reference to the security organs is not particularily apt, as the actual police in Soviet Russia were in fact the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior. However, for lack of a better term, it will be necessary at times to refer to security officers as policemen when describing the nature of their work. As we are not dealing with the regular police, or militia, herein, it is hoped that the term policeman will be understood to mean an employee of the organs unless otherwise stated.

revealing events of the history of the regime, the succession struggles. It has often been suggested that the KGB was reduced to something much less potent and influential after 1953 than it had been as the NKVD and then the MGB under Beria. However, the Soviet Union was never again to have a leader as thoroughly dependent on the organs as Stalin had been, and it can be argued that in the upheavals of the ensuing three decades there were several occasions on which the KGB revealed itself to be as critical, decisive and independent a factor as it had ever been.

An account of the influence of the security organs is necessarily an analysis of several rather abstract factors at once. In a system based on hierarchy, with individuals in possession of a great deal of power in their respective arenas, the personal relationships of the various police chiefs with other key members of government were decisive in determining later events. The status of the power struggle at any given moment brought together many unlikely bedfellows. Often, key figures held simultaneous positions in numerous agencies of government which allowed them to act in more than one capacity in order to achieve their ends. From its inception in 1954, for example, the KGB chief was legally assured a seat on the Council of Ministers, and Beria in Stalin's lifetime had occupied as many as five significant government posts at once. Most importantly, the policies or constraints adopted by various leaderships towards the KGB, while usually undocumented, disparate, and not always effective, are of critical importance.

It is the condition of perpetual internal struggle in Soviet Russia which precluded the possibility of assembling a definitive and comprehensive body of law. Nor, as shall be seen below, was this task a major concern of the Bolshevik government, concerned as it was with the ideological forms of control rather than the rule of law. But it will be seen that when ideology was subsumed by power politics, pure, simple and crude, the role of the security apparatus increased dramatically, often allowing it to install the candidate it favoured as leader. In the absence of a comprehensive

legal framework, the direction of the regime was necessarily tied to the ideological values of its leadership at any one time, and when these values became unpopular among the elite, or nomenklatura, they were relegated to the sidelines as the ensuing power struggle dominated government.

The difference between leaderships was great, so much so that Robert C. Tucker has claimed that "what we carelessly call 'the Soviet political system' is best seen and analysed as an historical succession of political systems within a broadly continuous institutional framework."[2] The individual program of the General Secretary or leadership group came to comprise the replacement for the rule of law, with consideration of the pitfalls of the past and a ready group of would-be usurpers always waiting in the wings.

At the present time, the organs are being reunited under the auspices of the presidential administration, in such a way that they are said to be afforded direct access to the president. By a law passed on 10 January 1994 many of the groups which formerly made up the KGB are being removed from the supervision of parliament and the cabinet and made subservient solely to Kremlin officials in Yeltsin's administration.[3] This ukaz mentions the word 'coordination', but there is doubt as to where the line is drawn between coordination and leadership. The relationship between the leaders and the organs was difficult to discern in the Soviet era as well, although one constant was that the latter was always accorded input into the political process while ostensibly in the service of this leadership. This level of participation was not always productive or harmonious, as often the organs were seen to actively oppose certain leaders, and help to affect leadership changes. KGB influence was significant in every transition of power since Stalin, and despite widespread reforms during perestroika, its political weight was not significantly reduced

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[2]Tucker, Robert C.: The Soviet Political Mind: Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change. Revised Ed. (New York: Norton and Co., 1971), p. 18

[3]Moroz, Oleg: "Rossiya kak chast' kantselyarii prezidenta", in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 9 August 1995

to prevent it from undermining Gorbachev and, indeed, attempting to remove him in 1991 in much the same way it had earlier succeeded in engineering Khrushchev's fall.

The KGB's failure in its attempt to oust Gorbachev, who was forced to resign largely because of Yeltsin's greater effectiveness in voicing public disenchantment with both the Communist Party and the organs, did not result in a permanent diminishment of its power. At present Yeltsin is being accused of creating the preconditions for a new putsch in placing the security organs under the control of shadowy Kremlin figures the hospital-ridden Russian president is said himself not to control.[4]

In order to effectively analyze the changes and constants with respect to the security organs over the lengthy and turbulent period in question, it will be necessary to examine the Soviet era somewhat cursorily, scrutinizing the more revelatory events. As well, because of the personality-dominated system of government which prevailed, it will be more useful at times to focus on the individuals most influential in determining the outcomes of struggles, rather than perusal of institutional tendencies which may at first seem to be less subjective. It seems invariably true that the so-called 'power' institutions in Soviet Russia invariably reflected the personality at the top of the hierarchy, due to the fact that any change in leadership brought with it an accompanying purge and installation of officials loyal to the new chief. As Zbigniew Brzezinski notes,

> "the standard weapon of internal combat was the purge, and the launching of a purge usually signified the completion of the struggle, the beginning of mopping up operations by the victor."[5]

It follows, then, that certain leaders of the KGB were either more significant in themselves or present during a more critical period

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[4]See Moroz in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 9 Aug. 1995

[5]Brzezinski, Zbigniew K.: The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 152

than others. In the interests of brevity, the lessers will have to be dealt with summarily, if at all.

Even before the inception of the Committee for State Security or KGB in 1954, the leaders of the Soviet Union had experienced difficulty in defining the role of the security organs of government. In 1917 Lenin had created the Cheka, the first Soviet secret police, which under Feliks Dzerzhinsky adhered to the will of the leader of state himself, insofar as this entailed consolidating the tenuous hold on power of the Bolshevik regime. There was little chance or desire for the fledgling government to be confined by legislative programs in the early days, faced as it was with challenges of popular opposition, civil war, and the implementation of its ideology. The struggle for the survival of the Bolsheviks dictated each day's course of action, and policies changed as rapidly as circumstances dictated. Having placed his trust in Dzerzhinsky and outlined his vision of the Cheka's purpose, Lenin allowed the chief of the organs room to manoevre. And with this latitude Dzerzhinsky began a Chekist tradition; he began to set his own agenda according to his personal view of the proper role of the secret police.

Created as little as six weeks after the coup, on December 20, 1917 (new calendar), the Extraordinary Commission for Combatting Counterrevolution and Sabotage, Vecheka or Cheka by its Russian acronym, began operation after a meeting of the Congress of People's Commissars. It was an auspicious beginning, "more or less illegal", according to Robert Conquest[6], and was not accompanied by any actual legislative decree announcing the formation and purpose of the new organs. In fact this declaration would not appear until 1924, after the security apparatus had already experienced one of its many changes of title. There was probably no behavioural standard for the Cheka in this early period, and it is not unrealistic to claim, as E.H. Carr does, that "the

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[6]Conquest, Robert: The Soviet Police System. (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 7

development of the Cheka was a gradual and largely unpremeditated process. It grew out of a series of emergencies."[7]

The existence of the Cheka was simply a fact for the Russian people long before any legal mention of it; acknowledgement did not occur in the form of documentation until the Red Terror was already an active and open policy.[8] Dated 5 September 1918, this first mention was merely a statement noting that the Chairman of the Cheka (Dzerzhinsky) had recommended more extreme measures against counterrevolutionaries;

> "the Soviet Republic must be made secure from class enemies by their isolation in concentration camps... all persons involved in white guard organizations, conspiracies and riots must be shot."[9]

On 2 November 1918 an act was drafted which gave the Cheka statutory foundation, entitled "On the All-Russian Cheka and the Local Chekas". This act shed some light on the purpose of the security organs; it named locations of Chekas to be formed and indicated their purposes by naming commissions for combatting counterrevolution, speculation and crimes by officials.[10] However, the act contained no mention of the powers of the Cheka, or restrictions thereof. Actually any such definition at this time could only have been restrictive rather than provisive, since the Cheka had for some time been expanding its prerogative at will.

The first mention of the powers with which the Cheka was invested occurred in a decree of 17 February 1919, entitled simply "On the Vecheka". It has been noted that this decree was limiting in that it provided that executions, heretofore rather indiscriminate, only be performed in cases of open rebellion, and may also have restricted imprisonment in concentration camps to similar cases. According to Leonard Schapiro, the Cheka, "designed

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[7]Carr, E.H.: The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923, volume I. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1950), p. 160

[8]Dobrin, S.: "Some Questions of Early Soviet Legal History", in Soviet Studies, vol. 7, no. 4(April 1956): p. 367

[9]Dobrin, p. 367

[10]Dobrin, p. 367

for investigation only", had its powers of punishment "limited to confiscation of property and deprivation of ration cards".[11] It is not clear that restrictions to this extent were decreed, but one can conclude generally that this was the first delineation of the powers of the Cheka, and that the decree constituted a constraintive measure.

When the founding decree was finally published in 1924, it was not particularily enlightening in view of all that had passed prior to this time. The duties of the Cheka were outlined as follows:

> "(1) To persecute and break up all acts of counter-revolution and sabotage all over Russia, no matter what their origin; (2) To bring before the Revolutionary Tribunal all counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs and to work out a plan for fighting them; (3) To make preliminary investigation only - enough to break up (the counter-revolutionary act)."[12]

Punitive measures allowed for in this document included only "confinement, deprivation of food cards, publication of the names of the enemies of the people, etc."[13] In reality, however, it is well understood that the Cheka was the punitive arm of the Soviet government, and were "answerable only to the top leadership of the Party and government."[14] Legal limitations on Cheka activity, however scant they may have been, were not a major concern of Lenin and Dzerzhinsky at this time.

The influence of Dzerzhinsky, a veteran of prison camps for years before the revolution and a participant in the coup as a member of the Military Revolutionary Committee, is the source of a scholarly debate, the revisionists claiming that the formation of the Cheka was largely his doing rather than Lenin's. Indeed, even before the founding of the security service, Dzerzhinsky had been

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[11] Schapiro, Leonard: The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State, First Phase 1917-1922. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1955), p. 174

[12] Bunyan, J. and Fisher, H.H., eds.: The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918: Documents and Materials. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 297

[13] Bunyan and Fisher, p. 298

[14] Wolin, S. and Slusser, R.M., eds: The Soviet Secret Police. (New York: Praeger, 1957), p. 4

named head of the above noted Revolutionary Committee to handle counterrevolutionary cases. On 7 December 1917 Dzerzhinsky had already brought to the attention of the Sovnarkom his views on the proper method of dealing with opposition to the new government, and had spoken of the need to form an organization to perform this task.[15] There in fact exists no evidence of Lenin commissioning the creation of a separate body from the Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) and S. Wolin and R.M. Slusser, Merle Fainsod and Schapiro all seem to agree that it is "probable that the driving force behind the establishment of the Cheka was not Lenin but Dzerzhinsky".[16] Schapiro goes further to claim that the founding decree was penned by Dzerzhinsky himself and not Lenin.[17]

Officially, the Cheka was to work in close coordination with the NKVD and the Commissariat of Justice, and was subordinate to the highest body of government, the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR. The chairman of the Cheka was to be appointed by the aforementioned Council, and the chairman also acted as a member of the collegium of the NKVD. Thus a structure was in place which demanded cooperation, but which did not achieve this goal extensively in practise. In the area of paramilitary strength, Conquest explains the relationships succinctly:

> "Both the central and the local Chekas had their own 'armed detachments' separate from the Militia (the Soviet equivalent of the normal police), the latter being attached to the local Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies and coming under the general supervision of the NKVD. The Militia, however, were to be at the disposal of the local Chekas insofar as it was essential to the discharge of their responsibilities."[18]

From the beginning, then, it can be seen that the security organs were given the prerogative to seize jurisdiction over the regular police force when it saw fit, and Feliks Dzerzhinsky appears to

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[15] Wolin and Slusser, p. 32n

[16] Wolin and Slusser, p. 32

[17] Schapiro, ibid, p. 174

[18] Conquest, p. 13

have been a personality who did not hesitate to take the initiative when given free reign. Having had the opportunity during his own frequent incarcerations to study the various methods of arrest and interrogation, and well-versed in Marxist-Leninist theory, Dzerzhinsky took a leadership role upon himself. The architect of Chekism, as one biographer describes him, held as one of his values the idea of "the political police as being not so much a police force in the usual sense of the word as the 'vanguard of the vanguard', a body which is not only an independent but even a leading political force, coming immediately under the Party with all its institutions".[19]

Although Lenin never disavowed terror, and in fact approved of its practise, it was Dzerzhinsky who was the instrument. Initially ordered by Lenin (as its first act of policing) to arrest several mine-owners in December 1917, by February 1918 the Cheka had expanded its powers to include summary executions of counterrevolutionaries, as well as such mundane criminals as "spies, speculators, burglars, hooligans, saboteurs and other parasites".[20] When Lenin was wounded in an assassination attempt in August 1918 and himself recommended a 'mass red terror', the killing became more rampant and arbitrary.

A leading Chekist at the time, M. Latsis, admits that the Cheka operated outside of the law by assuming powers of summary execution, and acknowledges Dzerzhinsky's autonomy in decision-making:

> "Life had made it necessary to appropriate by revolutionary means the right to immediate execution. Comrade Dzerzhinski [sic] had taken a step not foreseen by decree, not authorized by anyone. The Left Socialist Revolutionaries, heading the Commissariat of Justice, raised a cry, demanded that the question be brought up in the Sovnarkom. However, Vladimir Il'yich [sic] declined to include this question in the

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[19] Shteppa, Konstantin: "Felix Dzerzhinski: Creator of the Cheka and Founder of Chekism", in The Soviet Secret Police, Wolin and Slusser, eds., p. 187

[20] Wolin and Slusser, p. 5

agenda... He realized that Comrade Dzerzhinski was right."[21] According to Latsis the main guidelines for Chekist action were "Party directives which Dzerzhinski used each time according to the demands of the moment"[22], with ample freedom of interpretation.

On the subject of the Cheka in its formative years it can be said that several characteristics existed which were symptomatic of later excesses. The lack of legal framework produced a body which was susceptible to the whims of its chief, who happened to be a man who felt that "terror is an absolute necessity in times of revolution"[23], and who made use of his autonomy to begin a Chekist trend of making decisions independent of the Party mechanisms he was supposedly subordinate to. It has been noted that "by the end of 1918 some attempts were being made to keep the lawlessness of the Vecheka within bounds"[24], but these efforts did not entail the imposition of a legislative framework on the secret police.

In early 1919, following the formation of the five-member Politburo, a serious attempt was made to bring the Cheka under stricter control. This entailed delegating a Politburo member (or candidate member, this first being Bukharin) to sit directly on the Collegium of the Cheka, with the right to veto any plan of action.[25] However, Bukharin turned out to be quite a willing accomplice to Dzerzhinsky, and illustrated an "enthusiasm for the terror machine [which] was always extravagant".[26] There was one Politburo member however, L. Kamenev, who steadfastly opposed the use of terror, and who had in the past campaigned for the abolition of the Cheka. In attempting to prepare a statute for the reform of

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[21] Volin and Slusser, p. 33n

[22] Volin and Slusser, p.33n

[23] Conquest, p. 15

[24] Schapiro, p. 174

[25] Leggett, p. 134

[26] Leggett, p. 135

the security police organ, he advanced at the Sixth Congress of Soviets in November 1918 a proposal to free all prisoners "against whom no concrete accusations were brought within a fortnight of arrest, and [amnesty] of all hostages except those whose continued imprisonment was considered essential to safeguard Soviet lives".[27]

The conflict ran deeper than this as well, as the Cheka faced opposition from those regions that demanded their constitutional right to self-government (heretofore infringed upon by local and regional Chekas), and the Commissariat of Justice, which opposed the extra-judicial powers of the Chekas. The ensuing Central Committee debate brought into question the "whole concept of the political police, operating beyond the law and outside the framework of the regular state".[28] This had been a major thrust for legality in the Soviet government, one which possibly would have changed Soviet history had it succeeded. Unfortunately for the faction with the 'conscience', the hardliners included as one of their members Lenin, who regarded Communist morality as "wholly subordinate to the interests of the class war waged by the proletariat".[29]

Although during the early years the Soviet government was not as susceptible to a succession struggle or a coup attempt as it would be later, already the lack of a procedural framework had illustrated dangerous vulnerabilities. While there was little question of attempting to displace Lenin from his seat of power, Dzerzhinsky showed his opportunistic wont by choosing Stalin's side in the widening schism within the Party. It was Dzerzhinsky himself who brought the previously nonpartisan Cheka and later the GPU into the realm of Party politics; after the Cheka was subordinated to the NKVD in March 1919, Dzerzhinsky promoted greater political activity on the part of Chekists, himself

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[27]Leggett, p. 135

[28]Leggett, p. 137

[29]Lenin, quoted in Leggett, p. 137

beginning "to take part in Party disputes, assisting in the victory of one faction and the defeat of another".[30] This was a critical change of character for the Chekists, and set a precedent which would ensure that the security organs played a role in succession struggles to come. By 1923 Stalin had deftly trained the eye of Dzerzhinsky and his organization on the Party, in the form of a Special Commission. As well, Lenin began to notice Dzerzhinsky's dangerous autonomy, warning Trotsky to take countermeasures against Stalin's and Dzerzhinsky's increasingly harsh nationalities policy. Maintaining control over an extra-governmental body with as much power as the security organs already had become a challenge. The fact that Lenin was not able to make adjustments in this area before his death made it relatively simple for Stalin to expand upon Civil War precedents for arbitrary arrest and execution.

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[30] Shteppa, p. 89

Chapter I
After Stalin

In order to examine the influence of the security police organs during the periods of Soviet history in which the regime was least stable, the era of Stalin is obvious as the period of greatest police influence, but also must be acknowledged as a period of many instances of legal and practical precedence. For the security organs, it represented the apotheosis of their ascendancy in government, and this ascendancy came at the expense of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After the succession to Stalin had been decided, the Party would attempt to ensure that the police organs would never again take precedence over it, and did so through the rollback of Stalinist legal measures, the abolition of Stalinist practises and a restructuring of the organs.

Stalin had realized early on the advantage of having a vaguely defined and highly powerful security agency in his corner, and managed to have himself installed as Bukharin's successor on the Cheka Collegium in 1922. From this time forward Stalin obtained the loyalty of the organs, becoming a close friend of Dzerzhinsky. In doing so, Stalin helped the Cheka leader expand the scope of organ influence, to include responsibility for guarding the frontier in 1921, and eventually leaving no area completely untouched. By the time of Dzerzhinsky's death in 1926, the Cheka had expanded its purlieu to such an extent that "no significant aspect of Soviet economy and administration escaped its scrutiny, or was safe from its extra-legal methods of repression".[1]

When Stalin had achieved his succession to Lenin, which he orchestrated from the heretofore impotent position of General Secretary of the Party, it was the security police which comprised

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[1]Wolin and Slusser, p. 8

his muscle. Stalin's career marked the strengthening of the police organs in every capacity; he allowed them so much influence that he felt it necessary to remove the chiefs periodically and purge other elements within, to maintain control. The successor to Dzerzhinsky was V. Menzhinsky, an official who did not seem to relish the daily brutality of police work and who left the real administration of the organs (by now the OGPU) to his assistant, G. Iagoda.[2] The latter further expanded the security milieu, and established forced prison labour as a practise, the personnel for which he imprisoned in the GULag, established in 1930. Also added to police responsibility in this period was the monitoring of the internal passport system which came into effect in 1932.

By 1934 the organs had become a significant paramilitary power within the Soviet state. After Menzhinsky's death in July, Iagoda took over the newly renamed Main Administration of State Security (GUGB), which came to dominate Iagoda's other responsibility, the NKVD. By this time the two agencies were generally distinct in that the latter was responsible for ordinary criminal activity, while the former handled political terrorism, sabotage and espionage. The GUGB controlled, as well as border and internal troops, "fire brigades, convoy troops, and, after October 1934, the entire penal system".[3] From 1934 to 1940 responsibility for all major projects employing forced labour from the GULag also fell to the security police organs.

When Iagoda aligned himself with the 'rightists' opposed to collectivization, his days became numbered. He was replaced, after he had been involved in the murder of Kirov and initiated the first of Stalin's great Party purges, by N. Ezhov. Ezhov orchestrated the Great Terror of 1936-1938 which, while definitely marking the nadir of police malfeasance to this point, did not represent in any way police freelancing. Stalin was clearly running things from

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[2]Wolin and Slusser, p. 13

[3]Knight, Amy: The KGB: Police and Politics in the Soviet Union. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 25

behind the scenes, and when he felt that the purge had run its course, he used Ezhov as his scapegoat. In December 1938 Ezhov was replaced by his former deputy, Lavrenty Beria, who would bring the security organs to a level of autonomy from which he eventually was able to make a play for the ultimate prize, and nearly succeed.

By the time of Stalin's death the nature of leadership succession in the Soviet Union should have been cleared up somewhat. The regime had existed for over thirty years and yet the USSR was still not governed by legislation or law. This absence of 'rule of law', an earlier claim of this paper, deserves clarification. Although legislation and a constitution did exist in Russia at the time, the scope of this documentation was limited in nature and largely consisted of retroactive explanations for earlier deeds, added at the convenience of the leader himself. The concept of 'rule of law' was actually a repugnant notion to the Soviet government. Eugene Huskey offers an explanation of this fact:

> "For the Bolsheviks, *pravovoe gosudarstvo* represented a philosophy of rule designed to consolidate the power of a rising capitalist class. It was a relic of the bourgeois era, not an essential ingredient of a civilized society."[4]

Theoretically, Harold Berman claims that the concept was in fact anathema to Marxist-Leninist ideology:

> "In theory, it [rule of law] conflicted with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that law in all societies is a reflection of the will of the ruling class and that the state is ultimately bound by that will and not by any laws."[5]

While the concept of a law-based state eventually came to be accepted in some areas of government, and was finally embraced by Gorbachev in 1988, it was unacceptable while true communism was still fervently aspired to. As well, rule of law at this time

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[4]Huskey, Eugene: "From Legal Nihilism to *Pravovoe Gosudarstvo*: Soviet Legal Development 1917-1990", in Toward the Rule of Law in Russia? Political and Legal Reform in the Transition Period. Donald D. Barry, ed. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), p. 23

[5]Berman, Harold J.: "The Rule of Law and the Law-Based State (Reichstaat)", in Barry, p. 43

would "conflict with the ultimate supremacy of the Communist Party leadership over the state itself".[6]

Within the Party, the Central Committee, which is elected at each congress, was ostensibly the decision-making apparatus. In practise, however, it was the two executive branches, the Presidium and the Secretariat, which shared power in variable proportions. The history of Bolshevism has been marked by a trend towards an individual policy-maker, but as Myron Rush notes, "while personal rule has been customary, there is no constitutional or ideological justification for it".[7] Hence there is there is no principle legitimizing the trend, and herein lies the crux of the succession problem: while each contender aspires to assume directly the role of his predecessor (who has himself spent considerable effort to ensure his personal predominance), he has no right to actually do so in any legal sense. In the absence of a regulated procedure then, "the personal ruler's demise...leads to a distribution of his powers".[8] What then occurs is a compromise. The several aspirants, aware of the need to bide time to consolidate their respective power bases, form a cartel or 'collective leadership' which, recognized by all as a temporary arrangement, is intrinsically unstable. It is during this time that the support of interest groups such as the military and the security organs is recruited most heavily, to lend authority to one contender or another. The oligarchy which emerges directly from the demise of a leader is necessarily lacking in direction, divided as it is, and has as its dominant characteristic "the incapability of any individual to prevent the adoption of policies to which he may be opposed".[9] The collective leadership stage is merely an extension of the earlier succession struggle, with all but the most serious

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[6]Berman, p. 43

[7]Rush, Myron: How Communist States Change Their Rulers. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 14

[8]Rush, p. 14

[9]Rush, p. 17

contenders eliminated.

During Stalin's struggle for succession the Party, insomuch as it was embodied in himself, came to be the dominant body of government, having as its executive branch the Secretariat. The government's decision-making body was the Politburo, renamed as the Presidium in 1952. The relationship of Party to government has never been altogether clear, but can be summed up for our purposes by Robert Conquest:

> "The role of the Party as such was to make basic decisions, look after ideology and conduct the agitational and general campaigning while the government actually administered the policy side."[10]

This relationship was qualified by the fact that the majority of important government positions were filled by officials who had risen to prominence through the ranks of the Party, and these generally held a Party post as well as the government one. Although Politburo seats were generally accorded to representatives of the military, foreign affairs and security departments, real contenders for the ultimate seat of power, the General Secretary of the Party, were Party men first and foremost. While the pinnacle of power was generally out of reach for a career soldier or policeman, due to their prestige, firepower, and control over large segments of the population, the support of at least one of these institutions was critical to the quest for power of a Party official.

In the Stalin era the security apparatus came to far outstrip all other interest groups in influence, including the CPSU itself. The judicial system was among the first victims. Soviet criminal law even in Lenin's lifetime comprised the protection of the state in the guise of defending its ideology, which entailed an Orwellian practise of monitoring and eliminating possible threats before an actual 'counterrevolutionary' act was committed. According to one source, "the degree of responsibility was determined more by the

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[10] Conquest, Robert: Power and Policy in the USSR: The Study of Soviet Dynastics. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1962), p. 30

criminals' personality and how it deviated from the ideological and political norms than by any concrete criminal act".[11] Thus the Criminal Code (implemented in 1923) was not binding in that arrests could be made of those who had not actually violated the code in any way, but represented a perceived threat, or of those who had committed a crime analogous to one delineated in the Code.[12]

Some mention should be made of the 'special' powers of the organs. From its inception, the Cheka was by title an 'extraordinary commission', which in fact meant that this body had extralegal status, and acted independently to ensure the protection of the regime in emergency situations. This status was revoked on 8 February 1922, when the Vecheka was placed under the direction of the State Political Administration (GPU). The limitations placed on it by this move were however quickly undermined by decrees issued in August and December of 1922, giving the OGPU broad powers which included execution, and creating an independent judicial body for carrying out summary justice. When opposition to these judicial powers arose from the State Procuracy in 1924, the judicial body was abolished, but an amendment to the Criminal Code consisting of a 'special statute' once again freed the organs of any judicial interference. In 1929 this autonomy was expanded with an amendment stipulating that "'special rules' governed the types of cases subject to preliminary investigation by the security organs".[13] This amendment effectively allowed the OGPU to freely interpret its own scope of jurisdiction.

In May 1926 all Party control over the security police was basically eliminated by a directive from the Central Committee denying local Party officials any influence over security personnel above the rank of regular agent without approval from OGPU's Moscow headquarters. This directive enabled the OGPU to attack dissident

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[11] Knight, p. 15

[12] Knight, p. 16

[13] Knight, p. 17

Party members, as the organs were subject now only to national authority.[14] After Stalin had consolidated his hold on power by the mid-thirties, the organs began to regain their specifically 'special' status. In 1933 a 'Special Board' was created as a branch of the NKVD, charged with the task of surveillance of the Soviet citizenry. This board, which again acted outside of the legal system, was the NKVD equivalent of the OGPU's judicial body, circumventing the State Procuracy and becoming "one of the chief instruments of the Stalinist purges".[15]

Even before Beria, but certainly during his tenure as security chief, there is evidence of an alarming primacy of the organs over Party authority. It appears that Stalin responded to real or imagined political challenges through "the building up of the secret police as partners... elevating them above the Party".[16] While the Party was devastated after the purge of more than a million members between 1935 and 1939, as early as 1934 "the party's political importance fell well below that of the police... its deliberative bodies - the party congress, the Central Committee, and eventually even the Politburo - rarely convened".[17]

A final note on Stalinism in general concerns the use of law by Stalin to give the appearance of legality to the murderous acts of his government. Stalin always sought to create a legitimate scenario for his caprice, and to this end the Criminal Code was amended on 1 December 1934. This constituted a significant event in the history of the security organs, in view of both its immediate impact and Khrushchev's later response to it. While Kirov's assassination was the stated motive for the purge which followed, the 'legality' of this purge was guaranteed by the

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[14]Knight, p. 18

[15]Knight, p. 25

[16]Lewin, Moshe: "The Soviet Background of Stalinism", in Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation, Robert C. Tucker, ed. (New York: Norton and Co., 1977), p. 25

[17]Cohen, Stephen F.: "Bolshevism and Stalinism", in Tucker, p. 18

amendment concerning "special procedure for crimes involving terrorism" (Article 58-8 of the Criminal Code). The following practise was institutionalized:

> "the time of preliminary investigation was shortened to a maximum of ten days; the accused was to receive the indictment only twenty-four hours before trial; neither the defendant nor his counsel was permitted in the courtroom; no appeals were allowed; and the sentence (usually death) was to be carried out immediately."[18]

This particular amendment, for cases of terrorism only, was followed by another, allowing for similar procedure in cases of wrecking and sabotage, in September 1937.

Beria, by the time of Stalin's death, had been able to exploit his police experience to become the number two man in the Soviet government, acquiring the confidence of the fickle dictator as no one else had been able to do. By the beginning of 1953 Beria was First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, a member of the Presidium of the Party Central Committee (the equivalent of the earlier Secretariat), a Marshal of the Soviet Union, and effective chief of the Internal Affairs (MVD) and State Security (MGB) Ministries, although he had relinquished his official positions in these last two bodies upon entering the Politburo in 1946. Through the patronage system he had built Beria managed to oversee the organs and all their variegated operations and troops. But even from this lofty perch he was not without dangerous enemies. Beria's safety was never secure in the Stalinist system, as the leader constantly sought to maintain a balance among his subordinates by creating conflict among them.

However serious the struggles during Stalin's lifetime had been, a much more significant one was begun when, suddenly, on 5 March 1953, Stalin was dead, and the threat of another massive purge disappeared. With Stalin finally out of the way, Beria was now in position to make one final thrust for power. The organs,

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[18] Knight, p. 27

having outstripped Party influence for almost two decades now, albeit under the watchful eye of the tyrant, could logically now take the final step and seize power, or give up its gains and allow the Party to reassume leadership. So convulsive was the death of Stalin to Soviet Russia that the continued existance of the regime was threatened, and the reaction to Beria's play for power may have saved it; "without the secret police there might not have been a succession; the whole system would likely have collapsed".[19] One thing is certain; the actions of Beria compelled the rest of the elite to snap out of its reverie and take aggressive action before it was too late. While no other faction appeared to be as prepared for Stalin's death as the Beria-G. Malenkov alliance, even this duo did not act decisively or particularily artfully.

Succession improvisations occurred with surprising rapidity, and in fact had begun even before Stalin had finally expired. Contrary to Khrushchev's contention that no decisions were taken until after the dictator's death, on the night of 4 March the bureau of the recently enlarged CC Presidium, an eight-member elite, met. This bureau, consisting of Beria, Malenkov, Khrushchev, L. Kaganovich, N. Bulganin, M. Pervukhin, M. Saburov and K. Voroshilov, decided to do away with the larger Presidium and revert to a smaller one, consisting of themselves. The next night an emergency meeting of the Central Committee, the Council of Ministers, and the larger Presidium took place, to confirm this decision and to designate positions within the new leadership. These decisions were of critical importance to the immediate future of the security organs. According to Khrushchev, it was he alone who recognized the danger posed by Beria, and foresaw the events to come. In his memoirs Khrushchev quotes himself in a conversation with Bulganin while watching over the dying Stalin, in which he predicted;

> "He [Beria] will try to make himself Minister of State Security. No matter what happens we can't let him do this...

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[19] Dziak, John J.: Chekisty: A History of the KGB. (Massachussetts: Lexington Books, 1988), p. 133

> it will be the beginning of the end for us. He'll take that post for the purpose of destroying us...we can't let him do it, absolutely no matter what!"[20]

While the content of this conversation is of questionable veracity, we can assume that it was indeed Khrushchev who began to recruit opposition to Beria.

At the plenary session of 5 March, as expected, Beria and Malenkov took the offensive. After Beria nominated Malenkov for the position of chairman of the Council of Ministers, making the latter both Party chief and head of government, Malenkov made the nomination which, in all probability, should have sealed the fate of himself and the rest of the Presidium, when he proposed that the MVD and MGB be united and placed under the leadership of Beria. Although Khrushchev had feared this moment, he states that he remained silent, on the basis that little opposition would have been possible to a notion that seemed to be a compromise on Beria's part.[21] After this Beria nominated Voroshilov to be chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (equivalent to the figurehead post of President of the USSR), which Khrushchev saw as a ploy designed to "make Voroshilov into someone whom he [Beria] could rely on when he started his next round of butchery".[22] Khrushchev himself did not go unscathed, assenting to Beria's recommendation that he "be released from... duties as Secretary of the Moscow Committee"[23], to concentrate solely on CC Secretariat work. Khrushchev's men in the organs were demoted as well at this plenum, as Beria's major opponents shuffled posts. S. Ignat'ev and S. Kruglov were removed from the MGB and MVD chairs respectively, and I. Serov, a Khrushchev man, barely retained his post as deputy of the MVD. Kruglov was allowed to accept a demotion to the position

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[20]Khrushchev, Nikita S.: Khrushchev Remembers, volume 1. Strobe Talbott, ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), p. 319

[21]Khrushchev, p. 324

[22]Khrushchev, p. 324

[23]Khrushchev, p. 324

of deputy of the MVD also, a costly omission for Beria.[24]

Despite the profound changes, by all accounts there was an air of compromise about the decisions taken on 7 March. Although they had made a critical play for power, Malenkov and Beria had allowed several unfriendly personalities to remain on the Central Committee. It was strange that neither Kruglov or Ignat'ev were arrested or shot, which was "a clear departure from the norm for fallen leaders of the organs".[25] Perhaps aware of the public's perception of him as an executioner, Beria took measures to allay the fears of Russians to the prospect of his coming to power. At Stalin's funeral he "indicated an intention to move away from Stalinist policies"[26], rather than offer the expected eulogy of the fallen leader. In particular he stressed the multinational nature of the USSR, as a foretaste of his later efforts to achieve popular approval by restoring nationalist and religious freedoms. As well, Beria hinted at the future dismantling of the system of terror, stating "industrial and collective farm workers as well as the intelligentsia of our country can work peacefully and confidently, knowing full well that the Soviet Government will continuously and with great care protect their rights".[27] While this appeal has appeared to many scholars as a hazardous gamble, it may well have been a "promising, though risky, strategy for consolidating political power".[28]

Despite the inspirational rhetoric, beginning on the night of Stalin's death, security troops became highly visible in Moscow,

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[24]Dziak claims it was Beria's first major error. See p. 133.

[25]Dziak, p. 133

[26]Knight, Amy: Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 182

[27]Beria's speech is transcribed in its entirety in the appendices of Thaddeus Wittlin's biography: Commissar: The Life and Times of Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria. (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1972), pp. 483-488.

[28]Knight, Beria, p. 190

"taking complete control of the city".[29] Beria's justification for this presence to his fellow Presidium members was the recent amnesty for short-term prisoners in the GULag system, a few prisons of which had been completely emptied. The appearance in Moscow of thousands of criminals hence necessitated a 'preservation of order'.[30]

The dimensions of the firepower which Beria commanded at this time were formidable;

> "he owned the Border Troops, the Internal Security Troops, the Kremlin Guards and their dedicated units, the Gulag and Convoy Troops, and the OO's that penetrated the Soviet military. Not counting the regular uniformed police (militia) also under his control, Beria could muster approximately a million well-trained and equipped state security military forces that were completely independent of the Ministry of Defense."[31]

Among the troops controlling Moscow on 5 March were many of the elite security units, including the flagship First and Second Red Banner Dzerzhinsky Motorized Infantry Divisions.

Why Beria did not attempt a coup immediately is a question without a conclusive answer. Certainly, he had the military capacity to seize and hold Moscow in his grip long enough to install himself securely as the head of state, and thus continue the dominance of the security organs over all political interests.[32] It was not only a matter of firepower in the capital; the conditions were even more favourable when it is taken into consideration the awesome network which had been affected by the unification of the MVD and MGB. Included under this aegis were directorates which provided control over the Soviet Union's roads

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[29] Dziak, p. 133

[30] See Medvedev, Roy A. and Medvedev, Zhores A.: Khrushchev: The Years in Power. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 7-8. Thus the earlier amnesty declared by Beria appears to have served a dual purpose; it was both a publicity ploy and an excuse to deploy a significant amount of firepower in Moscow.

[31] Dziak, p. 133.

[32] Khrushchev expressed severally his doubts about "whether Beria was even a true Communist" (see for example Khrushchev, p. 319), thus one can only guess at the direction which he would have taken should he have managed to seize power.

and transport, local police forces, firefighters, and all economic activity.[33] The control of these areas of jurisdiction, let alone the troops themselves, was not exploited to any meaningful degree.

All conjecture of motivation aside, what is known is that Beria sent his troops back to their barracks (the 'monumental error' by one source's estimation[34]) before he had accomplished what most scholars assume was his ultimate goal. The presence of enemies Kruglov and Serov in influential positions within security bureaucracy may offer some explanation for Beria's dispersal of the troops, but there is no evidence to indicate any interference on their part.

Given the chance, Khrushchev, both by his own account and in the estimation of most scholars, worked quickly. He instigated the anti-Beria plot by personally recruiting all the members of the eight-member Presidium except Mikoyan and the offender himself, and did so within three months of Stalin's demise. As well, Khrushchev managed to wrangle the decisive position of First Secretary of the Party from Malenkov within twelve days of the funeral, on 21 March. Thus began what has been called "the fiction of collective leadership".[35]

While he did not succeed in seizing the grand prize, over the months following the funeral Beria did manage to repair some of the damage done to his security apparatus since Ignat'ev's installation as chief in 1951. Having removed the latter from his post, Beria promptly fired Ignat'ev's deputies, M. Riumin and A. Epishev, replacing them with Serov (who was promoted from a lesser police post), B. Kobulov and Kruglov. Poor choices all, yet these were men who owed some allegiance to Beria for his advancement of their careers. As well, several other protégés were promoted to head

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[33]This last area was governed by the EKU, or Economic Directorate, which oversaw all economic decisions and personnel.

[34]See Dziak, p. 134

[35]Deriabin, Peter: Watchdogs of Terror: Russian Bodyguards from the Tsars to the Commissars. (New York: Arlington House, 1972), p. 241

directorates, and Beria purged the Foreign Intelligence directorate, firing its chief and recalling at least two hundred foreign agents to Moscow.[36] The revision was thorough; Beria also made wholesale changes to republic-level MVD agencies and below this level as well. To affect a streamlined and less Stalinist apparatus[37], Beria eschewed the construction units and handed over the supervision of the GULag to the Justice Ministry. He also drew up a list of restrictions for the Presidium's approval on the powers of the security tribunal, the infamous Special Board. These were significant concessions indeed, albeit all designed solely for the acquisition of public support.[38]

Beria was arrested, it is generally agreed, on 25 or 26 June 1953, some nine days after riots occurred in East Germany because of an ill-considered policy announcement, and executed sometime between this date and his trial in December of the same year.[39] Khrushchev had been able to exploit the scandal surrounding this event to consolidate the opposition in the Presidium and convince the group of the need to take action. Malenkov had been convinced earlier of the futility of maintaining loyalty to the doomed man, and Mikoyan and Kaganovich, unknown quantities and quite possibly still Beria men, were left uninformed and out of town, respectively.

The actual circumstances of the arrest are the subject of scholarly debate, but it seems certain that army officials headed

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[36]See Knight, Beria, p. 184

[37]Knight notes that the paring down of security responsibilities was hoped by Beria to indicate a less monolithic, and hence less Stalinist, security administration. See Knight, Beria, p. 184

[38]See Knight, Beria, p. 184

[39]Opinions on the exact date of Beria's death vary widely. While Beria's son Sergo claimed that Beria was summarily executed upon arrest at his home (which would render fallacious all accepted versions of his father's arrest at the Kremlin), and Khrushchev once claimed to have shot Beria personally among his many versions of the story of the arrest, it is generally supposed that Beria was executed well before his trial. This may have been a measure to prevent his getting a message to security forces loyal to him which may have been prepared to take extreme measures to free their chief. The pretext for the arrest was the announcement of a 'new course' of government for East Germany, which created heightened expectations and then rioting in East Berlin.

by Marshal G. Zhukov were called in to offset the perpetual police presence around Beria. There were no qualms among most military leaders about participation, as any loyalty to Beria had largely been eliminated by recent events in Germany, but the dimensions of the army presence in Moscow remain unclear. It is generally accepted that Zhukov, General K. Moskalenko and at least five other generals were present[40], as well as mobile units in the city. It is possible that an entire tank division had occupied Moscow in preparation.[41] Beria was called, unsuspecting, to the Kremlin to a meeting attended by the members of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Party Central Committee. The generals waited in seclusion while Beria was accused, and awaited the signal. After all had spoken, and Beria had argued as best he could on his own behalf, Malenkov was to "sum up and formulate a consensus".[42] According to Khrushchev, Malenkov did not move when his time came, paralysed by the tension of this dangerous moment, and Khrushchev had to stand and propose that Beria be relieved of his duties. Malenkov then recovered enough to push the secret button, which brought in Zhukov ordering 'Hands up!'.[43]

Khrushchev confides that he was far from confident of success in this undertaking, and that the consequences of failure had occurred to him:

> "The Presidium bodyguard was obedient to him [Beria]. His Chekists would be sitting in the next room during the session, and Beria could easily order them to arrest us all and hold us in isolation. We would have been quite helpless because there was a sizeable armed guard in the Kremlin."[44]

Indeed, the generals had to remain with their captive in the

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[40]Khrushchev claims eleven generals were present, while Knight contends that five were at the Kremlin, citing Moskalenko's memoirs. See Knight, Beria, p. 197 and Khrushchev, p. 336.

[41]Beriabin, p. 332

[42]See Khrushchev, p. 337

[43]Khrushchev, p. 338

[44]Khrushchev, p. 336

Kremlin waiting room for several hours in order to sneak Beria out under cover of darkness, all the while fearing that Beria would somehow be able to signal for the aid of his guards. The danger ensued for several days while Beria's forces were 'subdued'. The entire operation had been largely improvisational.[45]

It is possible that an even greater danger had been imminent at this time: Beria's coup attempt.[46] In this context, Kruglov and Serov had become aware sometime before the arrest that Beria would attempt to seize power on 27 June (the following day), and had managed to convince the commander of the Moscow Military District to divert the city troops to Byelorussia during the period in question.[47] Thus Beria's firepower was removed, and thanks to the wire-tap intelligence of the disloyal subordinates and several anxious calls by Marshal Bulganin, the disaster had been averted. The existance of this scenario is not confirmed by all scholars, but the fact remains that Beria's at-large presence at this time was a dangerous prospect, and the arrest could easily have failed had Beria out-guessed his opponents.

The downfall of Beria was indicative of a distinct mindset among the elites in the Soviet Union in this uncertain time. The Party, the government, the army and all the other elements of the Soviet state saw it as paramount that the security organs were weakened and made subordinate to the Party. Never again (or so the general trend suggested) could a career policeman be allowed to hold such power in Soviet Russia.

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The removal and subsequent execution of Beria was accompanied

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[45]For a detailed version of the entire procedure, see Knight, Beria, pp. 198-200.

[46]Deriabin's theory seems to be substantiated by Wittlin, although the latter sets the planned date of the coup on June 19. & Wittlin, pp. 390-392.

[47]See Deriabin, p. 332

by an immediate purge of various agencies and departments stocked with his supporters and protégés. Kruglov and Serov were rewarded for their participation in the plot, with the former being awarded the post of chief of the MGB and the latter that of his assistant. The security organs, it was intended, were to be restructured in such a way so as to ensure that the Party "would not allow the political police to re-emerge as the dominant institution in the Soviet system".[48] Many of the key decisions toward this end supposedly occurred at a Central Committee plenum occurring from 2 to 7 July 1953, a meeting of particular importance for our purposes, more for its lack of substance than anything else.

Among the issues decided at this plenum were "measures to strengthen party leadership of all branches of the state apparatus, ensuring effective control over the work of all organs and agencies".[49] The decree adopted at this plenum was never published in the Soviet Union, but apparently was dictated by Central Committee member D. Shevlyagin to the deputy leader of the Italian Communist Party, Pietro Secchia, in mid-July 1953.[50] Thus the only indication we have of the results of this plenum, outside of vague accounts of it in Soviet party histories, is that published in Italy in 1961, included in Giulio Seniga's Togliatti e Stalin. This account proves to be far from revelatory in the area of specific policy changes, regarding the MVD and MGB or any other area. What is evident in the reproduction is a vague and contradictory critique of past practises, first indirectly criticizing Stalin ("whole industries are backward ... policies and decisions have been formulated without the necessary preliminary study"[51]), coupled with the laying of much of the blame on Beria:

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[48]Knight, KGB, p. 48

[49]Knight, KGB, p. 48

[50]According to R.J. Service, "The Road to the Twentieth Party Congress: An Analysis of the Events Surrounding the Central Committee Plenum of July 1953", in Soviet Studies, 33 no.2(April 1981): 232-245

[51]These are among the criticisms noted by Service, p.236

> "He tried to put the MVD above both party and government. His activity had undermined official policies on collective farms, the non-Russian nationalities and Eastern Europe... since 1919 he had been in the pay of the anti-Soviet Mussavatist organization.[52]

On the subject of the security police there is no specific mention whatsoever, other than charges against Beria's misuse of them.

The campaign for a return to 'Soviet legality', which can be defined more or less, as we have seen, as the rule of the Party, commenced immediately after the arrest in one rather predictable guise: the purge. On 7 July Beria's appointees B. Kobulov and S. Goglidze were expelled from candidate membership in the Central Committee, S. Ignat'ev was reinstated as organ chief after having been removed by Beria, and Marshal Zhukov was rewarded with full membership in the CC. The Party bureaucracy in Georgia was purged extensively over the next several months, and the police apparatus was rid of those known to be Beria associates. It has been pointed out, however, that "these were not Stalinist-type purges, in that they did not involve widespread arrests and executions".[53] They entailed at most imprisonment and most often firing and expulsion from the Party. In the months to come, however, former Beria henchman V.Abakumov and Riumin would be executed for their crimes under Stalin, as the new leadership continued to emphasize the guilt of individuals rather than entire institutions or large groups. When Beria's trial was concluded, *in camera*, he and six of his accomplices were said to have been executed, although they were likely long dead by this time. As well, it is widely assumed that many more than six of Beria's cronies were executed summarily in the immediate aftermath of the arrest. Further arrests and executions of 'Beria men' continued for several years.[54]

The security apparatus had its jurisdiction curtailed, but not

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[52] See Service, p. 238

[53] Knight, Beria, p. 215

[54] For example, M. Bagirov and several associates were executed in April 1956 for crimes committed under Beria as the leadership of the Azeri MVD.

radically in view of Beria's earlier shrinkage of the scope of its operations. The Ministry of Party Controls was expanded to ensure its ability to oversee the organs. At the same time the border and internal troops were transferred, temporarily, to the Ministry of Defense.[55] Consistent with Beria's reforms, all economic responsibility was transferred to the economic ministries, as were road and highway operations transferred to the Ministry of Transport. Many more prisoners were released from the GULag, and these camps were reformed to some degree.[56] In September the Special Board of the MVD was abolished by an unpublished decree, thus transferring judicial power back to its rightful owner, the Ministry of Justice. This was an important move, in that it seemed to imply that the Criminal Code would now take precedence over arbitrary arrest and punishment. The special decrees on terrorism enacted by Stalin after Kirov's assassination were repealed, and new departments in the Chief Prosecutor's office were established, to supervise the courts, the prisons and all police actions. Finally, the influence of the organs was curtailed further through their increased exclusion from important bodies of the government and Party. By 1956, at the Twentieth Party Congress, one observer claimed that Serov was the only "explicit and bona fide secret police official" elected to the Central Committee.[57]

As will be seen, the measures of the government fell far short of eliminating the security organs, or even reducing them to a minimal level of influence. The goal of the new government, largely run by men with intimate prior connection to the organs, was fulfillment of the dual responsibility of (a) ensuring that no personality as ambitious or bold as Beria would ever be in control of the agency again, and (b) ensuring the survival of the 'collective leadership' by bringing the organs under Party control.

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[55]See Wolin and Slusser, p. 28

[56]Wolin and Slusser, p. 28

[57]B. Meissner, in Wolin and Slusser, p. 60n

Internal affairs and the security apparatus were split into two bodies once again in March 1954, with the establishment of the KGB, now a committee, under Serov. Serov was given a seat on the Council of Ministers, while Kruglov remained MVD chief. This division was a controlling measure rather than a reinstatement, and occurred in the midst of continuing legal reform. Other changes to the law in the pursuance of the abolition of terror included the following:

> "military courts were deprived of all jurisdiction over civilians except for espionage...the law permitting punishment of relations of one who deserts to a foreign country from the armed forces was abolished...[former Chief Prosecutor] Vyshinsky's doctrine that confessions have special evidentiary force in cases of counter-revolutionary crimes was repudiated...Vyshinsky's doctrine that the burden of proof shifts to the accused in cases of counter-revolutionary crimes was also repudiated...the law on so-called 'counter-revolutionary crimes' was slightly narrowed and made a little less vague..."[58]

As well, a thorough re-examination of all cases of persons convicted of counterrevolutionary crimes was undertaken, and "the overwhelming majority of such persons" were released and rehabilitated.[59]

At first glance, it appears that the resolve of the government to both assuage the public and safeguard their existence by downgrading security organ status was achieved with the reforms and legislation that followed Beria's arrest. While it cannot be denied that the transfer of many peripheral responsibilities reduced the scope of security organ influence considerably, the legal reforms proved to be not nearly so debilitating as they might appear.

Firstly, the abolition of the Special Board was not quite so absolute a reversal as it seemed, as it did not entail the

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[58] Berman, Harold J.: Justice in the USSR: An Interpretation of Soviet Law. Revised edition. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 71

[59] Berman, p. 71

rescission of the MVD's power to impose exile and detention at will. As one source notes, the "devious and to say the least, indirect" announcement of the abolition left open the possibility that "the powers of the Ministry [of Internal Affairs] may be exercised by the Minister himself, or that the jurisdiction of the Special Board may have been transferred to the Committee on State Security".[60] When the Special Board was abolished no supporting or clarifying law was passed by the Supreme Soviet, the sole law-enacting body under the contemporary constitution. In fact, the Act of 5 September 1934 granting quick and extra-legal punishment of 'persons considered socially dangerous' was retained, and probably existed until the end of the Soviet era.[61]

Secondly, the amnesty of political and other prisoners of the GULag system was nowhere near as substantive as it appeared. If vast numbers of prisoners were released in three amnesties in the spring of 1954 and September 1955, these were hardly worthy of Evgeniia Ginzburg's praise to the effect that "the great Leninist truth has prevailed in our country and party".[62] The latter amnesty offers an example of the illusory nature of these measures, ostensibly excusing supposed collaborators under German occupation during World War II. According to a camp inmate at the time;

> "the amnesty...would have practically emptied the prison camps. Therefore, a few days after the proclamation of the amnesty a reservation was announced: all prisoners sentenced under Paragraph 58-11 (of the Criminal Code), which covered group activities, were declared outside the scope of the amnesty. This made the whole offer a farce...When the amnesty was announced, the camp guards were at a loss. Once the reservation had been published, however, they realized that everything was to remain exactly as it always had been, and indeed as it always would be."[63]

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[60] Gsovski, Vladimir: "Correspondence", in Problems of Communism volume 5, no. 3(May-June 1956): p. 52

[61] Act of Supreme Soviet quoted by Gsovski, p. 52

[62] Ginzburg, Evgenia S.: Into the Whirlwind. (London: Collins/Harvill, 1967), p. 316. Ginzburg concludes this account of her own experience with this expression of hope.

[63] G. Doberauer, quoted in Wolin and Slusser, p. 61n

Although many of the prisoners would eventually receive their amnesties, the apparent change in direction of government was perhaps more a smokescreen than a drastic reform. The various changes in administrative structure in the sphere of security operations gave the appearance of a revitalized and more beneficent Party, but in fact the status quo did not change to any great degree. A contemporary analyst commented that "the criminal laws have been modified only slightly to reduce severity. Even the limited modification has been offset by a few increases in severity".[64]

Once cognizant of the immateriality of the legal reforms in the area of security, it becomes easier to discern that Khrushchev, who took upon himself the leading role in harnessing the organs, was not overly concerned with lessening their prestige or putting real constraints on their power. While it was definitely a priority that the organs not be allowed to follow an independent policy again, the leadership obviously placed importance on maintaining the police apparatus as a powerful source of support. In short, it would be the same relationship which had existed until Stalin tried to destroy the Party - one of close personal ties between government and police leadership. It must be noted that Khrushchev and Malenkov each had lengthy associations with the organs in their pasts, including active roles in the Great Purge. Khrushchev's friend Serov was a career policeman since 1939, and was also tainted by participation in Stalinist terror, having supervised the mass deportations of North Caucasian nationalities in 1943-1944. Khrushchev reveals much about his general attitude towards the group of security policemen which had just emerged from the horrors of Stalinism in his reminiscences about Serov's character: "Serov is an honest man. If there are a few dubious things about him, as there are about all Chekists, then let's just

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[64] Hazard, John N., in Wolin and Slusser, p. 61n

say he was a victim of Stalin's policy."[65] Clearly the desire for continuity that was expressed by the new government was to be extended to the personnel of the security organs as well.

With a personal friend as security chief, and enjoying as well amicable relations with the army after the successful Beria plot, Khrushchev began to manoevre towards consolidating his position of power. Playing the familiar game of patronage, he managed to install several protégés in prominent KGB roles. K. Lunev and V. Ustinov, both assistants from the Moscow City Party Committee days, were made deputy chairmen of the KGB in late 1954, the latter also becoming chief of the Kremlin guards. By February 1955 Khrushchev was secure enough in his position as Party leader to have Malenkov removed as head of government, through the latter's resignation. Towards this end, Khrushchev managed to forge an alliance with Molotov, a strident Leninist, when Malenkov chose to adopt a rather dubious ideological stance. While Khrushchev and Malenkov battled over agricultural policy, Malenkov also favoured a rather 'soft' stance on foreign policy, based on a 'futility of war' doctrine. Khrushchev joined Molotov, who had the support of military leaders in this matter, in favouring a much more aggressive anti-west stance, and turned the debate into a huge defeat for Malenkov. When the latter, also threatened with the exposure of his role in the Leningrad Affair, accepted defeat and resigned, Bulganin assumed the role of Premier. Although Khrushchev's hard-line foreign policy would prove to be short-lived (and for this reason so would his alliance with Molotov), its adoption here produced the demotion of his chief rival for predominance, and set the stage for his dramatics at the Twentieth Party Congress.

Khrushchev's famous speech of 24 February 1956 came at a time when he had not yet managed to create his own one-man rule, but was in active pursuance of this goal. His opposition in this quest consisted of Malenkov who, while no longer Premier, retained

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[65] Khrushchev, p. 338

considerable influence in the Politburo, and Mikoyan and Molotov who were less than enthusiastic about Khrushchev's awkward 'Virgin Lands' agricultural policy. This opposition would eventually be purged the next year, but it was the gamble at the finale of the Congress which would pay dividends in the form of universal recognition of Khrushchev as the predominant Soviet official.

While the effects of this speech are not of particular relevance to our purpose, certain elements of it reveal that Khrushchev intended to rehabilitate the image of the organs in the public eye while at the same time bringing it under control. He began by denouncing crimes committed by the secret police under Stalin and Beria, which was a devastating blow, but Khrushchev consistently put the blame on individuals rather than on the organs. He reiterated his faith in the general virtue of security officials; "we know that the overwhelming majority of our Chekists consist of honest officials devoted to our common cause and we trust them".[66] The First Secretary went on to point out the harmful nature of the distrust expressed by "some comrades" towards the post-Stalinist security organs, and concluded this segment of his speech by stating the need for maintenance and even strengthening of the organs in view of increased opposition from the imperialist world.[67] His basic message can be paraphrased as follows:

> "[henceforth] the security and law enforcement agencies, purged of Stalinist excesses and subordinated to the collective leadership of a revived Leninist party, rather than to one man, would spare and protect the innocent and would punish the guilty in accordance with both the letter and spirit of the law."[68]

Which laws were to be obeyed remained in question. Khrushchev also claimed that the police, courts and security police had been

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[66]Knight, KGB, p. 53

[67]See Barghoorn, Frederick C.: "The Security Police", in Interest Groups in Soviet Politics, G. Skilling and F. Griffiths, eds. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p. 106 and also Knight, KGB, p. 53

[68]Barghoorn, p. 106.

replenished with new personnel, although the post-Stalin purges in the security arena "did not extend much further than Beria and his allies, leaving the majority of officials untouched".[69] Evidence of the widespread presence of Stalinist security officials during this period and after is offered in a speech by Serov in December 1957 stating that "newcomers are working with old, experienced workers to whom the Central Committee and the Party accorded their complete trust and support".[70]

A final note on the contents of the 'Secret Speech' centres around Khrushchev's denunciation of the amendment to the Criminal Code of 1 December 1934 (see above). Khrushchev labelled this decree as "the main legal instrument of mass repressions and brutal violations of socialist legality",[71] thus implying that its abrogation would logically be one of the first priorities of the government in the future. But not only was this amendment not rescinded, but it was actually invoked by Khrushchev, both before and after the speech.[72] The arrest of Beria had had no other legal basis than this infamous decree, and was published as such. The following arrests of Abakumov, Riumin, and numerous Beria men in both the organs and the Georgian Party were based on fabricated charges as well, and the later arrest of M. Bagirov in April 1956 (see note above) occurred under the procedure of the same decree, some two months after Khrushchev's speech.[73] It appears 'Soviet legality' would be comprised of nothing more than a covert version of Stalinist legality.

We have seen that the history of the security organs to this

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[69]Knight, KGB, p. 52

[70]See Knight, KGB, p. 52

[71]See Wolfe, Bertram D.: Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost: Text, Background and Meaning of Khrushchev's Secret Report to the Twentieth Congress on the Night of February 24-25, 1956. (New York: Praeger, 1957), p. 191

[72]Wolfe, p. 191

[73]Wolfe, p. 191

point was basically distinguished by a certain continuity, even through the upheaval following Stalin's death. The changes and reductions in the scope of organ influence instituted by Khrushchev were firstly rather superficial in nature, and secondly rooted in reforms suggested by Beria in the few months between Stalin's death and his own demise. Attempts to bring the security apparatus under the rule of law were largely flouted even as they were introduced, although the Party had made it clear that it would hereby reassume predominance in the Soviet Union. Generally, however, the structure and level of influence of the security organs had not changed significantly.

Chapter 2
Khrushchev Succumbs

Nikita Khrushchev is characterized by the majority of scholars, whether favourable or censorious in their judgement, as a leader who was genuinely concerned about the future of the regime. Toward this end, he took measures that he thought would provide stability for the Soviet system in years to come, and among these undertakings were efforts to regulate the two problematic areas which are central to our focus: the role of the security police and the process of succession. That Khrushchev was aware of many of the shortcomings of the Soviet regime is definite and his efforts at reform are truly remarkable in their dimension and quantity. However, these well-publicized reforms often brought minimal concrete results, as their meaning was often negated by immediate countermeasures or a lack of consideration for existing circumstances. The striking regularity of this inefficacy is one of the dominant themes of Khrushchev's tenure as leader.

As noted, the method by which Khrushchev attempted to control the security organs was twofold; security personnel were to be dominated by Party officials at the highest levels, thus ensuring that the organs did not turn on the Party as they had earlier, and the attempt was made to eschew forever the rule of terror by creating legislative restrictions on the power and autonomy of the organs. Rather decisive measures were taken in both of these areas in December of 1958.

In the midst of the much-publicized process of reforming the GULag system (after 1956 known as the GUITK system) and eliminating

imprisonment for loosely defined political crimes,[1] Khrushchev introduced a new criminal code which appeared considerably more liberal than its predecessor. The new code made no provision for political offences, thus eliminating them as a category. However, this was more a change of terminology than of policy.[2] Numerous 'crimes against the state' were listed in the new code, including the usual charges of espionage, terrorism and sabotage, as well as the rather indistinct charge of 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda', "a vague concept which the KGB and the courts could twist as they wished".[3] Other crimes included 'slandering the Soviet state or social order' which was punishable by up to seven years in prison, and again open to interpretation, as it made all complaints about Soviet life subject to possible prosecution.[4]

This endorsement of disguised political oppression came to be the norm in the new anti-terror era. The various republics of the Soviet Union began in 1957 to implement punishments of imprisonment and exile for the crime of being an 'anti-social parasitical element', which could be pronounced by bodies including "newly instituted comrades' courts, factory meetings, and other popular assemblages lacking judicial status".[5] When corrective labour camps were abolished in 1956, they were simply replaced by 'colonies', which may have been at the same locations as their predecessors. In addition, while the KGB had relinquished nominal control of the GULAG, it retained supervisory status through the

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[1] In January 1959 Khrushchev boasted at the Twenty-first Party Congress that "there are no political prisoners in the prisons of our country at present". While this statement is not verifiable, Berman was told in 1959 by then Assistant Prosecutor-General P. Kudryavtsev that less than 18,000 politicals remained in the camps. See Hingley, Ronald: The Russian Secret Police. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 231.

[2] Hingley, p. 232

[3] Hingley, p. 232

[4] Hingley, p. 233

[5] Hingley, p. 233

ongoing informer system.[6]

While determined to control the security organs, Khrushchev was not at all intending to destroy their potency in Soviet society; the maintenance of a strong security organ was a centrepiece of Khrushchev's government, just as it had always been under his predecessors. However, this presence was difficult to justify now by a regime which had repudiated terror. Serov himself conceded that "there are no domestic reasons to keep the apparatus of the state security organs on alert, as was the case in the first years of the Soviet regime".[7] The justification for maintaining domestic security status basically as it had been, then, was the professed need to protect the Soviet Union against the threat of internal subversion from foreign enemies. Vigilance (*bditel'nost*) became a catchword for police campaigns, and was a recurring theme in articles published by Propaganda and Agitation Department officials.[8] Of course, foreign enemies undermining Soviet society from within would necessitate active security countermeasures; Khrushchev stated in a speech to construction workers "the enemy hopes that we will weaken our vigilance and weaken our organs of state security. No, this will never happen". Serov chimed in; "It would be naive to suppose that our enemies will now give up their efforts to harm us in every way... we must therefore do everything to raise the revolutionary vigilance of the Soviet people and strengthen the state security organs".[9]

In 1960 a new RSFSR Code of Criminal Procedure was adopted, outlining regulations for KGB investigations. Procedures such as night interrogations and torture were prohibited, and all agents were placed under the supervision of the Soviet Procuracy. However, the organs maintained their considerable control over

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[6]Hingley, p. 233

[7]Knight, KGB, p. 53

[8]Knight, KGB, p. 53

[9]Knight, KGB, p. 53

society despite the new limitations, by adapting their methods.[10] Through the use of "extra-judicial repression", and managing to circumvent legal process, the KGB was able to impose "forced exile, various forms of harassment and, most important, confinement of dissidents in psychiatric hospitals".[11] This last practise, the conditions of which were well-documented by Solzhenitsyn in his novel The First Circle, became common in the years to come for dissident intellectuals, and put the offenders in a new category, outside the reach of criminal law. The use of harmful drugs to coerce and torture these prisoners was not uncommon.[12] A new technique of non-violent interrogation, "psychological persuasion", was adopted by the KGB in the early 1960's, involving the application of "the classical Pavlovian approach of alternating humiliation and decency".[13] Eduard Kuznetsov in his Prison Diaries describes this sort of treatment, first being given assurances of no more than twelve years for his attempted defection, then being threatened with the death penalty if he did not cooperate. He recognized that "these tactics are not flashes of 'pique': each step is part of a carefully calculated and co-ordinated plan of campaign".[14] Numerous handbooks appeared at this time outlining techniques for psychological manipulation of prisoners.[15]

Thus procedural reforms that were instituted did not prove to be particularily binding or comprehensive. It cannot be said that Khrushchev had taken any legal measure which ensured that the organs would not again turn on the Party should they fall into the

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[10] Knight, Amy: "The Powers of the Soviet KGB", in Survey (Great Britain), 1980 25(3): p. 148

[11] Knight, ibid, p. 148

[12] Knight, ibid, p. 148

[13] Knight, ibid, p. 148

[14] Kuznetsov, Eduard: Prison Diaries. H. Spier, trans. (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), p. 46

[15] Two such handbooks, as cited by Knight, include Ratinov, A.R.: *Subednaya Psikhologiya dlya Sledovatelei*. (Moscow, 1967), and Dalov, A.V.: *Osnovy Psikhologicheskogo Analiza na Predvaritel'nom Sledstvii*. (Moscow, 1973).

hands of an ambitious chief. It was clear that the rule of law was not yet rooted in Soviet Russia and that "nobody can guarantee that it [a recurrance of terror] won't happen".[16] Bolshevik ideology still held sway, as was aptly iterated by Deputy Procurator P. Kudryavtsev to a reporter:

> "Do not forget that we have in the Soviet Union the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that law must serve the state authority... Compulsion may be necessary. The Special Board of the MVD was necessary in its time, in the late 'thirties. Only it was later abused. The Cheka, which Lenin introduced, was entirely justified. No revolution is bloodless... If it becomes necessary we will restore the old methods. But I think it will not be necessary."[17]

In the area of personnel Khrushchev had in March 1958 eliminated Marshal Bulganin as Premier and thus managed to assume the same dominant position as Stalin had, occupying the post of both Party leader and head of government. In December of the same year he replaced the career policeman Serov with a Party official with no police background, Aleksandr Shelepin. Peter Deriabin, a former KGB agent himself (section head in Vienna), postulates with good reason that this move "probably cost him his leadership".[18] While the removal of Serov rid the organs of a chief handicapped by his Stalinist past, it also deprived Khrushchev of an intensely loyal supporter. It was an inexplicable decision:

> "Why Khrushchev violated such a prime prescription of Soviet power, by replacing a trustworthy and obedient security chief for one who could betray him, still needs an answer. But it may be that the little man was not so astute as he was touted to be."[19]

Shelepin represented a fresh start for the KGB in that he was first and foremost a politician, and thus equipped to handle the

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[16] Berman, Justice in the USSR, p. 87

[17] Berman, ibid, p. 87-88

[18] Deriabin, p. 245

[19] Deriabin, p. 245

responsibilities of the 'changed' KGB, which Serov "was unfitted to deal with".[20] Shelepin rose from the ranks of the Komsomol, or Communist Youth, where he was secretary from 1943 until his promotion to the KGB. A dedicated Party man and at face value a Khrushchev admirer, Shelepin in his first speech, at the Twenty-First Congress of Jan.-Feb. 1959, reiterated Khrushchevian themes of security reform:

> "In the last few years... revolutionary legality has been fully restored, and those guilty of of its violation punished... a fundamental restriction of the competence of the KGB organizations has been decreed... Punitive functions have in fact been greatly restricted throughout the country and will remain restricted in the future..."[21]

The new security chief also pointed to the new focus on enemies acting from without of the Soviet Union, rather than the Russian citizenry itself. However, this representation of a new, liberal KGB was nonsense; "Shelepin accorded a new - but fraudulent - look to the KGB. And the same - doubtlessly purposeful - misunderstanding at first applied to the new penal codes..."[22]

With Shelepin was reborn the tradition begun by Lenin of employing Party functionaries as security chiefs who were then allowed to accede to senior posts of government, a trend which culminated with the rise of Andropov to the leadership position in 1982. In mid-1958 Shelepin and a colleague, M. Mironov, had discussed with Khrushchev and Brezhnev (a Presidium member since June 1957) the possibility of the KGB *resuming* the role it had played under Dzerzhinsky in the early days. After being promoted to his new position Shelepin with this same colleague produced a report which, while praising the effectiveness of Serov's work as a policeman, noted that the KGB under the latter had "failed to prevent the growth of undesirable political trends either at home

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[20] Levytsky, Boris: The Uses of Terror: The Soviet Secret Service, 1917-1990. H. Prehler, trans. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971), p. 268

[21] Levytsky, p. 269-270

[22] Deriabin, p. 245

or among anticommunists abroad".[23] Shelepin advocated a greater role in political agitation for the KGB both at home and abroad, "concerned with positive, creative political activity under the direction of the party leadership".[24] Disinformation was the name given to the policy, and it became manifest in January 1959 in the form of a new sub-directorate, Department D. More important than the new intelligence department however was the return of the organs to active participation in policy-making.

Serov for his part was moved to the head of the GRU, the military intelligence agency. This demotion was linked to the arrest of a British-American agent P. Popov, but as Dziak notes could not have entailed complicity in any serious act of treason:

> "If Serov were truly disgraced he would have been fired, imprisoned or executed. This was, after all, a bona fide hostile intelligence penetration. Thousands of Soviets earlier had been executed on the basis of phony, trumped-up cases."[25]

More than likely Serov was moved because the scandal necessitated the removal of the old GRU chief, and afforded an opportunity to rid the organs of an old Stalinist. A contributory factor may also have been what another contemporary double agent, D. Penkovsky, called "the ingrate nature of Khrushchev's character".[26] Khrushchev was relentless in destroying his closest allies after they had served him well. Serov eventually met with disgrace, in 1963 when the aforementioned Penkovsky was arrested and Serov was bounced from the Party in the ensuing purge of the GRU.

Shelepin himself did not remain as security chief for long; in November 1961 he was promoted to become a Secretary of the Central Committee, and replaced by another Komsomol apparatchik, V.

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[23] Golitsyn, Anatoliy: New Lies for Old: The Communist Strategy of Deception and Disinformation. (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), p. 47

[24] Golitsyn, p. 48

[25] Dziak, p.147

[26] Dziak, p. 146

Semichastny. As had been the case with Dzerzhinsky and Beria, Shelepin maintained de facto control over the organs even after his promotion through his ally and longtime subordinate Semichastny. Among Shelepin's many duties in his new position was the handling of 'para-military problems', "which suggested that he was still supervising the administrative organs, that is the police".[27] One source contended that "Semichastny was only a party functionary who had no say in the political direction to be taken by the security service and was responsible only for the 'quality' of its work".[28]

Shelepin's arrival in the security arena was followed by a general flow of officials from the ranks of the Komsomol to positions with the organs. This was consistent with the aims of the ruling elite, as these were all career Party men. The increase in Komsomol influence was dramatic:

> "The majority of professional 'Chekists' were removed and their posts, sometimes equivalent to the rank of a general, were given to comparatively young men from the Moscow and oblast Komsomol organization. Oblast and raion Komsomol committee members were entrusted with setting up KGB administrations at the oblast level."[29]

It appears that Semichastny as well was promoted largely due to Shelepin's recommendation and his friendship with Khrushchev's son-in-law, rather than because of his organizational acumen.[30] To compensate for the new chief's intellectual shortcomings, an experienced and largely apolitical Deputy Chairman was appointed, N. Zakarov. The leadership of the organs was now void of any loyalty to Khrushchev.

If there had been any meaningful new restrictions placed on the Soviet police in Khrushchev's era, it was at the Internal Affairs level. The MVD was a readier target for criticism in that

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[27]Tatu, Michel: Power in the Kremlin: From Khrushchev to Kosygin. H. Katel, trans. (New York: Viking, 1969), p. 198n

[28]Levytsky, p. 271

[29]Medvedev and Medvedev, p. 40

[30]See Deriabin, p. 248

it was comprised mainly of domestic uniformed police, and was not the multi-faceted, international organization that the KGB was.[31] MVD operations were downscaled considerably during Khrushchev's leadership, beginning in 1957 when the border troops it had gained control of from the MGB in 1953 were returned under the aegis of security. Among the 'humiliating' blows to MVD prestige that followed were "being fragmented into Republic MVDs (1960) with no national ministry; [and] redesignation as Republic MOOPs (Ministries for the Maintenance of Public Order) in 1962 with no national ministry".[32] This dimunition of the role of the uniformed state police agency rather than that of the executor of the regime's will was later practised by both Andropov and Gorbachev in their anticorruption campaigns as well.[33]

Khrushchev had supervised an extensive review of Soviet law, which, although still vague and nonbinding, did by 1960 demand that arrests were not carried out without cause. However, when the KGB began to be earnestly rehabilitated in 1961, his effort to place restrictions on the organs "began to reverse itself".[34] The organs' jurisdiction in criminal investigations began to expand, most significantly by an amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure in June 1961. Article 126 of the code was amended to allow the organs simultaneous jurisdiction with the State Procuracy in investigating a wide range of crimes: disclosure of state secrets, loss of documents containing state secrets, smuggling, unlawful departure abroad and unlawful entry into the USSR, violations of the rules for international flights, violation of the rules for currency transactions, divulgence of military secrets,

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[31] Dziak, p. 140

[32] Dziak, p. 140

[33] Dziak, p. 141

[34] Knight, KGB, p. 60

and concealment or failure to report a crime.[35] The jurisdiction for these crimes, which were defined as of the 'state secret' variety, reintroduced to the organs access to all government records and files. As seen above, this was the prerogative which had facilitated the destruction of the Party earlier at the hands of the security apparatus.

The jurisdiction of the Procuracy was further infringed upon in April 1963 when the MVD, at this time suffering continual degradation, was granted the right to investigate many economic crimes as part of Khrushchev's campaign to eliminate this problem. While this did not rehabilitate the MVD to earlier levels of prestige, it did bring about some conflict between the MVD and KGB over jurisdiction. Judging by the adulation being heaped upon the KGB at the time, which included the circulation of numerous publications by KGB officials and nostalgic biographies of Dzerzhinsky, there was little danger of a serious challenge to the KGB from the downscaled MVD.

The claim has been made that Shelepin, for whom a new position was created in the Central Committee, was himself responsible for the KGB rehabilitation campaign.[36] This would make some sense, as the campaign really began only after he had been promoted to the Central Committee. There is evidence of considerable autonomy enjoyed by Shelepin as a result of Khrushchev's inexplicable faith in the integrity of the former security chief. In being allowed to appoint his personal assistant as his successor to head the KGB, Shelepin gained the ability to assume a position not unlike that which Beria had enjoyed under Stalin, or Dzerzhinsky under Lenin. Despite all his efforts to the contrary, Khrushchev left open the possibility that an ambitious official with de facto control over the security organs could turn these organs against the leadership. As Beria had, Shelepin possessed exclusive access (among the CC) to

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[35] Knight, KGB, p. 60

[36] Sayer, A: 'The Noble Chekists', in Bulletin of the Institute for the Study of the USSR, 22, no. 3(March 1965): p. 21

all security information, and could direct through Semichastny exactly which details of these data were channelled to Khrushchev. Beria had exploited this advantage to prevent Stalin from finding a reason to eliminate him, but against a more benign leader, Shelepin was able to act with greater impunity and aggression. Given the fact that Shelepin felt no loyalty to the leader, Khrushchev had lost what Stalin had always managed to maintain - control over, and thus support of, the organs.

During the years 1960 to 1964 Khrushchev made several key foreign policy blunders which are largely beyond the scope of this paper, but which solidified opposition to his one-man rule. Having eliminated the lynchpins of his support in the military and security arenas by his own hand, Khrushchev proceeded to transform blithe acceptance by many officials into rooted antipathy through hasty decisions and unpopular policy choices. The U2 Affair of 1959, ongoing Sino-Soviet hostility, and the Cuban missile fiasco of 1962 did considerable damage to Khrushchev's image among the elite at home, and marked the end of the leader's dabbling in foreign policy matters.

Domestically, his behaviour was no less erratic. After refusing to allow Boris Pasternak to accept his Nobel prize in 1958, Khrushchev assented to the publication of Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, which caused more of a global furor than could possibly have been foreseen by or comfortable for the Soviet government. Policies generally took the form of crash programs, "often ill-considered and inadequately prepared"[37], including the unpopular decentralization of industry and the 'virgin lands' agricultural scheme. The rejection of Stalinism lost momentum after the initial wave following the Twentieth Congress, and came to be embodied by Khrushchev alone. Many actors behind the scenes were not nearly so keen on eschewing the past, and were aware of Khrushchev's increasing isolation.

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[37]Conquest, Robert: Russia After Khrushchev. (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 110

the missile crisis, and now led a charge against the ongoing reorganization of the Party. To offset this challenge, Khrushchev brought into the Presidium two members of his 'Ukrainian team', younger and supposedly reform-minded protégés of the leader. The appointment in June 1963 of Brezhnev and N. Podgorny looks like a rather foolish move in hindsight, but made perfect sense at the time; both owed their careers to Khrushchev.

There is little doubt that Khrushchev had been deeply aware of the problem of succession in the Soviet system, and had given it considerable thought. One source makes the claim that Khrushchev did not fall from power at all but intentionally handed it over to his chosen successors, citing evidence that Khrushchev had begun to deal with the succession problem in 1961.[42] In a speech at the Twenty-second Congress, Khrushchev spoke at length about the need for a collective leadership:

> "It is impossible to permit the inception and development of instances when the merited prestige of an individual may assume forms in which he fancies that everything is permissible to him and that he no longer has need of the collective."[43]

If indeed Khrushchev deliberately stepped down, the primary evidence lies in the lack of indication of any opposition on his part and the fact that "it was his team that continued, without significant changes, to dominate the Soviet leadership".[44]
More likely Khrushchev took steps to solve the problem, but did not achieve this goal, and may have hastened his fall through these preparations.[45] While Khrushchev had spoken as early as 1959 about the need to designate a successor[46], this does not indicate that

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[42]Golitsyn, p. 201

[43]Golitsyn, p. 386n

[44]Golitsyn, p. 203

[45]Rush, Myron: Political Succession in the USSR. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 116

[46]In a conversation with Averell Harriman; see Rush, Political Succession, p. 116n

he had one in mind, or that he came to favour the idea of a single successor.

The majority of Khrushchev's policies were oriented toward long-term results, entailing sacrifices in the present that were highly unpopular. A primary goal was to ensure the hegemony of the Party over all other factions, including individual personalities. Toward this end he introduced a rotation of officials, legislating at the 22nd Congress that no less than one quarter of the members elected to the Central Committee at each regular election be new.

As to the naming of actual successors, Kozlov may have been Khrushchev's choice as his heir until the former's heart attack in 1963 rendered him an invalid.[47] In Khrushchev's rotational system, the reaction to this loss was to bring Brezhnev, now the nominal head of state as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, back into prominence in the Party. Brezhnev returned to the CC Secretariat after a three-year absence, and by holding two key positions appeared to be the most likely candidate for succession. At the same time, Podgorny was promoted to the Secretariat, creating "a new trend... with Khrushchev, the dictator; Brezhnev, the heir presumptive; and Podgorny, the counter heir".[48]

While this scenario is questionable in at least one area - Kozlov, a bitter opponent of Khrushchev, was an unlikely choice as successor - it does reveal that Khrushchev was definitely striving for a configuration which would allow for a smooth transition to a new leadership. Where he fell short was in the CC Secretariat, the real centre of power, where the various members were divided into opposing factions. Khrushchev, as the enlightened dictator who would hand power over to a collective leadership, could only unify the Secretariat by gathering power therein in the hands of the successor. The reason he did not do this may have been that he was unwilling to concentrate power in one man's hands this way, but it

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[47]Rush, Political Succession, p. 136

[48]Rush, Political Succession, p. 137

is also evidence that he had no intention of stepping down when he did. Had he completed preparing the succession, there would have been no choice but to step aside.[49]

In searching for the mechanism which would extirpate the need for any KGB presence in future successions, Khrushchev ignored the potential for betrayal in the present, and fell victim to a coup which may well have been initiated by the KGB. The turning of the tide against the leader was reflected in, and indicated by, the activities of the organs.

Soviet intelligence had been shamed somewhat by the aforementioned Penkovsky scandal of May 1963, which illustrated the high level of western infiltration of Russian security services. For obvious reasons KGB leaders had always been against rapprochement with the West as Khrushchev had advocated - it was antithetical to their raison d'etre - and now they had suffered the first humiliating defeat of the new 'reformed' era. Shelepin and Semichastny began to follow their own agenda. A campaign to undermine Khrushchev's detente took shape in the latter months of 1963, beginning with the October arrest of Frederick Barghoorn. A visiting Yale University professor and leading American specialist in Soviet affairs, Barghoorn was arrested and imprisoned on the basis of what he calls "fabricated and totally unsupported charges of espionage".[50] He was held for some time, until 12 November, when he was released and deported after personal intervention on his behalf by President Kennedy. Indeed, this affair threatened to "wreck Soviet-American cultural intercourse"[51], until Barghoorn was suddenly released by the KGB. Khrushchev had been helpless as this

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[49]Rush is of the opinion that Khrushchev favoured the idea of a single successor, but there is ample evidence that Khrushchev was preparing a future of collective leadership for the USSR, as has been discussed above. Rush does agree with this researcher, however, that Khrushchev purposely avoided completing the preparations for succession. See Rush, Political Succession, pp. 138-139.

[50]Barghoorn, p. 114

[51]Hingley, p. 240

scandal ensued, as Barghoorn was being held on charges for which the KGB had sole jurisdiction.

The next serious incident which appeared to have no other purpose than to undermine detente and give the appearance that Khrushchev was not fully in control occurred with the infamous mustard gas attack on a German diplomat on 6 September, 1964.[52] In the context of Khrushchev's effort to improve relations with Bonn, and shortly after his rehabilitation of the national group of Volga Germans, West German security specialist Horst Schwerkmann was injected with mustard gas while he attended a service at a monastery in Zagorsk. The attack destroyed all possibility for the signing of a trade pact with Germany, which was scheduled to occur just days later. As well, this assault very nearly took the life of the German official, and prompted Khrushchev to both distance himself from the act and condemn the perpetrators; "Those who indulge in such actions are trying to undermine the good relations between our two countries".[53] It was clearly a KGB operation.

A third incident occurred only days later, on 28 September, when fifteen plain-clothes agents burst into a hotel room in Khabarovsk and proceeded to harass one British and three American military attachés. Their bags were searched and their travel documents confiscated, prompting protests from the western governments. Khrushchev was compelled to reject these protests, to maintain the appearance of cohesion in the Soviet administration, but was clearly embarrassed once again. This incident "clearly impaired international relations, and [occurred] without the blessing of the political authorities, least of all Khrushchev".[54] Again Shelepin and Semichastny were making their presence felt.

There is little doubt that the KGB had been co-opted for

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[52]This date is disputed. While Tatu places it on 6 September, Barghoorn claims it occurred on the 12th. It is known for certain that the incident occurred on the eve of a planned meeting between Khrushchev and West German leaders. See Dziak, p. 155.

[53]Tatu, p. 390. Tatu notes that no specific blame was placed, and that this apology was published only in the German press.

[54]Tatu, p. 390.

participation in the coup well prior to the events of 13-15 October 1964, but it is not often noted that there is some evidence that the entire scheme may have been initiated by Shelepin. According to one source, neither Brezhnev nor Suslov nor Podgorny had planned it; "in fact it was the work of a group headed by A.N. Shelepin".[55] F. Burlatsky is a reliable source as a speech writer who worked for both Krushchev and Brezhnev and was present at the Kremlin for the entire transition of power. He claims that Shelepin formulated a plan to jettison Khrushchev, with a view to usurping power for himself, and recruited support for his plan at meetings "in the most unlikely places, usually at a stadium during a soccer match".[56] Semichastny was among the original plotters, assigned the task of ensuring that a repeat of the events of the failed coup attempt of 1957 did not occur, and Suslov and Brezhnev, in that order, were brought into the fold by Shelepin.

Semichastny seems to reinforce the claim of the centrality of the organs in the plot by his claim that he was involved from the very beginning, "since without him no one would have dared to begin".[57] Sergei Khrushchev acknowledges that Brezhnev, Podgorny and Shelepin "set the tone for the campaign" against his father, but also characterizes Podgorny and especially Brezhnev as cowards who involved themselves in the plot only when compelled to do so.[58] He also refers to the expanding coup movement as "the alliance with

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[55]Burlatsky, Fyodor: "Brezhnev's Words", in Encounter (Great Britain) 1989, 72(1): p. 66

[56]Burlatsky, p. 66

[57]Semichastny's account of the events of the coup is given in an interview with the editor of Argumenty i fakty, which is transcribed selectively throughout the treatise of Khrushchev's son. See Krushchev, Sergei: Krushchev on Krushchev: An Inside Account of the Man and his Era. W. Taubman, trans. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1990), p. 46

[58]See Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 47. For examples of Brezhnev's and Podgorny's hesitance to play an active role in the coup, see citations on pp. 67 and 116. It appears Brezhnev did not wish to return to Moscow from an East German convention for the final phase of the coup once Khrushchev had become aware of the situation.(p. 135) Neither Brezhnev or Podgorny were able to bring themselves to speak against Khrushchev at the Presidium meeting of October 13, while Shelepin had been among the most outspoken.(pp. 153-154)

Shelepin".[59] Burlatsky adds that "Brezhnev was entirely unprepared for the role that unexpectedly fell to his lot"[60], and perhaps was not expressly aiming at the role of Party leader for himself.

The pretext for the Central Committee Presidium meeting of 13-14 October was the reaction to a speech by Khrushchev's son-in-law, recent CC appointee A. Adzhubey, in which he had declared as acceptable the reunification of East and West Germany. This expressed function was little else than a facade however, behind which the machinations of the coup, meticulously arranged, were set into motion. Khrushchev had heard mention of a plot against him from his son and Ignat'ev's former security chief V. Galyukov, but had disregarded it: "No, it's incredible. Brezhnev, Podgorny, Shelepin - they're completely different people. It just can't be..."[61] However, when the call came from Suslov (Brezhnev had balked at the last second and managed to avoid making the call) to the leader at his Georgian dacha, citing agricultural problems that needed his personal attention, Krushchev correctly recognized the truth:

> "You know, Anastas [Mikoyan], they haven't got any urgent agricultural problems. I think that call is connected with what Sergei [Khrushchev's son] was telling us."[62]

It is apparent that here Khrushchev, while not planning to retire, had no intention of rigorously contesting an attempt to unseat him from power: "If I'm the issue, I won't make a fight."[63]

During the actual transfer of power, it was Shelepin and Semichastny who called the shots. Semichastny's account of the story seems to imply that the KGB were directing the military:

"As for Malinovsky, he was told with two days to go. By that

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[59] Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 67

[60] Burlatsky, p. 68

[61] Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 108

[62] Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 134

[63] Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 134

> time, I had already called in the heads of (KGB) special departments of the Moscow military district. I didn't tell them what was going on; I just warned them: 'In the next few days, if as much as one armed soldier on a motorcycle leaves his barracks, whether with a machine gun or anything else..., keep in mind it will cost you your head... You are not to allow anyone to undertake anything without reporting to me.' ...The minister of defense still knew nothing about it, nor did the military district commander. Yet despite that, everything was ready to go."[64]

As well, the Presidium officials were apparently receiving orders from the KGB men; Semichastny claims to have advised Brezhnev in the following manner on 14 March:

> "I phoned Brezhnev on the second day and called him out of the meeting. 'All this criticism is going too long,' I say. 'Get it over with. I couldn't stand a second night of it. At the rate you're going, Leonid Ilyich, you'll keep meeting until they arrest either you or Khrushchev. I don't need that. I've heard enough from both sides today.'"[65]

The circumstances surrounding Khrushchev's flight to Moscow from Sochi to accept his fate are not clear. While the Medvedevs contend that a military plane was used rather than Krushchev's personal plane[66], and others claim that the plane was staffed with KGB agents[67] or that Khrushchev's bodyguards had been replaced by Semichastny's[68], Khrushchev's son, who was on the plane, states rather confidently that all of these contentions are fallacious. The latter claims that the flight went quite normally, and with the accompaniment of the usual crew and personnel.[69] The younger Khrushchev also states that an oft-cited attempt by his father to have the plane reroute and land in Kiev, apparently first noted by

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[64] Kruschev, Sergei, p. 136

[65] Krushchev, Sergei, p. 159

[66] Medvedev and Medvedev, p. 174

[67] Deriabin, p. 250

[68] Knight, KGB, p. 65

[69] Khruskchev, Sergei, p. 142-143

Burlatsky, was also fictitious[70]; it was a "routine flight". All that was different from the norm was that Khrushchev and Mikoyan were discussing the ends of their careers on it and that they were met at the airport by Semichastny instead of the usual "gang of Presidium members".[71]

From this point the removal of Khrushchev from power went fairly smoothly, and was completed by the evening of the fourteenth. According to Semichastny precautions were taken, although it was widely expected that the leader would 'resign' peacefully:

> "Knowing Khrushchev, I was convinced that he wouldn't opt for a confrontation... I was just taking extra precautions. ...As soon as they arrived at the Kremlin and entered the room, I changed the guard in the reception area. I also replaced the security men in the apartment and the dacha. I had already managed to send Khrushchev's security chief off on leave."[72]

All phone connections from the Kremlin were under KGB control as well, preventing any desperate plea for help, and all guards were ordered to respond only to direct orders from Semichastny. However, the KGB chief was confident that all contingencies had been accounted for:

> "I didn't even close the Kremlin to visitors. People were strolling around outside, while... in the room the Presidium was meeting. I deployed my men around the Kremlin. Everything that was necessary was done."[73]

The Presidium made the decisions, electing the insipid Brezhnev as Party chief and Podgorny as Premier, thus splitting Krushchev's 'cult' of Party and government leadership. After much procrastination, which Semichastny credits to the wavering of Brezhnev, the Presidium dictated their terms to the amenable Central Committee, and had them vote their approval. For his part,

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[70]Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 4

[71]Khrushchev, Sergei, pp. 143-144

[72]Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 146,148

[73]Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 148

Khrushchev received his demotion passively, and noted ironically that it was his leadership which had made this peaceful fall from power possible:

> "I'm old and tired. Let them cope by themselves. I've done the main thing. Relations among us, the style of leadership, has changed drastically. Could anyone have dreamed of telling Stalin that he didn't suit us anymore, and suggesting that he retire? Not even a wet spot would have remained where we had been standing. Now everything is different. The fear's gone and we can talk as equals. That's my contribution. I won't put up a fight."[74]

It is true that the abolition of terror as a method of government had precluded the possibility of Khrushchev enjoying a high level of stability during his tenure as a reformer, but he had not acted prudently to maintain support in any given arena. With respect to the KGB, it was apparent that "Khrushchev's stress on innovation, public participation, and cultural liberalization was incompatible with a strong and effective political police".[75] His desire for reform in all areas met with predictable opposition from groups unprepared to eschew all the elements of Stalinist rule.

The presence of a unified government and a long-range policy for the future may have been enabling factors for a smooth transition between leaderships, and it was Khrushchev's handpicked 'team' that took over from him. However, a schism between those favouring a return to Stalinist norms and reformers surfaced almost immediately after Khrushchev's dismissal, and many of the latter's policies were abandoned. The most powerful of those favouring a return to Stalinism was Shelepin, made a full Presidium member after the coup.

It was not until he had reached a position in the highest body of the Party that Shelepin decidedly showed his true colours, actively advocating "general coercion to correct the failings of

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[74] Khrushchev, Sergei, p. 154

[75] Knight, KGB, p. 66

the economy and make silent all the dissenters".[76] According to Burlatsky, after orchestrating the coup Shelepin had designs on a relatively facile seizure of power from the unassuming Brezhnev:

> "He was convinced that Brezhnev was an interim, temporary figure and it would cost him nothing, after felling a giant like Khrushchev, to deal with a man who was only Khrushchev's feeble shadow."[77]

Burlatsky, who in working with Brezhnev noted his incompetence and his personality as an "executor of orders, but no leader"[78], claims that Shelepin could very well have achieved this goal, despite his radical views. In preparation for the congress for the 20th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War, Shelepin submitted a report which he planned to deliver as a speech. Brezhnev, who "greatly disliked reading and absolutely could not bear writing", listened as Burlatsky listed its contents, which seemed to indicate preparations for an attempt to seize power:

> "We counted seventeen points involving an abrupt change in political direction, back to the old times: restoration of Stalin's 'good name',... repudiation of the approved Party programme and certain guarantees it contained against the recurrence of the personality cult,... insistence on tough labour discipline at the expense of democracy,... and abandonment of the principle of peaceful coexistence (and also of peaceful transition to socialism in capitalist countries)... and much more in the same vein."[79]

Burlatsky attributes to Brezhnev the response of "I find it hard to grasp all this", after which he brushed it aside.[80]

The ideological struggle which broke out in 1965 came to be led on the one side by Shelepin and on the other by Yurii Andropov, who submitted a program to Brezhnev and Kosygin which was based on the decisions of the Twentieth Congress. To this as well Brezhnev

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[76] Daix, Pierre: L'Avenement de la Nomenklatura: La Chute de Khrouchtchev. (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1982), p. 104

[77] Burlatsky, p. 67

[78] Burlatsky, p. 68

[79] Burlatsky, p. 67

[80] Burlatsky, p. 68

Chapter 3
Reformation under Andropov

The appointment of Yurii Andropov to the post of Chairman of the KGB in May 1967 was anomalous in that it was initially more of a demotion than a promotion; Andropov had since 1957 been a member of the Central Committee, after a successful period as an ambassador in Hungary. Nonetheless, however prominent Andropov had been before, he was now placed in a position from which he would eventually become, largely through his autonomy as chief of the organs, the leader of the Soviet Union. Although several security chiefs had had Party leadership in their sights previously, Andropov became the first policeman to assume the leadership post. There is some debate as to whether Andropov's loyalties lay with the organs or with the Party - he had been a Party official first - but there is little doubt that it was as a policeman that he manoevred into power. The organs under Andropov had continued to evolve from their terrorist origins, maintaining their autonomy and influence through continued adaptation of their methods. Andropov's rise to power is indicative of both the changes and the constants in the organs up to his time; he exploited their continued extra-Party power while utilizing their new, devious methods of operation to undermine his enemies. Once in power, Andropov's rule clearly reflected the fact that a KGB chief was running the Soviet Union.

Andropov's appointment to the chair of the KGB came as a result of Brezhnev attempting to re-establish Party control over the organs. After securing his group's accession to power, Brezhnev and his cronies began to move against the KGB elements that had aided him in planning and carrying out the coup, but which now comprised an unwanted and politically ambitious presence. In

1967 Brezhnev demoted both Shelepin and Semichastny; the former had now been exposed as a Stalinist who aspired to power, while the latter was a supporter of Shelepin who had become notorious for his crude personality and tasteless remarks. The KGB under Semichastny had performed dismally, failing to prevent such pronounced embarrassments as the defection of Svetlana Alliluyeva in December 1966 (followed by a bungled kidnapping attempt) and the arrest and trial of the writers A. Sinyavsky and Y. Daniel, another in a long series of questionable practises in the area of human rights. The greatest danger, however, was that the focus of the organs would be diverted to the Party. So long as the KGB was under Semichastny's control, the organs were primarily loyal to Shelepin, and no one else. In the event of any impropriety or moment of weakness on the part of the leadership group, the worst was possible. Hence Semichastny was sent to be First Deputy Premier of the Ukraine, while Shelepin was removed from the Politburo (formerly the Presidium, renamed at the 23rd Congress in 1967) and put in charge of trade unions in a remote region of eastern Russia.

While Brezhnev took the measures necessary to remove the Shelepin-Semichastny threat, in replacing those officials he did not ensure a decrease in the political influence of the organs. The appointment of an experienced Party man, Andropov, as KGB chairman was seen as the solution. The latter, who had proved his worth through central roles in both the putdown of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the final division of Berlin in 1961[1], must have been assumed to be a safe bet, if a little overqualified. However, only a month after his demotion from the Central Committee, where he had been Secretary for the Department of Liaison with Ruling Communist and Workers' Parties, Andropov was brought back into the fold of political decision-making, now as KGB chief, when he was made a candidate member of the Politburo. And

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[1]Solovyov and Klepikova note that Andropov was one of the two chief political architects of the Berlin Wall in his role as "imperial overseer of the socialist countries". See Solovyov, Vladimir, and Klepikova, Elena: Yuri Andropov: A Secret Passage into the Kremlin. G. Daniels, trans. (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1983), p. 27.

hence began the now-familiar practise of a chief of the organs, allowed to wield political influence, beginning to follow an agenda separate from that of the leadership.

Andropov's fifteen-year tenure as KGB chief was marked by a trend towards changing the content of the police force. With his experience as a senior Party man, which equipped him with a perspective from the top of the hierarchy looking down, Andropov went about affecting the transition of the organs from a body of armed thugs to an educated new breed. As one source noted, "all but one of the top fourteen KGB officials ... [by 1981] have higher education".[2] It appeared that the Party and the KGB were experiencing a rapprochement[3], but what was actually happening was that the organs were infiltrating the Party bureaucracies. KGB directorate heads at both the national and local levels were installed in the executive bodies of the regional and city Party committees. This development, rather than indicating an increase in Party control, allowed the KGB to gain added influence in government and begin a new era of autonomy; "with the oligarchy locked firmly into place, there now began one of the most dismal periods of the post-Stalinist USSR".[4] The operational focus was on following legal procedures rather than trying to circumvent them. Midnight arrests and interrogations in the Lubyanka dungeons were frowned upon, and the new chief went as far in 1967 as to condemn previous security chiefs who had manipulated KGB control for the furthering of their own ambitions:

> "Nor do we have a right to forget the time when the political adventurers who had wormed their way into key positions in the state security service attempted to lead it astray from Party control, to isolate it from the people, and committed

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[2]Knight, Amy: "The Powers of the Soviet KGB", p. 146

[3]Geoffrey Hosking notes that "they [Party and organs] began to operate almost like two divisions of one and the same organization", although which organization this new amalgamation resembled more is precisely the issue here. See Hosking: A History of the Soviet Union. (London: Fontana, 1985), pp. 423-424.

[4]Albats, Yevgenia: The State Within a State: The KGB and Its Hold on Russia - Past, Present, and Future. C.A. Fitzpatrick, trans. (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1994), p. 176

> acts of lawlessness, which caused grave harm to the interests of the State, the Soviet people, and the security service itself."[5]

Notwithstanding the fact that Andropov may have later proved to be a hypocrite, he appeared to undermine his own stated policy immediately. It was under Andropov that the Fifth Directorate was formed in 1968 in order to eliminate political, nationalist and religious dissent. This occurred shortly after demonstrations occurred in Red Square protesting against the military putdown of the 'Prague Spring', and indicated a harsh policy, implying that only the Party line was the correct opinion; "they [dissidents] had to be persuaded to perceive that their actions were harmful to the Soviet state".[6] Implied was a preventive rather than a corrective approach, as indicated in a speech delivered six months earlier:

> "the state security service is conducting important work to prevent criminal offences, and to persuade and reeducate those who commit politically harmful actions. This work helps to eliminate the causes likely to generate criminal offenses against the state."[7]

Among the changes in methodology introduced under Andropov were more careful preparation of trial cases to avoid the embarrassing clumsiness that had marked the Sinyavsky-Daniel affair, planting of evidence, infiltration of dissident organizations, and the incorporation of technological advances in investigations. The preference in cases of dissidence was to "use pressure to encourage emigration... [or] people were forcibly deported or deprived of Soviet citizenship while they were abroad".[8] In April 1969 Andropov submitted to the Central Committee a comprehensive plan for the establishment of a network of psychiatric hospitals, often

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[5]Andropov, in a speech delivered at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Cheka, 20 December 1967. See Maxwell, Robert, ed.: Y.V. Andropov: Speeches and Writings. Second Edition. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1983), p. 103.

[6]See Owen, Richard: Crisis in the Kremlin: Soviet Succession and the Rise of Gorbachov. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1986), p. 91

[7]Andropov, in Maxwell, ed., p. 108

[8]Medvedev, Zhores: Andropov. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 64

referred to as "the infamous *psikhushkas*", as another alternative for the disposal of dissidents. The GULag system, as well, was far from dead. Later campaigns against corruption were to supply the labour camps with millions of new prisoners.

The new breed of KGB agent, although more educated, was not so 'new'. While the average age of senior security officials was lower by eight years at 62 than that of Politburo members, ten out of the senior fourteen agents began their careers "in the security organs during the Stalin era".[9] This would seem to imply a questionable past and perhaps a less evolved character of KGB leadership than the Party and public was led to believe. The same was probably true of medium- and lower-ranking officials as well, as Khrushchev's purge of the Stalinist organs in 1953 had generally affected only top agents; "presumably for practical reasons, [Khrushchev] left the middle and lower ranks partially intact".[10] As well, there is evidence that many Beria policemen had, after a period of exile, been rehired by the organs.[11]

The prospect of a Party dignitary like Andropov being accepted by such hardened career policemen, while at the same time implementing a new philosophy for the organs, may have seemed remote. However, the new direction did not entail serious restrictions - rather the opposite - and is claimed by some writers to be closer to 're-Stalinization' than reform.[12] In any case, Andropov had little problem fitting in, as his past experience had familiarized him with the territory. Former Soviet diplomat A. Shevchenko observed that Andropov's selection as chief was not illogical at all:

> "At first I was surprised that so many KGB officers had immediately accepted Andropov as one of them. He had no

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[9] Knight, "Powers", p. 146

[10] Knight, "Powers", p. 146

[11] Knight, "Powers", p. 146

[12] Among those who cite 're-Stalinization' as a policy of the Brezhnev era are John Dziak and Zhores Medvedev.

> background, either in the agency or in the military. I finally realized that his previous position in the Central Committee as supervisor of the Soviet bloc empire was closely linked with KGB functions. They knew their man."[13]

In terms of strength, the organs continued to be an immense network, and grew considerably during Andropov's leadership. One source estimated KGB numbers at approximately 500,000 agents, at the low end, not including the familiar network of informers.[14]

A distinct Brezhnevite presence in the organs was the reaction by the leader to his inability to appoint his own KGB chief. While Brezhnev had not outwardly opposed the nomination of Andropov, he had not consolidated his predominance enough to suggest an official who was obviously one of his cronies. Vitaly Fedorchuk was a prominent member of the Brezhnev entourage who was placed highly in the security hierarchy in 1967, but who proved to be less of a politically ambitious personality than a dedicated KGB man. A key appointment for Brezhnev was that of his son-in-law, S.Tsvigun, as deputy chairman of the organs in June 1967. A career policeman and also a loyal follower of the General Secretary, Tsvigun was to be Brezhnev's conduit of information as to the activities of the KGB, as well as a controlling influence on Andropov. Viktor Chebrikov was also a supposed Brezhnevite, having risen through the Party ranks in Brezhnev's home of Dnepropetrovsk. He was made a deputy chairman in 1968. Among the other men installed in the KGB by Brezhnev were G. Tsinev, who became a deputy chairman by 1970, and V. Matrosov, appointed chief of the Main Directorate of Border Troops in 1968.

While these officials were to play important roles in the rise of the KGB's influence under Andropov, their use to Brezhnev as leverage in the organs against Andropov was questionable, as scant evidence exists of any conflict or tension within the KGB leadership. The only complaints from within seem to have come from

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[13]Shevchenko, Arkady: Breaking With Moscow. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), p. 185

[14]Solovyov and Klepikova, p. 273

apolitical agents such as Oleg Kalugin, former Chief of Counter-intelligence, who decried the trend towards Party infiltration of the organs:

> "At all levels, Communist Party apparatchiks - shallow, fawning, and unprofessional - were moving into positions of power. Though I respected Andropov's astuteness and toughness, he, too, was responsible for bringing in legions of Party hacks who ultimately weakened the KGB."[15]

The events surrounding the invasion of Czechoslovakia in mid-1968, although not a domestic matter, are useful to illustrate two things; the influence of the Andropov's KGB on Soviet policy-making, and unity among leading KGB officials. At the time of the crisis, Andropov was only a candidate, and thus nonvoting member of the Politburo, but nonetheless his experience was indispensible as an expert on East European affairs. The Politburo appears to have been divided on the subject of what response to take to the growing reformist movement in Czechoslovakia, and consulted, as is logical, with Andropov. It is clear that the latter was in favour of military intervention; in December 1967 he warned of the dangers of imperialists trying to "weaken the might of the socialist countries and shatter their unity and cohesion with the forces of the workers' and national liberation movement".[16] More conclusive evidence of Andropov's stance comes to light in view of the campaign waged by the KGB to present the Czechoslovakian scenario as a U.S.-sponsored counterrevolutionary plot. The KGB, as the sole provider of intelligence assessments to the Politburo, "sought to nudge Soviet decision-making in the direction of intervention", and began a systematic campaign of "political provocation, disinformation, and propaganda", aimed at justifying a Soviet

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[15] Kalugin, Oleg: The First Directorate: My 32 Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 109

[16] Pravda, 21 December 1967, quoted in Amy Knight's "The Party, the KGB, and Soviet Policy-Making", in The Washington Quarterly, 1988 11(2): p. 125.

invasion.[17] Proof of Andropov's implication in this project is provided by Kalugin, who prepared for the KGB chairman an analysis of American intelligence operations in the weeks before the invasion;

> "The analysis conclusively showed that, while America was closely monitoring the situation in Czechoslovakia, the CIA had taken no steps to destabilize the country... Later, I learned that when my report arrived in Moscow, Andropov ordered its immediate destruction."[18]

Ample evidence exists that the KGB effort to produce the preconditions for an invasion was a comprehensive one, carried out on many levels. Cohesion is evident within the organs on this matter, despite the presence of many so-called Brezhnevites under Andropov; "statements made by other leading KGB officials indicate that Andropov's views reflected those of the KGB as a whole".[19] Perhaps the most unknown quantity in the security administration, Fedorchuk, was shown also to have been in accord when he later wrote of 'grave threats' that had been posed by 'imperialist counterrevolutionary strategies'.[20]

Andropov was re-promoted in 1973, into the Politburo as Minister of Internal Affairs, at the same time that A. Gromyko and Marshal Grechko were appointed Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense, respectively. This move gave him control over the regular police, while he retained his position as security chief. The wisdom of this appointment must be questioned, as although Andropov was a Party man before he was a policeman, he seemed to relish the

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[17]Valenta, Jiri: Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968: Anatomy of a Decision. Revised Edition. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 105

[18]Kalugin, p. 108

[19]Knight, "The Party, the KGB, and Soviet Policy-Making", p. 125

[20]See Knight, "The Party, The KGB, and Soviet Policy-Making", p. 125. The loyalties of Fedorchuk are difficult to ascertain. While Solovyov and Klepikova cite him as a member of Andropov's entourage (see p. 275) and Zhores Medvedev writes of him in a similar light (see pp. 121-122), Dusko Doder characterizes him as a staunch Brezhnevite, and perhaps this claim is somewhat valid, in view of Gorbachev's dismissal of Fedorchuk after the former's rise to power. See Doder, Dusko: Shadows and Whispers: Power Politics Inside the Kremlin from Brezhnev to Gorbachev. (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 85, 85n. However, there is little if any evidence of friction between Fedorchuk and Andropov.

latter role to a greater degree. In the first place he continued to closely supervise KGB operations and actively promoted his supporters within the organs, and secondly he never personally lost the conduct or demeanor of a secret police agent. Andropov was rarely present on the international scene after being admitted to the Politburo, and was never much of a public figure. Even once he had ascended to power, he never released information about his private life, and remained a figure about which only the most superficial facts were known to the world at large. In fact it was not until his funeral that it was established that Andropov actually had a wife.[21]

Those who claim that the KGB had by the later years of Brezhnev's tenure become tamed and fully subjugated to the Party base this characterization on the fact that terror, as it had been known under Stalin, had been eradicated, and that there did not appear to be any threat of the organs turning on the Party or acting independently as they had done in the past. The Party, according to one source, had established by this time the protection of its own from police investigation.[22] KGB officials always maintained that the organs were subordinate to the Party, and there was an agreement not to compile dossiers on Party officials. The agreement consisted of the following: "Top Party officials were off-limits. You could bug anyone else's telephones, collect *kompromat* [compromising information], amass a dossier, even if they had parliamentary immunity - unless they were Party brass."[23] Kalugin elaborated on the details:

> "an internal directive went into effect prohibiting any operations against these people, that is, against bugging their telephones, putting them under surveillance, or filming

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[21] Owen, p. 158

[22] Carrère d'Encausse, Hélène: Confiscated Power: How Soviet Russia Really Works. (New Jersey: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 194

[23] Albats, p. 186

them with a videocamera."[24]

Kalugin noted, however, that Party members could be monitored if the KGB had approval from the nomenklatura, or Party elite[25]. As well, the restriction was not always binding, or even adhered to:

> "It was all a matter of the Party member in question and the rank of the KGB officer who had compromising evidence... No regional chief was without a roster of individuals to whom such tasks could be trusted, especially if the orders came from higher up. ... All this may give the impression that such cases were rare. Precisely the opposite was true, as the wave of criminal trials and investigation that followed the death of Leonid Brezhnev made clear... it became obvious that for years, Andropov had been gathering information and maintaining a dossier of abuses in the Party-state apparat."[26]

While an understanding may have been in place, the organs clearly did not behave as if it was binding.

Evidence of the fact that the organs had not been fully subjugated to the Party lies in Andropov's campaign to undermine the leadership of Brezhnev, begun soon after he was appointed security chief and intensified after his promotion into the Politburo. A golden opportunity to discredit Brezhnev in western opinion arose when President Carter placed an inordinate amount of emphasis on the Soviet Union's treatment of dissidents in the late 1970's; "Carter over-reacted to the arrest of human rights activists in Moscow by making the fate of Orlov, Ginzburg and Shcharansky [all arrested and imprisoned for dissent in 1977-78] the cornerstone of American-Soviet relations".[27] As Andropov had already been directed by the Politburo to rid the country of dissidents, he was able to go on with the practise of arresting and exiling them even after Carter's rhetoric. It has been claimed

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[24]Kalugin, in an article in Komsomolskaya Pravda of 20 June 1990, quoted in Albats, p. 186.

[25]Kalugin, in a later article for Moskovskiye Novosti of 24 June 1990, also quoted in Albats, p. 186.

[26]Albats, pp. 186-187

[27]Medvedev, Zhores, p. 91

that "Brezhnev's detente policy and his reputation thus became hostage to the fate of a few dissidents"[28], and Andropov had control over the handling of these dissidents. He was able to further undermine Brezhnev through the continuation of this repression, culminating in the 1980 exile of the outspoken Nobel Prize winner Andrei Sakharov. In this way, Andropov had managed through the KGB to acquire influence in foreign policy decisions and now had Brezhnev at a distinct disadvantage.[29] Trials of dissidents were to produce vast amounts of negative publicity for Brezhnev's leadership.

Aside from popular rumours spread by KGB employees for the purpose of exposing scandals and corruption, other elements of Andropov's campaign against Brezhnev showed a keen resourcefulness. One example is an anonymous story which appeared in the Leningrad literary magazine Aurora in December 1981, which has been referred to as the "opening shot in the final campaign".[30] It was entitled "Jubilee Speech", and was "widely perceived as a scathing satire on Brezhnev's public and literary activities and his continuance in office despite his advanced age".[31] It included a sketched caricature which resembled Brezhnev, and satirized Brezhnev's awarding himself the Lenin Prize for literature, despite the fact that it was common knowledge that he made use of a ghost writer. Above all, the article expressed eagerness to be rid of the old 'writer':

> "It is hard to believe that he will die. But he will, sure as taxes. We won't have to wait for long. He won't disappoint us. We all believe in him so much. Let's hope he completes the work still in hand and gladdens our hearts by departing (from this world) as soon as possible."[32]

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[28] Medvedev, Zhores, p. 91

[29] Medvedev, Zhores, p. 91

[30] Owen, p. 92

[31] Doder, p. 52

[32] See Doder, p. 52

And this was an issue dedicated to Brezhnev's 75th birthday!

Just two weeks later another event, striking in both its immediacy to Brezhnev and in its effect (it may have brought about the death of both Tsvigun and Suslov within the span of a week) occurred with the Great Circus Scandal. Brezhnev's daughter Galina, said to have a taste for unsavoury characters, became entangled in a scandal involving the illegal procurement of foreign goods and services for her friends (and lover) in the Moscow Circus. Rather than allow the controversy to die away, Andropov ordered Brezhnev's son-in-law Tsvigun to investigate. The latter promptly committed suicide rather than disgrace the leader's family, thus eliminating Brezhnev's "insurance policy" in the KGB.[33] The scandal also claimed Suslov, the Secretary of Ideology, as a victim, as this official "was profoundly shocked by the whole imbroglio and suffered a stroke when Andropov revealed to him the extent of the scandal".[34] On 25 January Suslov was dead. The immediate effect of these events was that Andropov now was rid of a bothersome subordinate and had above him an opening in the hierarchy. Brezhnev, his prestige weakened by the scandal and experiencing failing health, allowed Andropov to assume the critical Secretary of Ideology position, from which the KGB chief was to engineer his succession.

It is acknowledged by many scholars that the assumption of the ideology position, which took place during the Central Committee plenum of 25 May 1982, was the turning point, after which the former security chief's ascendancy was almost inevitable. The nomination was contested by Chernenko, Brezhnev's choice of successor, who was also nominated but voted down by the Politburo, and who until this time had appeared to be the front-runner for succession. It appears that opposition to Andropov may have been germinating at this point, possibly due to fear in the Party of

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[33] See Doder, p. 55

[34] Owen, p. 93. Doder claims that it was the argument at a meeting when Suslov summoned Tsvigun to question him about the scandal which brought about Suslov's stroke two days later. See p. 56

Andropov's power. There was some question as to whether Tsvigun's death was actually a suicide, and its effect on Party members appears to have been profound:

> "Now, none of Andropov's closest entourage would risk his life by infringing on the power of the Kremlin's new master, even though his physical strength began to fail him..."[35]

One source claims that from this day forward Andropov had successfully turned the organs on the Party, and that the autonomy of the organs was complete:

> "While Brezhnev was yet among the living and the Politburo had become an almshouse, the centre of power had shifted from the Central Committee to the KGB, for which Andropov had obtained the status of 'a state within a state', no longer subject to anyone but subjugating everything around it."[36]

While this rhetoric may be a bit exaggerated, it is generally agreed that there existed significant insecurity among the elite, and debate surrounding the appointment of Andropov to the ideology portfolio was the last occasion at which this trepidation could have logically been alleviated:

> "the fear of Andropov was real among those who feared for their careers and privileges should the man with the dossiers emerge victorious. This probably explains the long delay and apparent acrimony [the debate took up much of the plenum] that attended Andropov's selection as Suslov's successor."[37]

Even after the accession to the ideology portfolio by Andropov, Chernenko continued to be the apparent future successor, dominating the Soviet press and television and perennially at the ailing Brezhnev's side during Party functions. The basis of Chernenko's support, however, was a system of patronage and popularity within the Party, and had no physical manifestation. When this network of friendly relations was confronted by an aggressive campaign for leadership by a personality with the support of both the military and the organs, it melted away into

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[35]Solovyov and Klepikova, p. 269

[36]Solovyov and Klepikova, p. 269

[37]Breslauer, George W.: "From Brezhnev to Gorbachev: Ends and Means of Soviet Leadership Selection", in Leadership Change in Communist States. R. Taras, ed. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 55

nothing.

Andropov's alliance with the military came about through an agreement with Marshal Ustinov (the Defense Minister) as to the direction which the Soviet Union should take after Brezhnev. Despite the fact that he had opposed the intervention in Afghanistan, which the military had favoured, Andropov was able to come to terms with Ustinov on the basis of earlier experience. As a diplomat, Andropov had cooperated with the army, particularily in preparing for the Hungarian invasion, and had later worked in close cooperation with the military in his guise as KGB chief. Indeed, "during the fifteen years that Andropov was in charge, he took part in the preparation of many joint military-KGB operations and worked closely with top army generals and marshals".[38] When Chernenko had made the gaff of declaring the military as sufficiently qualified to meet any western challenge in a speech in the Ukraine in 1981, Ustinov, typically dedicated to the augmentation of defense spending, threw his support behind the man he knew best, Andropov.

It has been claimed that Andropov used the KGB 'modus operandi' to acquire the support of Politburo members, presenting them with information of his sources of support, and persuading them with the forceful logic that it would be better not to resist.[39] Andropov's application of this procedure, which basically entailed presenting himself as the KGB chief to senior members of the nomenklatura and implying the possession of damaging information, is what according to one source facilitated the usurpation of power over the intended successor Chernenko, and comprised a coup.[40]

Indeed, even while Brezhnev remained alive, in mid-1982, Andropov began to take charge. In a move of complete disrespect, the latter recalled and restored to favour V. Vorotnikov, an

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[38] Medvedev, Zhores, p. 105

[39] See Voslensky, Michael: Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class. (New York: Doubleday, 1984), p. 371

[40] See Voslensky, pp. 371-372

> of force, with KGB troops as well as soldiers and militia out in strength in the crisp air and snow-lined streets was also Andropov's first policy move."[42]

Discipline was to become a basic theme of Andropov's short tenure, and the contention that Andropov's succession was nothing short of a forceful takeover is echoed by the same correspondent: "As we drove from the Kremlin... we felt as if we were watching a coup in progress."[43]

Andropov had launched a vigorous attack on corruption and inefficiency six months before Brezhnev's death with a speech on Lenin's birthday, and this was carried out in the name of the Party but in practise by the KGB. Championing the fight against abuse of privilege and administrative power, the KGB intensified this campaign after Andropov came to power, and did its best to purge the Party of Brezhnevites under this pretense.

The new leader wasted little time in condemning his predecessor. As soon as eleven days after his assumption of the position of General Secretary, Andropov addressed the fact that the previous leadership had overlooked or condoned an unacceptable level of corruption and graft, and took aim at the remnants of Brezhnev's administration: "It now turns out that they [corrupt officials] are worried in case this policy could be changed".[44] Indeed it would, and it must have been frightening for officials accustomed to whatever prior corruption had existed to realize that a figure who had intimate knowledge of all sinister activity while being in charge of the KGB was now able to implement his policies at will. The attack on corruption carried out by the organs was the centrepiece of Andropov's domestic policy.

Andropov introduced in Moscow a level of police presence not seen since the Stalin era, and made it a policy to promote KGB men into positions of power in order to implement his programs.

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[42] Owen, p. 96

[43] Owen, p. 96. Also see Voslensky, pp. 370-373

[44] Andropov, quoted in Owen, p. 115

Fedorchuk was promoted from KGB chief to become Minister of the Interior, and Chebrikov, an Andropov deputy since 1968, took the office of KGB chief. The People's Control, an inspectorate body under the control of new KGB chief began a pervasive campaign to sniff out the wrongdoings in everyday life, such as "sloth, absenteeism, lateness in coming to work, and drinking during working hours".[45] The code name for the operation was 'Trawl', and its purpose was to "catch shirkers unawares; in movie theatres, cafes, bars, stores and even bathhouses".[46] The officers would randomly inquire as to the nature of people's business as they conducted their daily affairs; "why they were not at work, what their business was, and why they were wasting state time and money".[47] One source saw firsthand the thoroughness of the increased police presence:

> "At Novgorod... I saw the People's Control and militiamen pulling over a van marked 'Veterinary Surgeon' and establishing that the driver was not on some mercy mission to a stricken animal but using his state-provided van for personal financial gain. In another case the driver of a milk lorry was found to be using his vehicle for 'illicit purposes'."[48]

Another time the police entered a popular bathhouse and photographed the occupants therein naked, arresting many and sending the pictures to their places of employment.

Andropov's short chapter in Soviet history as the only security chief to eventually take power ended, along with his life, on 9 February 1984. It appears that the ascension to power of a KGB chief was perfectly logical in the Soviet system; the combination of the absence of a succession mechanism coupled with a perennially strong and politically active security force as the 'action arm' of government in fact made it a likely occurrence.

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[45]Solovyov and Klepikova, p. 279

[46]Solovyov and Klepikova, p. 279

[47]Owen, p. 104

[48]Owen, p. 104

The security organs in Andropov's time had seen their influence increased, and their prestige was restored to such degree that a security chief was able to come to power without having been promoted out of their midst. While it may be exaggerating to say that the organs enjoyed unlimited autonomy under Andropov, this contention seems to be shared by Shelepin:

> "It was precisely with the coming of Andropov that the KGB once again became the state within a state it had been in the pre-Krushchev era. Andropov restored everything that I had tried so hard to liquidate at the KGB."[49]

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[49]Alexander Shelepin, in an interview with Albats of September 1993. See Albats, p. 176

Chapter 4
Gorbachev

While the succession of Mikhail Gorbachev seems today to have been the least tumultuous in Soviet history, it was not so straightforward as it might have appeared at first glance. The Soviet system had not resolved the succession issue so completely that there was no need of dramatic KGB input; as in the past struggles, a certain amount of coercion was needed to secure the victory of one faction over the other. While by this activity the KGB was in some ways continuing a tradition, the Gorbachev leadership was to see revolutionary changes for many elements of Soviet society, and the KGB would not escape these changes. For this reason, it becomes necessary to examine the methods by which the organs adapted to perestroika and glasnost', leading to the events of August 1991, which might be considered a succession struggle without a succession.

By the time of Chernenko's death on 10 March 1985, there appeared to have been only one logical successor, Gorbachev, although there was, of course, opposition in the Politburo. As the Party official who had been deemed by Andropov to be the personality best-suited to begin a new generation of Soviet leadership, Gorbachev was to come to power in a relatively smooth transition. The dominant factor contributing to this ease was the fact that there had been considerable expectation that Gorbachev would have succeeded Andropov rather than Chernenko - this had apparently been Andropov's wish - and thus all of the necessary preconditions had been in existence for some time. The lack of upheaval, however, was not owing to any mechanism for the transfer of power; there was still no legislation in this area, despite the fact that this was the third such struggle within the past five

years. As well, there was little indication of the emergence of even a pattern for succession, although some rudimentary characteristics of succession seem to have been roughly established. It had been established that a rise to leadership consisted firstly of assumption of the position of General Secretary of the Party, after which the leader would attempt to consolidate his place "by [acquiring] the chairmanship of the Defense Council and the state presidency (in that order)".[1] This pattern had been initiated by Brezhnev (although it took him eleven years to complete), and reinforced by Andropov and Chernenko. In the rise to power, certain positions were preferable to others; "the combination of offices and their order of precedence seem to be settled"[2], although the holding of a particular portfolio did not guarantee anything; it merely confirmed the rough position of an official in the hierarchy, and provided a base from which to manoevre further. Since the days of Suslov under Brezhnev, the combination of the government post of chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Supreme Soviet and the Party position of Secretary of Ideology in the Central Committee Secretariat was considered to be that of the number two man in the pecking order - the successor-in-waiting.

The general recognition of a second position in the hierarchy was as far as the system had come. The order of the other officials depended, as it always had, upon the personalities involved, the combination of offices held, and sources of support both within and outside of the Party. As well, the seemingly quick transition which often occurred after the death of a leader was illusory; the new Party chief had to spend considerable time and effort consolidating his power after election, as he inherited the power configuration of his predecessor. In Gorbachev's case, it was largely a Brezhnevite elite that remained, preserved as this

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[1]Frank, Peter: "The Soviet Union", in Leadership and Succession in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, M. McCauley and S. Carter, eds. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), p. 24

[2]Frank, p. 25

was by Chernenko, although he benefitted from leftover Andropovites to counteract this. Chernenko had had almost no distinctive impact on Party personnel.

Another particularily problematic area of succession was the difficulty of removing or replacing incumbent leaders. Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko had each continued in office well beyond his ability to perform his duties, while the Party, government and population literally waited for him to die. It became a game, detecting the subtle signs of a leader's progression towards death, and the pattern surrounding this death, the funeral, and the announcement of a replacement became much more predictable than the behind-the-scenes manoevring. Gorbachev assumed the posts allotted to the number two man in the Soviet hierarchy on 11 April 1984 after nominating Chernenko as president. From here his accession to power was really a matter of course, despite his struggles with several Politburo opponents, blessed as he was with the legacy of Andropov. From the moment of Andropov's succession Gorbachev's rise had accelerated. Andropov made Gorbachev his deputy and, although he also promoted Gorbachev's later rival G. Romanov, it was Gorbachev who was being groomed for the leadership. Falling ill soon after coming to power, Andropov eventually had Gorbachev act as de facto leader, and "expanded his [Gorbachev's] mandate from agriculture to the entire economy, put science and technology under his wing, and had him oversee a purge of the Party apparatus to replace corrupt Brezhnev hacks..."[3] When Gorbachev's supporters decided to consolidate his position as number two rather than vigorously oppose Chernenko's succession, Gorbachev had already acquired a considerable power base:

> "He had inherited the institutional support of Andropov's coalition - the KGB, the officer corps, government technocrats, experts in numerous institutes, and a miscellany of intellectual and artistic figures, educational leaders, younger party members and industrial managers in the

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[3]Smith, Hedrick: The New Russians. (New York: Random House, 1990), p. 72

1950's.[8] Even before he reached the pinnacle of power he began to recreate the reformist policies of his mentor. After Andropov's death the anticorruption campaign which had been one of the major themes of his rule had lost momentum under Chernenko, but only for a short period of time. In what may have been an indication of Gorbachev's growing influence, "the respite from the anticorruption drive was short-lived; by the summer of 1984 it had gathered new momentum."[9] The campaign was initiated again by the publication in newspapers of widespread corruption in Uzbekistan, followed by the arrests of several prominent officials in this region. As earlier stated, Gorbachev had inherited good relations with the organs, and presumably under his and E. Ligachev's influence the KGB took as its focus once again the Brezhnevites; "It became clear by the autumn of 1984 that neither Chernenko nor anyone else was strong enough to protect his fellow Brezhnevites from the vicissitudes of the anticorruption drive."[10]

It is apparent that Gorbachev's ties with the KGB became quite cohesive. While Romanov was losing valuable support in the military with the dismissal of Red Army Chief of Staff N. Ogarkov and the death of Minister of Defense Ustinov, which also resulted in a further decline of military influence in government, it became evident that the organs were actively backing Gorbachev to replace the dying Chernenko. Oleg Gordievsky, then the resident KGB agent in London, became aware in late 1984 that headquarters in Moscow had decided to take what action they could to favour their choice.[11] According to this source, the KGB "looked to Gorbachev to provide the dynamism and discipline necessary to break out of

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[8]Gail Sheehy has noted that "no one advanced in Party work without a patron in the organs", and questions how Gorbachev could have climbed so rapidly through the ranks without being a KGB informer. See Sheehy, Gail: The Man Who Changed the World: The Lives of Mikhail S. Gorbachev. (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), pp. 63-64.

[9]Knight, KGB, p. 95

[10]Knight, KGB, p. 96

[11]Andrew, Christopher and Gordievsky, Oleg: KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev. (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), p. 606

the Soviet Union's economic stagnation and establish a 'correlation of forces' with the West".[12] In addition to taking pains to ensure that Gorbachev was exhaustively briefed for his upcoming visit to London in December (a marked success, resulting in the now-famous Margaret Thatcher claim "I can do business with Mr. Gorbachev"), the KGB began to ensure that Gorbachev had the benefit of knowledge only it could provide:

> "In the months before Chernenko's long expected death in March 1985, the KGB put great care into briefing Gorbachev in a way that would allow him to impress the rest of the Politburo with his grasp of both Soviet and world affairs. And the reports that it provided to the Politburo as a whole were deliberately designed to support Gorbachev's arguments."[13]

When it happened, the Gorbachev succession appeared to be remarkably swift; only four hours after the initial announcement on March 11 of Chernenko's death, *TASS* announced that Gorbachev had been 'unanimously' elected General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. In fact it had not been quite so facile a transition, and KGB input was apparently required to settle the issue, as might be expected by this time. Nor was the battle altogether over with the announcement of Gorbachev's succession. While Romanov had been weakened by the loss of Ogarkov and Ustinov, and the appointment of Marshal Y. Sokolov as the new Minister of Defense had not brought with it full Politburo membership, there was still a close battle in the Politburo. Nominated by Premier Gromyko in an inspiring speech, the 'unanimous' vote had apparently been five to four[14], with one Politburo member (V. Shcherbitsky, a possible vote against) absent on a trip to the U.S. The chief opposition likely came from Grishin, the Moscow Party chief, supported by Romanov, who could no longer make a play for power independently.

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[12] Andrew and Gordievsky, p. 608

[13] Andrew and Gordievsky, p. 608

[14] According to an article by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak in *The Washington Post*, 1 November 1985. Cited in Mitchell, R. Judson: Getting to the Top in the USSR: Cyclical Patterns in the Leadership Succession Process. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), p. 131

Although few details are available, it appears that KGB chief Chebrikov was the key to discouraging this opposition, by producing KGB dossiers on Grishin and Romanov, the existence of which was strictly forbidden by Party-organ protocol, to discredit the two disputants.[15] While this may have been favouring one Party member at the expense of another and not technically turning on the Party, it reveals two things: firstly that the KGB continued to act wholly independently in matters of succession, and that turning on the Party was not out of the question for the organs, in view of the existence of dossiers on nomenklatura members. The KGB had once again influenced a succession struggle decisively, so that its choice emerged victorious. Apparently the organs were cognizant ahead of time of Gorbachev's leanings toward large-scale reform, and supported this policy. As then First Deputy Chairman F. Bobkov stated in a 1990 interview; "the KGB in 1985 understood very well that the Soviet Union could not develop without perestroika".[16]

The relationship of the KGB and Gorbachev after the latter's rise to power can logically be split into two phases while Chebrikov remained as security chief, and both were marked by continual struggle. The first began with the promotion of Chebrikov to full Politburo membership in April 1985, while the second commenced with Gorbachev's attempt to extend perestroika to the organs in 1987, after having left the security milieu unruffled long after all other elements of Soviet society had been scrutinized. The later tenure of V. A. Kryuchkov as chief was apparently the beginning of an era of like-mindedness between the organ and Party chiefs, but did not turn out that way.

As stated, the early indications of Gorbachev's rule pointed

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[15]While Mitchell claims that Chebrikov "provided" dossiers on both men, Breslauer claims that it is possible that Chebrikov influenced the decision by "offering to open the files on Grishin". How exactly these events were played out is not clear, but in either case, this incident reveals that the aforementioned 'understanding' between the Party and the organs was not being adhered to. See Mitchell, p. 132, and Breslauer, in Taras, ed., p. 65.

[16]Albats, p. 198

to a rebirth of Andropovian reform, although no one could have guessed just how far beyond Andropov the new leader would venture. Immediately after taking power, Gorbachev indicated his intention to continue the anticorruption campaign towards the goal of improving the efficiency of the sagging economy. Thus measures to increase worker discipline and morale were taken, designed to make Russians generally work harder. These included "a harsh anti-alcoholism campaign, as well as a campaign to eliminate all 'non-labour income'".[17] More importantly for our context, however, was the campaign to clean up corruption in the Party, which was affected not through the organs, but through public opinion:

> "His initial actions in support of increased openness in the mass media [glasnost'] were dictated by his desire to mobilize public opinion, especially among the intellectuals, against the party bureaucracy and against Soviet propaganda's most arrant campaigns."[18]

Thus Gorbachev took the role of watchdog away from the organs and placed it in the hands of the media and public, which not only left the KGB guessing as to what its new place would be, but left it exposed, along with the Party and the military, to public criticism. As well, dissent was no longer clearly a crime, or if it was, the definition was now considerably less sweeping than it had been before.

By the summer of 1985 the KGB leadership had reacted to the new uncertainty and Gorbachev's radical new foreign policy in the same manner as would much of the conservative side of the political spectrum in the future: by grasping at old, established values. In an article in the Central Committee's main outlet *Kommunist* of 9 June, Chebrikov showed what would prove to be his true conservative colours. While hesitant to criticize the man who had promoted him to the Politburo, Chebrikov cautioned against adventurism in pursuing detente with the West, and "dwelt on the theme of western

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[17]Shlapentokh, Vladimir: The Last Years of the Soviet Empire: Snapshots from 1985-1991. M.F. O'Donnell, ed. (Connecticut: Praeger, 1993), p. 1

[18]Shlapentokh, p. 2

hostility toward the USSR and said little about the chance of improving relations with the West".[19] In the area of domestic policy, the security chief reacted to glasnost' by making it clear that the KGB would retain its traditional program, noting that criticism of the social or political order would be proof of "foreign influence... and the interests of foreign intelligence services and anti-Soviet centers".[20] He went on to warn that those who "disseminate rumors about the imperfections of socialist society" were propagating "imperialist slander".

This variance of the organs' agenda with the program of the Party chief was indicative on one hand of ongoing KGB autonomy, and on the other of posturing for a renewed and redefined role in Soviet life. Chebrikov was obviously taking matters into his own hands in order to broaden the mandate of the KGB. In domestic affairs, Chebrikov indicated that the KGB was now responsible for morality in Soviet society, insofar as "communist immorality" created ideological and political decay.[21] Chebrikov's opposition to the new direction was hardly surprising in view of the fact that he had felt it necessary in the same 9 June article to respond to criticism of his organization, which in the past would never have been necessary, by labelling complaints against violations of human rights "slanderous allegations by bourgeois propagandists".[22]

By the late summer of 1985 the renewed anticorruption campaign was running at full speed, and the newspapers were full of exposures of corrupt Party officials. This was Gorbachev's purge, and it proved to be an extensive one; by the time of the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress in March 1986, both Romanov and Grishin had been removed from the Politburo, and the Central Committee elected at the Congress showed a turnover from the previous one in 1981 of

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[19]See Parrott, Bruce: "Soviet National Security under Gorbachev", in Problems of Communism, 1988 37(6): p. 5

[20]Chebrikov, in *Kommunist*, 9 June 1985, quoted in Shlapentokh, p. 6

[21]Shlapentokh, p. 7

[22]Chebrikov, quoted in Knight, KGB, p. 98

forty per cent. In November 1985 Gorbachev managed to placate Chebrikov somewhat with the drafting of a new official Party program to replace the previous one of 1961. The draft served to lift the prestige of the organs at the expense of the military; "the draft mentioned the role of the police organs [never before mentioned in the context of the defense of the state] and implied that their mission in combatting imperialist political machinations was on a par with the Armed Forces' military mission".[23] Chebrikov was grateful enough to reciprocate this bit of flattery by delivering a speech praising the "potential benefits of flexible diplomacy". These niceties seemed to indicate that a deal had been made by Gorbachev "to maintain the KGB as a political counterweight to the Armed Forces and obtain stronger backing for his diplomatic initiatives".[24] Chebrikov was made a Hero of Socialist Labour and featured in several newspaper articles in the following months, and was allowed to deliver important speeches in forums not accustomed to hearing from KGB chairmen. At the 27th Congress Chebrikov became the first security chief since Shelepin in 1961 to address the delegates.

The police organizations did not escape Gorbachev's purges completely unscathed in the period leading up to the 27th Congress. The MVD was extensively purged in a continuation of Andropov's efforts in this area, and Fedorchuk himself fell victim, transferred to head a military inspectorate in the Ministry of Defense in 1986. This was not a huge setback, but clearly a demotion for the former organs chief, and revealed that Gorbachev was not hesitant to purge Andropovites if he felt it essential to the furthering of his program. Fedorchuk's place was taken by an official with no police experience, A. Vlasov, who hailed from Gorbachev's home base of the North Caucasus. The KGB was also purged, although not to any significant degree, with two regional

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[23] Parrott, p. 5

[24] Parrott, p. 5

chiefs being dismissed along with Moscow city chief V. Alidin and aged First Deputy Chairman Tsinev. Gorbachev was clearly shielding the organs from any extensive interference, presumably to maintain the support of the organization in the face of growing opposition in the Politburo.

It became clear that Chebrikov was backing Gorbachev's policies only reluctantly, in spite of the fact that he was not comfortable with them. Primarily experienced in and focussed on the domestic aspects of security, "Chebrikov [gave] domestic considerations priority over foreign issues and [did] not have the breadth of vision that Andropov had."[25] This was perhaps the source of much of their antipathy, along with Chebrikov's general conservatism. Thus prejudiced, Chebrikov could only see glasnost' as a challenge to the KGB's control over foreign contacts with Soviet citizens, and thus was basically working in direct opposition to Gorbachev even while paying lip service to the beneficence of his policies. It was difficult to reconcile the new openness of society with traditional KGB philosophy, but Chebrikov made the effort in order to maintain the appearance of support:

> "The principle of glasnost' is also being realized in keeping with the specific nature of Chekist work, and the population is being more widely informed about the probes of the class enemy... Practise shows that the better informed the toilers are about questions of state security, the more consciously and actively they become involved in the cause of guaranteeing it..."[26]

To leave it to the public to decide what should and should not be revealed to westerners was, obviously, anathema to KGB doctrine, but the message of this article is consistent with Chebrikov's earlier stated intentions to revise the role of the organs by placing them in charge of the ideology and morality of society.

Signs began to emerge in mid-1986 that the KGB had reverted to pursuing an agenda apart from that of Party leadership. It began

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[25]Knight, "The Party, the KGB and Soviet Policy-Making", p. 129

[26]Chebrikov, in *Kommunist*, no. 9, June 1985, p. 51. Quoted in Parrot, p. 13n

with rumours of attempts on Gorbachev's life which, while they cannot be traced solely to KGB sources, strongly suggested meddling by the organs. The first group of rumours referred to an alleged assassination attempt on Gorbachev while he had been touring the Soviet Far East, shortly after the leader had mentioned that foreign terrorism posed a threat to his leadership in a speech. A year later another similar rumour surfaced in the German magazine *Bildzeitung*, this time concerning alleged attempts to poison Gorbachev's food, and citing an unnamed KGB agent as the source.[27] The circumstances seemed to indicate a KGB disinformation campaign; "when [the rumours] concern the head of state and are passed on to foreigners posted in Moscow, their likelihood of being KGB plants becomes stronger".[28]

More noticeably indicative of KGB malfeasance was the scandal surrounding the arrest of Nicholas Daniloff in September 1986. Immediately following an apparent conciliatory measure by Gorbachev in enlisting heavy media coverage of the KGB's success in exposing the alleged spy Ilya Suslov, the aforementioned American journalist who was arrested and detained on 30 August, accused of espionage. In fact, the KGB had framed Daniloff, the Moscow correspondent for *U.S. News and World Report*, as a security agent posing as a priest who had convinced his quarry to deliver a letter to the U.S. Embassy which contained an offer to provide American operatives with Soviet intelligence information.[29]

The aim of the KGB, ostensibly, was to secure the release of one of their agents, G. Zakharov, a Russian physicist who had been arrested in New York on similar charges the previous week[30], but the timing of this incident could not have been worse. Gorbachev

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[27]Tatu, Michel: Mikhail Gorbachev: The Origins of Perestroika. A.P.M. Bradley, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 121

[28]Tatu, p. 121

[29]Doder, Dusko and Branson, Louise: Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin. (New York: Viking, 1990), p. 158

[30]Doder and Branson, p. 158

was at the time working assiduously to secure a date for a U.S.-USSR summit (which would occur at Reykjavik in October), clearly a difficult task in view of Ronald Reagan's policy toward the Soviet Union.

The Daniloff arrest closely paralleled the mustard gas incident of 1964 which had precluded a proposed meeting between Khrushchev and German leaders, as both were part of campaigns to damage the prestige of the leader abroad and undermine his program at home. Apparently little had changed in the 22 years between these two incidents, as the KGB was still able to present the government with a fait accompli, and the leader was still obligated to defend the actions of his security organs. Soon after the Daniloff affair, in December 1986, dissident Anatolii Marchenko died in his place of imprisonment, under suspicious circumstances, just as a campaign of liberation of political prisoners was underway. Gorbachev was clearly vulnerable to KGB malignance at this time;

> "He had inherited Andropov's reformist coalition, in which the KGB, one of the three main institutional pillars in the system, was an essential component. He had alienated the military, the second pillar... and he was at war with the conservative majority in the party, the third pillar. Without KGB Chairman Chebrikov's backing, Gorbachev's position would become intolerably precarious."[31]

In early 1987 the relationship between Gorbachev and the organs took a turn for the worse. In the latter months of the previous year there had been increasingly frequent cries for judicial and legal reform, as legal experts expressed in the press the need to "protect individuals' rights by introducing greater access to the criminal process for defense lawyers and full publicity for trials".[32] This did not bode well for the KGB, as the organs were generally included as one of the organizations in

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[31]Doder and Branson, p. 158

[32]Knight, KGB, p. 100

need of reform. On 2 October the Politburo had recommended perestroika for the procuracy, the courts, and "other law enforcement agencies" in an effort to regulate the criminal process[33], and on 30 November the Central Committee issued a resolution in the same vein. It appeared that Gorbachev, until now sheltering the organs from any extensive restructuring, would now have to redress the issue.

The controversy surrounding the case of journalist V. Berkhin marked a turning point in Party-organs relations, in that it exposed the KGB to public criticism for the first time.[34] Illegality of KGB procedure was revealed in the press when the arrest of Berkhin, working on uncovering corruption in the Ukraine Party ranks, was revealed as having been a KGB frameup to halt the investigation.[35] Gorbachev made no effort to shield the organs from the negative publicity surrounding the affair, and Chebrikov was compelled to respond. The front page of *Pravda* on 8 January 1987 featured an article by Chebrikov acknowledging misconduct by the Voroshilovgrad KGB, and announcing the removal of the chief of this bureau and disciplinary measures taken against several mid-level officers.

This episode was a first in that the KGB had never been forced to endure criticism before (even Khrushchev had stopped short of castigating the organs as they existed after Stalin's time), and in that the chief was forced to make concessions to legality. Chebrikov stated in the article that the KGB "was taking additional measures to ensure rigorous adherence to legislation".[36] As well, glasnost' in the media had hereby terminated the Party's ability to consign the KGB to do its bidding beyond the confines of law.

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[33]Knight, KGB, p. 100

[34]Knight, KGB, p. 102

[35]The malfeasance was revealed in successive articles appearing in *Pravda* on 29 November 1986 and 4 January 1987.

[36]Chebrikov, quoted in Parker, John W.: Kremlin in Transition, Volume II: Gorbachev, 1985 to 1989. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1991), p. 156

A Party plenum held in January 1987 saw a resolution passed which forewarned of coming changes, requesting the following:

> "...improving the mentality of cadres of the security organs, training them in behaving in a way more appropriate to the climate of increasing democracy and *glasnost*. They must remember that those who are in charge of security have to be blameless in matters of the Law, the Party, and the People."[37]

In keeping with his policy of providing the Soviet citizenry with greater freedom and respect for their human rights, Gorbachev began to curtail the more vaguely defined KGB activities. The campaign against dissent was virtually abolished, and over 300 political prisoners were released from prisons, as well as another 64 from psychiatric hospitals.[38] Arrests for political crimes, which invoked Article 70 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR referring to anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, were also completely halted. As well, invocation of Article 190-1 of the Code, which referred to the circulation of false statements that defame the Soviet state, cases of which were commonly delegated to the MVD by the KGB for investigation, was largely curtailed.[39] The resulting emergence of free speech in the Soviet Union was unprecedented. Never in its history had the KGB been forced to limit itself to threats and harrassment against dissent. As one source noted at the time, "the current apparent moratorium on political arrests has all but deprived KGB employees working in the area of domestic security of their main operational weapons of coercion".[40] In short, these officers now had very little to do. While the organs still harrassed dissidents and attempted to control them through arrests for lesser offenses such as hooliganism or disrupting public order, glasnost' had clearly reduced their mandate.

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[37] *Pravda*, 29 January 1987. See Yatu, p. 122

[38] Knight, Amy: "The KGB and Soviet Reform", in Problems of Communism, 38 (5): p. 63

[39] Knight, Amy: The KGB and Democratization: A New Legal Order?", in The Soviet Empire: The Challenge of National and Democratic Movements. Ra'anan, Uri, ed. (Massachussetts: D.C. Heath and Co., 1990), p. 50

[40] Knight, "The KGB and DEmocratization", p. 63

Meanwhile, scrutiny by the press on KGB operations continued. In December 1987 *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published the story of fabricated charges and a forced confession in the case of an A. Malyshev, who was wrongly imprisoned for two years. In March 1988 *Izvestia* questioned the integrity of the Turkmen KGB, pointing out that senior security officials in this region enjoyed inordinate wealth.[41] Throughout 1988 the vituperative anti-KGB media campaign intensified:

> "In April the Soviet humor magazine *Krokodil* published a letter accusing the KGB of inspiring a smear campaign against the emigre writer Vassily Aksyonov. Then in July, Moscow television broadcast a discussion on literature in which the writer Vladimir Dudintsev pointedly asked why the KGB should be allowed to interfere with literature. In that same month, *Znamya* carried a sharp critique of a book of stories about the KGB, noting that it glorified the security police and stirred up 'spy mania'."[42]

In addition, *Argumenty i Fakty* published an article in August which directly criticized the number of people (clearly KGB agents) employed for the sole purpose of guarding secrets. A letter from a reader expressed the opinion that the KGB should be subjected to "public oversight".[43]

The options of the KGB in responding to these criticisms, considerably reduced in the past months, seemed only to include response in kind. The aforementioned *Argumenty i Fakty* became the venue for a regular column entitled "The KGB Informs and Comments". Ostensibly for "keeping readers abreast of KGB activities and programs"[44], the column was more of a propaganda effort to convince the public of the multifarious and meaningful services that the organs were performing. As for the chief, it was evident that "by 1987 the extent and pace of Gorbachev's new thinking had become too

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[41] Knight, "The KGB and Soviet Reform", p. 65

[42] Knight, "The KGB and Soviet Reform", p. 65

[43] See Knight, "The KGB and Soviet Reform", p. 65

[44] Knight, "The KGB and Soviet Reform", p. 66

much for Viktor Chebrikov".[45] His last gasp, which may have been a public relations success but which did not prevent the coming changes, was a front page interview in *Pravda* of September 1988. In it Chebrikov claimed that the KGB had remained strong while championing perestroika, and invoked the tired theme of the need to counteract western conspiracy.[46] Chebrikov also responded to the secrecy issue, noting that the organs had endorsed a relaxation of secrecy rules, claiming that many documents were being declassified and that "a number of other restrictions that were a breeding ground for formalism have been lifted".[47]

Gorbachev appeared to have changed the organs significantly, and could continue to do so as long as they remained committed to supporting his reforms. Chebrikov remained defiant in his opposition however, and the tone of his speeches remained cautionary, advising restraint and vigilance in view of the vulnerability of the USSR to western conspiracy in this age of openness. In October 1988 Chebrikov was 'promoted' out of the ranks of the organs, appointed to head the Party commission supervising legislative reform. He was replaced in the KGB by Vladimir Kryuchkov, the former head of the First Chief (foreign intelligence) Directorate. Whether this was an intelligent move by Gorbachev was difficult to discern at the time, as Chebrikov would now be able to maintain KGB control, if tradition meant anything, while influencing multitudinous forthcoming legislation:

> "Chebrikov no doubt welcomed the opportunity to put a conservative stamp on the long list of upcoming legislation, including legislation concerning the KGB and the new institutional arrangements for national security decision-making that the Supreme Soviet is to consider"[48]

While losing his KGB chairmanship, Chebrikov managed to retain his

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[45]Andrew and Gordievsky, p. 624

[46]Knight, The KGB and Soviet Reform", p. 67

[47]Chebrikov, quoted in Knight, "The KGB and Soviet Reform", p. 69

[48]Parrott, p. 31

seat on the Defense Council and membership in the Politburo. Up to this point, his career had followed the pattern of many KGB chiefs who would later come within striking distance of power, although he would not get such a chance.

The choice of Kryuchkov is somewhat problematic. Not a Party apparatchik who could be easily controlled by Gorbachev, or an official known to favour reform[49], Kryuchkov was rather a twenty-year policeman, and before that a subordinate of Andropov who had helped to put down the Hungarian reformist movement in 1956. While one explanation for his selection might be that Gorbachev had not consolidated his power base sufficiently to install one of his own cronies as KGB chief, there was also the possibility that the selection of Kryuchkov, who bypassed two officials senior to him, was "part of a stratagem to reshape the KGB into an institution devoted more to foreign intelligence gathering than to domestic political repression".[50] There seems to be some credence to this theory in view of Gorbachev's apparent desire for a reduced KGB presence internally, and even more convincing is the fact that, while domestic KGB officers are generally opposed to East-West detente policies, foreign intelligence officers are generally favourable, because of two factors:

> "The relaxation of East-West tensions facilitates espionage and the theft of foreign technology, and it upgrades the significance of KGB political operations (in contrast to Soviet military programs) as a means of enhancing Soviet interests abroad."[51]

A third reason for appointing Kryuchkov is simple enough; Gorbachev knew his man. It had been Kryuchkov who had made certain that Gorbachev had been consummately prepared for his critical trip to London in late 1984, and Gorbachev had taken the unusual risk of taking Kryuchkov, incognito, to Washington for the signing of a

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[49] See Knight, "The KGB and Soviet Reform", pp.62-63

[50] Parrott, p. 31

[51] Parrott, p. 32

missile pact in December 1987. As Gordievsky noted proudly, "the appointment for the first time ever of the head of the KGB's foreign intelligence arm as its chairman was evidence both of the prestige of the FCD [First Chief Directorate]... and the importance Gorbachev himself attached to briefing by it."[52] It has been insinuated that Kryuchkov's appointment was the repayment of a debt Gorbachev had owed to the FCD, but the familiarity of the two men must be acknowledged; "it was commonly said that he [Kryuchkov] was one of the people closest to Gorbachev".[53]

Kryuchkov initially proved to be a willing accomplice in perestroika and glasnost' policies, and also had no qualms about self-criticism when it came to the organs, stating that one of the problems if the KGB was that "we have always been submerged in cliches and stereotypes".[54] The new chief's view of perestroika was striking in its contrast to Chebrikov's:

> "According to Kryuchkov perestroika had made it harder for Western intelligence agencies to compromise Soviet citizens travelling abroad, because the expression of unorthodox political ideas could no longer be made a basis for blackmail."[55]

With Kryuchkov installed as KGB chief, it now appeared plausible that democratic reforms affecting the organs were possible. In 1987 the initiative had been taken to change the legislation governing the organs, as well as the drafting of a new criminal code. Since 1959 the organs had been governed by a statute on state committees. After the project was first proposed, little progress was made between 1987 and 1990, the only mention being periodic promises of continued effort by the chiefs. In his *Pravda* interview Chebrikov had indicated that the KGB was actively involved in preparing the new legislation, and had several of their

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[52]Andrew and Gordievsky, p. 625

[53]Albats, p. 202

[54]Andrew and Gordievsky, p. 626

[55]Parrott, p. 32n

own people placed on the Legislative Proposals Commissions of the Supreme Soviet.[56] Kryuchkov stated twice in the summer of 1989 that the new legislation would possibly be a law rather than a statute, and thus more binding.

The criminal code was due to appear in 1990, but there is no indication today that it was ever produced before the tumult of August 1991. It was noted in 1990 that it was not at all unlikely that the new code would be delayed, in view of the many bureaucracies and interest groups that had input into the process.[57] In July 1988 legal professor V.M. Savitsky, who was working on the recodification at the State and Law Institute, described the difficulties involved:

> "A more or less finished draft appears 'from nowhere'. When discussing it, scientists and practitioners have no idea what was there at the very beginning, what concept of the law was adopted as the basis, which departments and who in particular played a part in preparing the draft and what stance they all took... Commission members...argue until they are hoarse... and when the law emerges, it is almost unrecognizable."[58]

In January 1989 the draft principles of the new code were published[59], which would apparently ensure that circumstances such as those quoted above would not continue, but this was not followed by any speedy completion of the task at hand.

In April 1989 some piecemeal changes were made in the Code, as it was decreed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (the highest legislative body of the USSR) that the aforementioned Article 70 was to be amended, eliminating the vague charges of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and making punishable the somewhat more concrete charges of "public calls for the overthrow of the Soviet

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[56] Knight, "The KGB and Soviet Reform", p. 68

[57] Knight, "The KGB and Democratization", p. 49

[58] From an interview in *Argumenty i Fakty*, no. 28 (July 9-15, 1988), pp. 5-6. Quoted in Knight,"The KGB and Democratization", p. 49

[59] The publication of the draft principles was noted by Julia Wishnevsky in the *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR*, 2 January 1989.

State, or... obstructing the execution of Soviet laws".[60] This change came in the aftermath of the killing of demonstrators in Tbilisi by Soviet troops, but was not an improvement:

> "'Calling for the obstruction of the execution of Soviet laws or preparing materials containing such calls', for example, could be interpreted in such a way as to make even the most insignificant act of civil disobedience subject to prosecution and imprisonment."[61]

Another setback to those hoping for liberalization occurred when, in the same decree, a clause was added to Article 11 making it a crime punishable by up to three years in prison to "publicly insult or defame state organs or officials, elected deputies or public organizations".[62] This was meant to serve as a replacement for the aforementioned Article 190-1, which was repealed, but in fact constituted a huge setback to freedom of speech. Glasnost' appeared to be losing ground, as Gorbachev struggled to appease the conservative majority.

Two legal changes of Gorbachev's early tenure are worthy of mention here. In August of 1986 the government responded to western criticism by allowing Soviet residents to leave or enter the Soviet Union on personal business, "irrespective of their origin, social or property status, race, ethnic origin, sex, education, language or attitude towards religion". However, this addendum to the statute of 1970 On Entering and Leaving the USSR was followed by a list of conditions which had to be met with, and denial was possible "if they [the travellers] are privy to state secrets or *if there are other reasons of state security*".[63] In the end, the KGB had the final say as to who entered or left the Soviet Union.

In January 1988 the government issued a Statute on Procedures

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[60] *Izvestia*, 11 April 1989, cited in Knight, "The KGB and Democratization", p. 50

[61] Knight, "The KGB and Democratization", p. 51

[62] Knight, "The KGB and Democratization", p. 51

[63] Knight, "The KGB and Democratization", p. 54

and Conditions for Providing Psychiatric Assistance, which at first glance appeared to outlaw the abuse of this system for imprisoning dissidents and other healthy but unwanted persons. Upon closer scrutiny, however, it was discovered that these new stipulations did not apply to persons accused of crimes, and thus the abuse could continue unabated.[64] The nature of the legal system of the Soviet Union had not changed one iota under Gorbachev; it continued to issue seemingly ameliorative laws that were in fact either nonbinding or so meaningless as not to merit the paper they were printed on.

The new law on the KGB, scheduled to appear in 1990, finally was adopted on 16 May 1991 by the Supreme Soviet. Regardless of its content, the creation of the law and its publication shortly after was a landmark in the history of the security organs. It was heralded at the time; "It is a milestone of the reform movement initiated in 1985, marking the completion of the first stage, perestroika."[65] This, the first publication of any kind delineating the role of the organs since their creation in 1917, was definitely a step toward the institution of the rule of law in the USSR, but also made clear the sizeable role the organs had played and were clearly to continue to play for the regime. Article 1 was stunning in its breadth, revealing that the KGB was the real guarantor of the continued existence of the Soviet Union, with the following basic task:

> "to protect the constitutional order of the USSR and the republics against illegal infringements and to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state".[66]

Among the duties intrinsic to this role, and set out in the law, were all intelligence and counterintelligence operations at both the national and republic levels, protecting state security at economic establishments, which granted the KGB a role in the

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[64]Knight, "The KGB and Democratization", p. 54

[65]Yasmann, Victor: "Law on the KGB Published", in *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR*, 270 (2 August 1991): p. 12

[66]Yasmann, p. 12

economic life of the USSR, the maintenance of state security at all public gatherings, and supplying dossiers on individuals to the state bodies upon request.[67] The legal rights of the KGB were, according to Article 13, "equal to those of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the USSR Cabinet of Ministers and exceeding those of the elected legislatures of the Union republics".

It appeared clear that the adoption of a law on the security police was not an attempt to put new limits or restraints on the KGB. Rather, the power of the security organization was reinforced by the law, and there was almost no mention of limits whatsoever. As well, a new agency, the RSFSR KGB, was created where none had existed before for Russia specifically, as it had always fell under the auspices of the all-union organs. In the economy, the transition to a more western model was to be supervised by the organs, although the extent of this was left vague. As well, it was with this publication that it was first discovered that the KGB played a prominent role in the satellite and telecommunications industries, closely monitoring both.[68]

One particularily significant revelation provided by the new law for the purpose of this research occurred in Article 11, which dealt with the relationship of the KGB and the Party. Apparently, the Party was no longer to hold supervisory powers over the organs, which was a radical departure from tradition:

> "In their official activities, those working for state security bodies are to be governed by the demands of the law and are not bound by the resolutions of political parties and mass public movements pursuing political ends."[69]

This was in direct contravention to the provision of the 1959 statute which stated "The KGB is a political working organization of the CPSU".[70] The inclusion of this clause separating the organs

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[67] Tasmann, pp. 13-14

[68] Tasmann, p. 17

[69] Tasmann, p. 13

[70] Tasmann, p. 13

from political participation can only be seen as a huge stride taken in the direction of confining the KGB within legal boundaries, and concluded its history as the action arm of the Party. Many 'democratic' officials had long been calling for just such a measure, most noisily at the 1989 Party Congress. Oleg Kalugin, who was expelled from the organs for his outspoken calls for depoliticization of the KGB, had boldly stated in a 1990 interview that despite assuming a more democratic image, the KGB had been "virtually untouched by five years of perestroika".[71] This was no longer the case.

However bold the attempt, the KGB remained inextricably linked to the Party, as each and every one of its formal employees was a CPSU member. This was now an overt, more legitimate relationship[72], and yet it was a fact that the organs remained fundamentally unchanged insofar as their influence was concerned. One reporter dredged up familiar terminology in noting that "the full text of the law... covers so many aspects of state and public life that it virtually makes the KGB 'a state within a state'".[73] It seems somehow ironic though, that after finally having their status confirmed with the public after seventy-four years of doubt, the new 'legal' KGB would only maintain this new legitimacy for another three months.

The attempted coup of 19-21 August 1991 was equally important and considerably more difficult to configure than Gorbachev's succession, in that it is still not clear exactly what happened. What is clear is that the tumultuous events of August 1991 precipitated the demise of the Soviet Union and the CPSU, and facilitated the emergence of Boris Yeltsin as the preeminent political personage in Russia; it was plain and simply one of the

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[71] Kalugin, in an interview in *Moscow News*, 1 July 1990. Cited in Smith, p. 523

[72] Tasmann, p. 13

[73] Tasmann, p. 12

definitive moments of Soviet history. However, despite the fact of considerable KGB influence in the outcome, as might be expected in a time of instability, the political and social configurations of the Soviet Union had changed so radically by this time since 1985 that this event can barely be said to fall within the boundaries of 'Soviet history'.

It is difficult to discern a starting point in assessing the August putsch, but a brief overview of the ebbing of Gorbachev's support for his leadership, which is associated with his shift to the right, seems logical. This shift, which was not enough to placate those who would eventually move to oust him from power, came as a result of the fact that Gorbachev was having problems with the growing unpopularity of the course of leadership. Many interest groups were disenchanted; the decentralization of the economy, the abolition of the monopoly of the Party, the reduction of the budget and prestige of the military, and the creation of the conditions for secessionist movements in the republics all had the Russian population believing that the Soviet system was unravelling, as indeed it was. Whereas Gorbachev had in the early period of his rule purged conservatives and been heralded as a visionary by reformers, by 1990 the latter were divided amongst themselves and generally unsupportive of the leader.

In March 1990 Gorbachev took a particularily controversial stance in advocating the amendment of Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, the article which guaranteed the monopoly of the Communist Party in the USSR. This move, should it come to pass, would remove the ideological glue which had held the Soviet Union together throughout its history, and would open the door to anti-communist rebels and factions of all sorts. It was received positively by the population at large, which held rallies of a magnitude not seen since the Revolution[74], but was the subject of a bitter debate at the plenum in which it was proposed. In the

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[74] Numbers were as high as 200,000 people at several, according to Angus Roxborough. See Roxborough, Angus: The Second Russian Revolution: The Struggle for Power at the Kremlin. (London: BBC Books, 1991), p. 172

end, mention of the CPSU was retained in the constitution, in the context of sharing in policy-making along with "other socio-political organizations and mass movements"[75], but the Party was no longer the centre around which the rest of the Soviet Union revolved.

By this time, it was being lamented by conservatives and democrats alike that the USSR had no real government, and Gorbachev sought to remedy this problem through the creation of an Executive Presidency, outside of the Party and elected by the Congress. In March 1990 the creation of this position was approved by the Congress of the Supreme Soviet, which also elected Gorbachev the first Executive President of the USSR. Thus central authority appeared to be restored outside the aegis of a monolithic Party, but by now the centrifugal force of reform was threatening to disintegrate the union, as recently elected republican parliaments began to reject central authority.

At the Congress of People's Deputies of December 1990, after a strong showing by hardliners who campaigned on promises to fight to preserve the Soviet system, Gorbachev began to noticeably abandon his reformist program. His appointment of Gennadii Yanaev as Vice President, an official who had openly instigated opposition to Gorbachev's economic reforms in the past, along with his sacking of reformist MVD chief V. Bakatin and his repealing of glasnost in the media, signalled Gorbachev's shift to the right. His appointed cabinet, as well, was largely conservative in content, led by Finance Minister V. Pavlov. Gorbachev had by now alienated his strongest fellow reformers such as A. Yakovlev and Eduard Shevadnardze; the latter resigned as Minister of Foreign Affairs directly after the Congress in what was a shocking blow to the reformist cause. Outspoken reformer Boris Yeltsin, fired as Moscow Party chief after rebelling at a 1987 plenum and revived by a victory over Gorbachev in the March 1989 election of People's Deputies, had resigned from the Party in July 1990, and now was

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[75]Roxborough, p. 173

poised to lead the reformist cause, in direct opposition to Gorbachev. Kryuchkov, for his part, began to openly oppose perestroika on behalf of the organs as well in December 1990. Freed from Chebrikov's interference since the latter's removal from the Politburo in September 1989, Kryuchkov had apparently seen the effects of the reforms exceed his comparatively liberal tolerances.

The issue that precipitated the coup attempt, by all indications, was the proposed Treaty of the Union to deal with the shift of power to the various republics. In December 1990 both Kryuchkov and Defense Minister D. Yazov had strongly condemned nationalist movements in the USSR and voiced their fears that the Soviet Union would collapse if these were not contained. In the winter and spring of 1991, the hardliners continued to rail against Gorbachev and proposed placing limits on his power in favour of Prime Minister Pavlov. Gorbachev's appointees began to unite against him. Yanayev, Kryuchkov, new MVD chief B. Pugo and Yazov all took Pavlov's side in attempying a 'constitutional coup d'etat' on 17 June 1991, asking the USSR Supreme Soviet to expand the authority of the cabinet at the expense of the President.[76] Gorbachev was able to counter this manoevre through his influence in the Supreme Soviet, but it was clear that the odds were against his surviving much longer in the face of such powerful opposition. As well, he did nothing to discipline the unruly cabinet members for their misdeeds.

On 19 August 1991, the day before the treaty on the Union of Sovereign States was scheduled to be signed, which would legalize the breakup of the USSR, a State Committee for the State of Emergency (GKChP) acted with military force to attempt to take power in Russia. It was clear what would have occurred had they delayed, as Gorbachev noted:

> "The draft of the Union treaty was ready for signature. On 20 August in the St. George's Hall in the Kremlin delegations from six republics were due to sign it. As the country's

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[76] Hann, Dawn: "An Abortive Constitutional Coup d'Etat?", *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR*, 5 July, 1991, p. 1

President I was due to make a speech."[77]

The 'gang of eight', as they became known, was truly a formidable collection of individuals, consisting of the following:

Gennadii Yanayev, Vice President of the USSR
Valentin Pavlov, USSR Prime Minister
Vladimir Kryuchkov, Chairman of the USSR KGB
Dmitrii Yazov, USSR Minister of Defense
Boris Pugo, USSR Minister of Internal Affairs
Oleg Baklanov, First Deputy Chairman, USSR Defense Council
Vasilii Starodubtsev, Chairman of the USSR Union of Peasants
Alexandr Tizyakov, President of the Association of USSR State Industries

In view of the influence wielded by these men, it might well be wondered how they ever managed to fail in seizing power, and the answer lies in the fact that the conservative values of this leadership core were not shared by their subordinates. More specifically, the subordinates of Kryuchkov in the KGB, who supervised the military aspect of the coup, were not committed to their leader or his ideals, and thus created a situation where, for the first time since Beria, a succession attempt with the backing of the chief of the security organs failed.[78]

There is little doubt that Kryuchkov played a leading role in the organization of the coup: according to the head of the Russian KGB at the time, V. Ivanenko, the chairman should be considered to have been *the* organizer of the putsch.[79] The Chief Investigator of the Procuracy, E. Lisov, confirms the fact of KGB involvement from the beginning: "without the participation of the KGB, the conspiracy would have been impossible. It was precisely in its

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[77]Gorbachev, Mikhail: The August Coup: The Truth and the Lessons. (London: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 15

[78]It must be noted here that while the exact nature of the coup is still unclear, I accept what appears to be the most logical version - that involving Gorbachev as victim rather than accomplice. Moreover, I have opted to present events in the simplest light possible and accord to the insubordinate troops the credit that they seem to have merited, as their inaction appears to have been the sole cause of the failure of the coup attempt. As for Gorbachev's possible complicity in the events of 19-21 August, see Solovyov and Klepikova: Boris Yeltsin. (New York: Putnam Press, 1992), pp. 254-268. For Gorbachev's comments on the conspiracy issue, see Gorbachev: The August Coup, p. 28.

[79]Dunlop, John B.: The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 192

bosom that all the documents were drafted..."[80] It has been claimed that the planning for the coup began as early as 1989, when the KGB began to maintain surveillance over prominent democratic elements in Russia, including Boris Yeltsin and members of the Democratic Russia organization.[81] The investigation of the Procuracy into the putsch revealed that preparations began in earnest September 1990, when a 'prelude' occurred involving the appearance of several divisions of paratroopers just outside of Moscow. Current chief of the Russian security organization (at the moment considerably diminished in size and jurisdiction) Sergei Stepashin, who conducted an investigation for the Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Security shortly after the coup, declared many such manoevres were practised, "staged by the KGB under the pretext of introducing order".[82] By the time Gorbachev had left for his vacation on 4 August the preparations had been completed by the KGB, including the drafting of a declaration of a state of emergency and an arrest list thereafter - to be put into effect after the president had been isolated. Regular meetings of the coup leaders took place in a KGB safe house from 7 August onward.[83]

With such assiduous planning, why then was the coup such a dismal failure? While western media labelled the putsch a "fiasco" (New York Times), a "vodka putsch" (Wall Street Journal) and a "catalogue of farce, drunkenness, gullibility and incompetence" (The Guardian)[84], there were compelling factors other than vice or inadequacy. In all there have been six investigations of the events of 19-21 August by Russian authorities, two of which have been cited above, and through these the story becomes much clearer

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[80] Dunlop, p. 192

[81] Dunlop, p. 193

[82] Stepashin, in an interview in *CIS Today*, 4 February 1992, cited in Dunlop, p. 194

[83] Dunlop, p. 194

[84] See Miller, p. 71

than through personal memoirs. The most exhaustive investigation was that undertaken by the RSFSR Procuracy, which eventually in January 1992 indicted fifteen former Soviet officials with "conspiracy to seize power", while the most aggressive was a commission under the leader of the Democratic Russia bloc, L. Ponomarov.[85] This last commission was not allowed to present its findings or even complete its work, shut down as it was midway through the process by the speaker of the Russian parliament R. Khasbulatov. Ponomarov later claimed that he was halted because he was uncovering evidence of widespread complicity: "too many people are interested in there not being personnel changes [among the leftover elites]".[86]

The coup became known to the world with the issue of a decree on the morning of 19 August entitled "Appeal to the Soviet People" but, if we are to believe Gorbachev, the leader was detained without communication at his dacha at Foros in the Crimea the previous afternoon. This imprisonment was carried out by a group led by the chief of the Security Directorate of the KGB, Yuri Plekhanov, accompanied by the GKChP's spokesman O. Baklanov and Gorbachev's chief of staff V. Boldin.[87]

For the next three days the GKChP, employing the muscle available to the leaders of the KGB and the military, held the Soviet Union in its grip as it struggled to win over support for its program. While the content of this program is irrelevant to our purposes, the method by which the coup was attempted is important. From the beginning, the plotters made concessions to legality, hoping to maintain some legitimacy by utilizing Article 127(7) of the USSR Constitution which allowed the president to step

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[85] Dunlop, p. 189

[86] Ponomarov, in *The Boston Globe*, 23 January 1992. Cited in Dunlop, p. 189

[87] Boldin maintains his innocence in the affair, claiming he did not know what was going on, but accompanied the group blindly. However, he confirms Gorbachev's claim that the phone lines were cut unexpectedly. See Boldin, Valery: Ten Years that Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era as Witnessed by his Chief of Staff. E. Rossiter, trans. (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), pp. 25-30

aside if he was incapacitated in favour of his vice president.[88] The declaration of a state of emergency was also constitutional, in accordance with article 127(3), and the formation of the GKChP was provided for by Article 2 of the USSR Law on the Legal Regime of a State of Emergency. This law allowed for "the formation of a State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR to govern the country", and "outlined specific measures to be taken, including a ban on strikes and demonstrations, and the introduction of central control over the mass media"[89]

Thus this was not a typical coup d'état, as its perpetrators went to great lengths to ensure that a legal basis existed for all their actions, in the interest of creating "the illusion of a constitutional transfer of power".[90] The greatest defender of reform, Yeltsin, was actually the one acting illegally in calling for a general strike and issuing counterdecrees. Yanayev was able to respond to Yeltsin by outlawing all of the Russian president's decrees, and citing a constitutional basis (Paragraphs 1 and 4 of Article 127(3)[91]) for doing so. This adherence to legality in a time of crisis was unprecedented in the Soviet Union, and was in itself a tribute to the changes Gorbachev had wrought. In past times of legitimate succession, meaning after the death of a leader, there were no legal or constitutional tenets to be followed, and thus no attempt was made to impress anything upon the public other than a fait accompli and the survival of the communist cause. On the other occasion that a leader was forcibly removed from office, in 1964 with Khrushchev's ouster, the same lack of concern for legality had prevailed. The fact that the GKChP had even attempted to address the public before completing its coup was

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[88] See Thorson, Carla: "Constitutional Issues Surrounding the Coup", in *The Radio Liberty Report on the USSR*, 6 September 1991, p. 20

[89] Thorson, p. 20

[90] Thorson, p. 21

[91] Thorson, p. 22

a result of one thing only: glasnost'.

The KGB's role in the coup was manifest on two levels, although the two are simple enough to discern: the chairman supported the putsch while his subordinates rejected it. Never before in a succession struggle had the organs been asked to fire on civilians (excepting the original coup of 1917), so it is not known whether the troops would have carried out this order in other succession struggles. In the age of democratic reform, however, it was not to happen.

There is little doubt that Kryuchkov was committed to the coup, and there is considerable evidence that much of his organization was not, and did in fact throw their support behind Yeltsin after the latter's dramatic rejection of the coup. The second stage of the putsch, after the isolation of Gorbachev, was to be the arrest of some seventy persons on a list prepared by Kryuchkov beforehand. The names on this list have been pieced together by the various investigators, despite the disappearance of the actual document.[92] Many scholars speculate as to why Yeltsin was not arrested, and offer this omission as evidence of either incompetence or a conspiracy. However, Yeltsin's name, along with "virtually his entire team of top advisers", including Russian vice president A. Rutskoi and acting chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet Khasbulatov, were on the list.[93] This would seem to suggest that neither of the aforementioned scenarios was valid, and that despite the fact that Kryuchkov had ordered these arrests, they did not occur. Major General Viktor Karpukhin, the commander of the now-famous Alpha Group of the KGB during the coup, confirmed in a 24 August interview that he was ordered to arrest Yeltsin, and stated his reaction:

"I knew from the outset that these people would not be capable

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[92]The names were provided by cooperative former KGB agents, and were published in *Argumenty i Fakty*, no. 38 (1991):8. Dunlop notes several omissions, p. 329n101.

[93]Dunlop, p. 207

> of running the state. There were no strong personalities among the eight... Therefore, I did all I could do to avoid doing anything."[94]

Oleg Kalugin, who as a member of the legislation had access to and from the White House during the upheaval, was also apparently on this list, and in spite of his knowledge of this fact was roaming around Moscow on foot throughout the time of the coup. At one point he encountered a KGB agent who enlightened him as to the loyalty of the organs to the cause of the GKChP:

> "I had decided to take the Metro to the White House and was on the escalator, heading to the subway platform, when I heard a man's voice behind me.
> 'Don't turn around', he commanded. 'You will be arrested, but not today. I will warn you when it is coming. But your friends Gdlyan, Yakunin and several others will be arrested today... You are not on the list today, but I will warn you when it happens.'"[95]

There is speculation that the KGB staff undermined the putsch from the beginning in this manner. Yeltsin may have been alerted of his pending arrest beforehand[96], and Gorbachev may have been tipped off about the coup beforehand, which brought about the speculation about a conspiracy. The *Washington Post* also reported that KGB agents provided the Russian government with information about the communications of the military and the organs themselves.[97]

The centre of the putsch while it lasted was the White House; by the second day several thousand people had gathered outside this building. This was not indicative of widespread opposition to the coup; most scholars note that the public was apathetic, and a few thousand Muscovites was hardly a significant number considering the population of the city. As Kalugin notes, "the masses were waiting

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[94]Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), 6 September 1991

[95]Kalugin, p. 353

[96]Miller, p. 74

[97]*Washington Post*, 28 August 1991. Cited in Miller, p. 74

to see how the drama in the capital would play itself out".[98] By the time the call finally came to storm the White House, where Yeltsin and many reformers had held out, the fate of Kryuchkov and the rest of the group of eight had already been decided.

The order, as given to Karpukhin, is described by him as such:

> "At 3am special police units would clear the square using gas and water cannons to disperse the crowd. Our unit would come in from behind them from land and air, using helicopters, grenade launchers and other special equipment. We would occupy the building."[99]

As to how long the operation would have taken, should it have been carried out as ordered, Karpukhin stated "My boys are virtually invulnerable. All this would have taken about fifteen minutes".

Although the fact that the KGB was almost unanimously opposed to any order to take action against civilians is not disputed, the source of the refusal to obey Kryuchkov's order is a source of debate. Two of Karpukhin's deputies, M. Golovatov and S. Goncharov, claim that it was their decision, after consulting with the other officers of Alpha Group, not to launch the operation, and that Karpukhin had been "absolutely" willing to carry out the order.[100] Karpukhin, predictably, claims he had no such whim, and is supported on this matter by Pavel Grachev, commander of the airborne troops at the time (and now Defense Minister), who states that the general had told him that he "had assessed the situation and made a decision", not to send his men on this mission.[101]

After the failure of Alpha Group to storm the White House, the coup fell apart. Kryuchkov did not even bother to call on a second

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[98] Kalugin, p. 353

[99] See FBIS, 6 June 1992, p. 20

[100] See FBIS, 6 September 1991, p. 20

[101] Interview in *Izvestia*, 4 September 1991. Cited in FBIS, 6 September 1991, p. 21

group to take the place of the first.[102] Alpha Group had been his elite unit, the group which had performed the most difficult tasks in recent times, including the seizure of a television station in Vilnius several months earlier in an operation that was not popular among the men or the public. Perhaps Kryuchkov knew that the chance for success was lost. Having as they did access to communications, perhaps the plotters had heard that when a BBC correspondent had telephoned the KGB headquarters that afternoon, she had been told "We're all for Yeltsin here!"[103]

Yeltsin later claimed that the KGB had been the prime mover in the coup[104], and it appears that the failure of the organs to act in a unified manner was the main reason for its failure; "the courage of many people led to the collapse of the coup, but if the state security apparatus had acted as a disciplined force, the courage of these people would have gone for naught".[105] The leaders of Alpha Group, a force of 15,000 men, stated;

> "We could have gone in there, but we wouldn't have come out. Not because everyone would have been killed, but because it would have been impossible to come out and see all that we had done."[106]

Immediately after the coup had fizzled, the people of Moscow vented their anger against the KGB as had never occurred before. A crowd assaulted the Lubyanka on 22 August with spray paint and placards, and finally (with the help of a crane supplied by nervous Moscow city officials) toppled the statue of Dzerzhinsky in front of the KGB headquarters.

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[102] B Group, originally planned to second A Group's assault on the White House, was not called on to take the leading group's place. There is some evidence of KGB troop movement in Moscow after 5am on 21 August, but either Kryuchkov turned them back or they refused to march further. See Bonnell, V.E., Cooper, A. and Friedin G., eds.: Russia at the Barricades: Eyewitness Accounts of the August 1991 Coup. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 359

[103] See Elliot, Iain: "Three Days in August: On the Spot Impressions", *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR*, 6 September 1991, p. 65

[104] Yeltsin, Boris: The Struggle For Russia. A. Fitzpatrick, trans. (New York: Random House, 1994), p. 49

[105] Miller, p. 76

[106] Golovatov and Gonckarov, in an interview in *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 28 August 1991. Cited in FBIS, 6 September 1991, p. 21

Conclusion

After the experience of the Stalinist terror, in which the organs, populated as they were by thugs, slaughtered much of the Party, the trend among leaders in Soviet Russia was to protect themselves by attempting to elevate the security apparatus above this type of behaviour. This was to be accomplished firstly by bringing the KGB into the political fold through an alliance with the Party, and secondly by employing a more sophisticated brand of personnel. As well, various attempts were made to impose a legal framework on organ activities. The problem with the first aspect of this solution was that when Party ideology disintegrated, as it always did during times of disunity and particularly during succession struggles, the KGB was left to follow its own path in the absence of a guide. Invariably the security chief, having been painstakingly promoted into the political elite by alliance-minded nomenklatura members, became free to choose his own course of action either in supporting a favourable candidate or in making a play for power himself. Armed as he was with a formidable configuration of potential force, he was often the decisive factor in the selection of a new leader.

The problem with the second aspect of this solution was that a highly educated KGB personnel, while eliminating some of the brutality of the Stalinist era, also entailed the creation of a politically cognizant and ambitious organization. With the new Komsomol-indoctrinated elite force, as it was portrayed, the era of a blindly loyal security body, as had existed under Stalin to large degree, came to an end. The security police from Khrushchev onward were aware that their greatest chance for a unhampered career lay with the promotion of their own organization above all, even if this necessitated a separate agenda from that of the Party. When the Party and its ideology were swept out of predominance by

Gorbachev, the KGB was left without a guide once again, and did what could only have been expected - it reacted to the power vacuum by seeking to enhance its own position. The difference was that by 1991 security personnel had experienced a new era of radical change and ideological debate which was chaotic in comparison to the pre-Gorbachev Soviet regime, and thus were not united by dogma under their chief as they had been in the more predictable past. This fact, coupled with the circumstance of being ordered to shoot on their own people in the interests of a reactionary junta, sufficed to precipitate a mutiny. In the heady days of glasnost' and perestroika, communist ideology had been eschewed by some and not by others in favour of democratic reform, and there was no common cause to unite the troops. It appears that the forces of forward progress won out in this instance.

The legal measures that were implemented to attempt to control the organs were often honourable attempts on the surface, and largely seemed to be efforts to placate those who feared the recurrence of Stalinist terror. Invariably, however, these laws and decrees fell short of what seemed to be their mark. The KGB was able to either circumvent or influence a quick recantation of these laws, and thus were seldom restricted at all by any new legislation. The bottom line seemed to be that those who held power, Khrushchev included, desired to maintain a strong KGB in the interest of supporting the leadership's continued predominance. However, this alliance seldom proved to be a durable one.

The history of the succession struggle in the Soviet Union has been not so much a process of evolution as a tale of neglect. The Soviet system was prevented from reaching maturity when its refinement as a polity was stunted by a lack of consideration for transition between leaderships. In a system which had no system for succession, a struggle was constantly in progress, and intensified periodically as leaders appeared to be on the way out. The ongoing struggle preordained two conditions: firstly that the Party was never even remotely united in purpose, and secondly that

certain individuals were constantly attempting to augment their power base against other potential successors. As well, no coherent ideology could be maintained while the Party was divided within itself. The organs, with their long history of close contact with the Party, played a significant role in the political system by stepping into the vacuum created by a weak or embattled leadership and decisively influencing every succession crisis since the revolution. As well, we have seen that security chiefs, often promoted out of the organs after a period in this position, never really eschewed their connections with the security organization, and invariably used their influence here to further their own causes in the Party and government. An alliance with the KGB chief came to be a prerequisite for any attempt to accede to power in the Soviet Union; it was not a coincidence that no leader, with the exception of Khrushchev, an anomaly in many ways, ever came to power in the Soviet Union without the support of the organs.

Khrushchev managed to accomplish the unlikely in outmanoevring Beria and his secret police to place himself in a position of predominance in the period immediately following the Stalinist era of absolute police domination. However, to do so he needed the united support of all other elements of Soviet political life against the organs; he had this backing because the security apparatus was unanimously viewed as the remnant of Stalin's era most urgently in need of reform. He managed to subjugate the organs temporarily, as the only leader who seriously attempted to create a more rigorously defined role for this organization strictly under the supervision of the Party. But even Khrushchev eventually allowed the organs to regenerate into a semi-autonomous force after he had consolidated his power in 1956, and as well allowed all of the legislative restrictions he had created for them to be undermined.

In Andropov the trend of former security chiefs aspiring to reach the pinnacle of power came to its logical conclusion. Andropov had the advantage of a weakened system and an absence of strong contenders for power and, though he came to power as a

versatile official with extensive foreign policy experience, he largely ran the Soviet Union as a police state. Andropov brought KGB influence in government and Party to levels approaching that of Beria's under Stalin. While Beria had personally embodied the organs in the Stalinist regime, however, Andropov promoted a throng of police officials into influential Party positions, creating a presence which could not be eradicated with the removal of one man.

It appears that the most firmly entrenched pattern in Soviet succession struggles was the necessity of physical force or the threat of it to reinforce a candidate's claim to power. After Khrushchev the practise of co-opting the KGB became established for potential usurpers, and this enabled these officials, whether overtly or implicitly, to threaten to turn the organs on uncooperative Party members if they did not cooperate. For this reason it cannot be claimed that the KGB ever ceased to be a political organization, or ever lost its semi-autonomous status. The fact that these most critical events in Soviet history, the changes of leadership, were decided through power politics and always involved the threat of coercion precludes the presence of rule of law. The KGB, while often law-abiding where the law was conclusive, always was provided with enough leeway to operate at the discretion of its leadership. When in the crises of succession there were no legal guidelines, the organs operated extra-legally and were quite free to influence the outcomes as their chiefs saw fit.

In the post-Soviet era, although the organs had apparently been dismantled and relegated to a comparatively impotent role in political life, the potential for rehabilitation to former levels of influence was never eliminated. It has been lamented that Yeltsin has followed the pattern of Soviet leaders in shying away from the imposition of meaningful restrictions on the security apparatus, and in view of recent events it appears that the KGB has survived the USSR.

In December 1991 the new security chief Bakatin was questioned as to whether the KGB after the coup was not largely the same as it

had been before. His reply was reminiscent of post-Stalinist chiefs: "Yes, we are the same people... the question is not whether people have remained the same but whether they are capable of changing..."[1]

After he had restructured the organs, establishing an Interrepublic Security Service (MSB) and a Ministry of Security and the Interior on 19 December 1991, Yeltsin began to show signs of reverting to a familiar dependency on the organs in order to maintain order and stability. Legislation of questionable character began to surface; on 24 February 1992 it became known that a draft law existed in the RSFSR proposing to "establish criminal liability of up to seven years deprivation of liberty for acts... committed for any purpose flagrantly contravening the interests of the Russian Federation".[2] At this time, from his prison cell, Kryuchkov claimed that the KGB could not have dreamed of exerting the kind of power under Gorbachev that the Russian state security organs enjoyed under Yeltsin.[3]

From the beginning of his presidency, Yeltsin appears to have been vulnerable to the influence of security officials. His Security Minister, Viktor Barranikov, betrayed the president's close confidence when in 1993 he assumed shared leadership of the October armed uprising at the White House. Recently there are ominous signs that the chief of Yeltsin's Presidential Guard, Andrei Korzhakov, is exerting considerable influence over the president. On 24 January 1995 *Izvestia* reported that Yeltsin was considering establishing a National Guard as an "instrument in the battle for political power", under the leadership of Korzhakov.[4] This move, which would create an elite supplementary force to Yeltsin's 4000 member security force, was cited by *Izvestia* as

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[1]From an 18 December 1991 interview. See FBIS, 27 December, 1991.

[2]From an interview with S. Kornilov in *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 24 February 1992. See FBIS 25 February 1992.

[3]From an interview in ITAR-TASS 27 February 1992. See *Radio Liberty Research Report*, 27 March 1992.

[4]*Izvestia*, 24 January 1995. See OMRI (*Open Media Research Institute Report*), 25 January 1995.

indicative of Korzhakov's "hard-line influence" on the president.

More recently, a bill passed by the Duma on 15 February 1995 was particularily revealing. The Federal Counterintelligence Service (FSK), which had been viewed by many as the organization closest resembling the former KGB today, was strengthened considerably. The bill gave this body what *Izvestia* called "sweeping powers, allowing it to carry out operations in almost total secrecy".[5] The restrictive measures imposed by and after Gorbachev seemed to be in the process of being reversed here, as the organs regained an extra-legal and autonomous status: "Methods used in countering crime and espionage... will be kept secret from the General Prosecutor's Office which is in charge of all law enforcement bodies."

On 15 March the progression towards the recreation of the organs as an organization equal in strength to the fromer KGB continued when the heads of all CIS secret services agreed to set up a formal organization to coordinate all their activities.[6] This announcement, occurring in the aftermath of the murder of Russian Public Television director V. List'ev on 28 February, was made under the pretext of battling the crime problem. It appeared that Sergei Stepashin, chief of the FSK, was manoevring to install himself as the next true organs chief, in view of the fact that he was the spokesman for the various organizations in making the announcement.

Finally, Yeltsin's decree of 28 March 1995 seemed to complete the process of resurrection. By this decree the president created a new organization, the Federal Security Service (FSB) out of the FSK while at the same time "vastly broadening the authority of the special services", making a "reanimation of the KGB" seem complete.[7] It appears that Stepashin will have competition for the

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[5] *Izvestia*, 15 February 1995. See OMRI, 17 February 1995.

[6] *Interfax*, 15 March 1995. See OMRI, 16 March 1995.

[7] See OMRI, 30 March 1995

chairmanship of this new KGB, as Korzhakov, known to be a close personal friend of Yeltsin, is said to be lobbying for this post as well.[8]

If there is the danger of a putsch today (and Yeltsin has already survived two in which he was far from being ensured of survival), the conspirators will have to consider that there is in existence a legal tenet of the constitution which will have to be circumvented if they are to achieve the appearance of legitimacy. As well, a putsch led by the organs seems less likely at present since the structure of this body does not render it capable of the autonomy which it once possessed. Having said this, however, it seems that not a week goes by without some scrap of news which bodes of a resurgence of the security organs to former levels of influence.

While it is too early to speculate as to the political role which will be in fact allotted to the revitalized organs by Yeltsin or those around him, the president appears to be fostering close ties between himself and a powerful security force. Whether this phenomenon is temporary and is tied (as some optimists have suggested) to transient factors, such as Yeltsin's ill health or the presidential elections scheduled for 1996, remains to be seen. Unfortunately, Yeltsin's own statements when the Chechen war began about the importance of now developing 'state power' within the Russian Federation were vague enough to cause many Russian democrats to decry a return to the Soviet past. The institutional constraints limiting the chance of this occurrence have been reduced by the diminished role of Parliament under the Yeltsin constitution, the relative weakness of the media and, paradoxically enough, by the feebleness of law enforcement. It appears that the Russian[9] leadership today finds itself at a crossroads, with a choice between a return to the familiar past and an unsure path to

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[8]As reported by *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. See ORRI, 30 March 1995.

[9]By 'Russian' the author wishes to imply *rossiiskii* rather than *russkii*, the former connoting a reference to all those peoples directly affected by the leadership decisions of post-Soviet Russia, rather than ethnic Russians exclusively.

future democracy.

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