

GORBACHEV -  
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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M S GORBACHEV:

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Summary

I. Early years; 1931-1949

Gorbachev was born in 1931 into a peasant family in the agricultural area of Stavropol (North Caucasus), which was occupied by the Germans between August 1942 and January 1943. After working as an assistant to a combine harvester operator Gorbachev entered Moscow University (paragraphs 1 to 4).

II. Moscow University, 1950-1955

Gorbachev studied law, but Moscow University was of decisive importance in his political career. He joined the Party in 1952 and was probably secretary of the University's Komsomol (the Party's youth wing) organisation (paragraphs 5 to 6).

III. Komsomol Work in Stavropol, 1956-1962

Immediately after university Gorbachev started his career as a Komsomol and Party official in his home region (paragraph 7).

IV. Party Work in Stavropol, 1962-1970

Gorbachev's first years as a Party official coincided with Khrushchev's last. He benefited from Khrushchev's numerous reorganisations of the Party apparatus, but also took a hand in returning the local Party organisation to its traditional form under Brezhnev (paragraph 8). He got an agricultural degree by correspondence (paragraph 9). He rose steadily in the Stavropol Party organisation, probably helped by the promotion to the centre of his former boss, Kulakov, and by the decline under Brezhnev of his immediate superior in the Stavropol regional party organisation (paragraphs 10 to 12).

V. First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom, 1970-1978

On election as First Secretary of the Stavropol Kraikom in 1970, Gorbachev became one of the regional Party Secretaries who are the backbone of the Party's organisation throughout the country (paragraph 13). Locally he supported schemes to improve incentives for farm workers and greater mechanisation of the harvesting process. Nationally, he became a Deputy to the Supreme Soviet and a member of the Party's Central Committee. As such he began to lead Party delegations abroad (paragraphs 14 to 15).

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### VI. To Moscow as Central Committee Secretary, 1978

Gorbachev's crucial promotion to Party Secretary for Agriculture in 1978 probably came about through a mixture of luck (the sudden death of Kulakov), connections with the leadership (Suslov's interest in the region, and its resorts, frequented by the leadership) and ability (noted by Brezhnev). (Paragraphs 16 to 17.)

### VII. Rise in the leadership under Brezhnev and Andropov, 1978-1984

At 47, Gorbachev was not exceptionally young to be made a Party Secretary, but his rise to full membership of the Politburo by 1980 was exceptionally rapid and was probably due in particular to Brezhnev's approval (paragraphs 18 to 19). Gorbachev's personal contribution to agricultural policies is hard to determine (paragraph 20). He rose steadily up the ranks of the Party Secretaries until he stood third after Andropov and Chernenko. With both sick in 1983, much of the burden of running Party affairs must have fallen on Gorbachev (paragraphs 21 to 22). In May 1983 he visited the West for the first time as a representative of the Soviet State (paragraph 24).

### VIII. Under Chernenko as General Secretary, 1984-March 1985

Gorbachev is unlikely to have challenged Chernenko for the leadership when Andropov died in February 1984. He retained the confidence of the rest of the leadership, as was shown by the exceptional breadth of his responsibilities as a Party Secretary (paragraphs 25 to 26). As Chernenko's health deteriorated the likelihood of Gorbachev succeeding him increased, though Gorbachev was not dictating policy (paragraphs 27 to 28). He visited the UK in December 1984 (paragraph 29).

### IX As General Secretary March 1985 -

Gorbachev's election was probably a foregone conclusion (paragraph 30). As General Secretary he has made an immediate impact through his style (paragraph 32), the consolidation of his power (paragraphs 33 to 35), and the urgency of his call for a better economic performance (paragraph 36). He has stressed that this will also determine the effectiveness of Soviet foreign policy (paragraph 37).

### X. Family

Gorbachev's wife is an important influence; they live as an extended family (paragraphs 38 to 39).

### XI Conclusions

A wide range of observers agree that Gorbachev is unusually talented (paragraph 40). As the first Politburo member not old enough to have fought in the War or to have held political office under Stalin, and the first in recent history to have had a university

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education, Gorbachev belongs to a new generation. The generational gap should not be exaggerated: Gorbachev has made his entire career in the Party apparatus, whose cautious and secretive methods have not been relaxed. But he reached political maturity under Brezhnev, when the Party came to recognise the complexity of the issues it was dealing with, sought specialist advice and strove for solutions that satisfied all interests. Gorbachev thrived in this atmosphere (paragraph 41). As General Secretary he continues to work through the system, trying through his own energy, youth and ability to have others put into practice principles to which they have long been paying lip service (paragraph 42).

Annex A Gromyko's speech to the Central Committee Plenum of 11 March 1985 recommending Gorbachev as General Secretary.

Annex B Gorbachev's aides.

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I Early years; 1931-1949

1. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev was born into a peasant family on 2 March 1931 in the village of Privolnoe in the Krasnogvardeisky district of Stavropol region. This is an important grain growing and sheep rearing area of the Russian Republic (RSFSR) in the North Caucasus. Gorbachev's birth place is in the north west of the region, bordering the neighbouring Rostov region.

2. Gorbachev was born after the forcible collectivisation of the peasants had largely been achieved, but just before one of its immediate consequences, the great famine of 1932-1934, which affected the north Caucasus as well as the Ukraine and Kazakhstan. As a child Gorbachev will have felt the effects of the war; his home was in a region occupied by the Germans between August 1942 and January 1943. According to the dissident Soviet historian Roy Medvedev, who has made enquiries about Gorbachev's background in Stavropol, Gorbachev was not evacuated, but the area was not heavily occupied, and living in a village Gorbachev might have had little or no contact with German troops.

3. Gorbachev's father, according to Medvedev, was a well-regarded combine-harvester operator who had been awarded the title Hero of Socialist Labour. He fought in the Soviet army and was fatally wounded in Košice (Czechoslovakia). Gorbachev was brought up in his paternal grandparents' home (his mother's role is not clear). His grandfather, who seems to have been a significant influence, was a Communist and a pioneer in the organisation of the first collective farms. His grandmother was an ardent believer and had him baptised.

4. Gorbachev's official biographies make much of his starting work in 1946 at the age of 15 as a machine servicer in a Motor-tractor Station (these were state run enterprises which from 1930 to 1958 served as agricultural machinery pools for collective farms and also as centres of political control). Gorbachev seems to have combined this work with his studies at secondary school. Nonetheless he had the unusual distinction of being awarded the Red

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Banner of Labour (ORBL), according to Zdeněk Mlynář (the former Czechoslovak Party Secretary who rose to prominence under Dubček and who was a personal friend of Gorbachev's at Moscow University).

II Moscow University, 1950-1955

5. Gorbachev entered the Law Faculty of Moscow University in 1950 (aged 19) and studied till 1955, the standard length of that course at the time. His elevation from the provinces to the most prestigious seat of learning in the Soviet Union was clearly of decisive importance for his later career. Gorbachev may have benefited from the reconstitution and expansion of the Soviet higher education system after the war. Stalin's campaign against the Jews from 1949 to his death may also be relevant. A high proportion of Soviet lawyers were Jewish and there may have been a requirement to replace Jewish law students with Russians. Gorbachev's own academic ability must also have played a part. Mlynář has ascribed Gorbachev's advancement to his ORBL.

6. Gorbachev was evidently exempted from military service through being at university, though he will probably have done a reserve officer's course concurrently. According to Medvedev he was made a Lieutenant in the reserve on graduation. Moscow University was the starting point of Gorbachev's political career. No date for his joining the Komsomol (the Party's youth wing) has been given, but according to a Soviet emigre (Lev Yudovich, who was in the Law Faculty) he soon became Komsomol organiser of his group and then of his course. In 1952, at the age of 21, he joined the Communist Party. According to one Western scholar, Gorbachev was secretary of the Moscow University Komsomol from 1954 to 1955 (it is normal for leading Komsomol officials to be Party members).

III Komsomol Work in Stavropol, 1956-1962

7. It was evidently Gorbachev's Komsomol and Party credentials, rather than his degree in law (although "excellent", according to Mlynář), which determined his next steps, and indeed his whole subsequent career. From 1955 to 1962 he was a Komsomol official in his home region of Stavropol. He was successively Deputy Head of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Stavropol Regional Committee (Kraikom) of the Komsomol (1955-56), First Secretary of

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the Stavropol Town Committee (Gorkom) (1956-58), and Second and then First Secretary of the Stavropol Kraikom of the Komsomol (1958-62). In 1961, as a Komsomol representative, Gorbachev was a voting delegate to the 22nd Party Congress, a historic occasion, when it was decided to remove Stalin's body from the Mausoleum.

IV. Party Work in Stavropol, 1962-1970

8. The start of Gorbachev's career as a Party official coincided with the last 2½ years of Khrushchev's tenure of office, with its constant administrative reorganisations, which seem to have worked in Gorbachev's favour. In the spring of 1962 Khrushchev reorganised the administration of agriculture with the creation of "Territorial-Production Administrations", bodies which covered several districts and administered collective and state farms. This reorganisation gave Gorbachev his first Party post, as Party Organiser of the Stavropol Territorial-Production Kolkhoz/Sovkhoz Administration. The end of that same year saw another reorganisation: the splitting of the Party into separate industrial and agricultural structures. This meant that there were now 2 Stavropol regional party organisations, one for industry and one for agriculture. In the course of the reorganisation, in December 1962, Gorbachev was advanced to the politically sensitive post of Head of the Department of Party Organs of the Stavropol Regional Party Committee (Kraikom). (This was presumably the agricultural Kraikom, which in Stavropol was the more important.) In this post Gorbachev will have dealt with party organisational matters and appointments throughout the region. Gorbachev's nomination for such a sensitive post could only have been made with the full approval, if not at the instigation of the then first secretary of the Kraikom, F D Kulakov (see paragraph 10 below). He remained in this job until September 1966 and thus will have been in charge of implementing in the Stavropol region the post-Khrushchev leadership's decision in November 1964 to restore a unitary party structure.

9. During these years Gorbachev was doing a correspondence course at the Stavropol Agricultural Institute, from which he graduated in 1967 as an agricultural economist. The Party has always encouraged its officials to further their education. The purpose of Gorbachev's further qualification - in academic terms worth much

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less than his degree from Moscow University - will have been to enhance his authority as a Party official in a largely agricultural region.

10. Between 1966 and 1978 Gorbachev rose steadily as a local party official. From 1966 to 1968 he was First Secretary of Stavropol Town Party Committee (Gorkom), from August 1968 to April 1970 he was Second Secretary of the Stavropol Regional Party Committee (Kraikom) and from 1970 to 1978 First Secretary of the Stavropol Kraikom. While it is impossible to say whether his connections played a greater part in this rise than his talent, it is undoubtedly relevant that his former superior, Kulakov (see paragraph 8 above), was transferred to Moscow and promoted in late 1964 after the fall of Khrushchev first to Head of the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee and then to Central Committee Secretary for Agriculture, from which position he could undoubtedly influence appointments in his former region.

11. It is also relevant that Kulakov's replacement as First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom was L N Efremov, a politician on a downward trend. Efremov had been a Candidate Member of the Politburo under Khrushchev, but was shunted aside to Stavropol by the new leadership and lost his Politburo status in 1966. Thus Gorbachev as Second Secretary from 1968 was serving under someone whom he may already have been earmarked to succeed.

12. The timing of Gorbachev's rapid promotion to First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom in April 1970, after less than 2 years as Second Secretary and at the early age of 39, may have been dictated by the approach of the elections to the Supreme Soviet in June 1970 and the 24th Party Congress in April 1971. The leadership presumably wished to deprive Efremov of his status as a Deputy to the Supreme Soviet and full member of the Central Committee, to which he had the unspoken right as Party leader of an important region. In the event, it was Gorbachev who acquired this status (see paragraph 15 below).

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V. First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom, 1970-1978

13. Gorbachev thus became a significant political figure at local and national level. He was now one of the regional Party secretaries who are the backbone of the Party's organisation throughout the country. His own region of Stavropol ranks high in importance because of its agricultural potential. As a Krai it also ranks in status above most other regions (oblasts) because it includes within its borders one of the regions set aside for national minorities within the Russian Republic - the Karachaevo-Cherkesskaya Autonomous Oblast.

14. As the Party boss of a major agricultural area Gorbachev was in a position to put his weight behind various agricultural schemes which had proved successful in his own region. In 1976 he advocated the "link" system of farming (whereby small teams are allocated specific areas of farmland to cultivate round the year and paid by results), which has now won Politburo approval (see paragraph 20 below). He also supported the "Ipatovo method" of harvesting by highly mechanised harvesting columns complete with their own transport, spare parts, canteens etc, which toured the farms completing the full harvesting and reploughing process in a single operation. Gorbachev acknowledged in a Pravda article in 1978 that this Ipatovo method (named after the district where it was evolved, which is also Gorbachev's Supreme Soviet constituency) cut across the link system and was not everywhere greeted with enthusiasm. It nonetheless met the Party's requirement for more intensive and mechanised cultivation and was recommended by a Central Committee decree and by a personal message from Brezhnev for wider application. As with so many similar initiatives, whatever its intrinsic local merits, its wider and frequently thoughtless application has led to the Ipatovo method being somewhat discredited.

15. Gorbachev's debut on the national stage came with his election in June 1970 as a Deputy to the Council of the Union of the USSR Supreme Soviet. In 1970 he was also elected a member of its Environmental Protection Commission and in 1974 of its Youth Affairs Commission. More importantly, in April 1971 he was elected to full membership of the Central Committee of the CPSU at the 24th Party

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Congress. This did not in itself confer any significant central decision-making role on Gorbachev (there were 240 other full Central Committee members), but gave him status in the Party. It also gave him the opportunity to travel abroad as a leading Party representative. He had travelled abroad before: to the GDR in 1966 to study Party management of economic reform, and to Czechoslovakia in November 1969 to discuss youth work, a difficult assignment in the atmosphere following the Soviet invasion. But as a member of the Central Committee he began to lead Party delegations: to Brussels in 1972, the FRG in 1975 and France in 1976. (Gorbachev and his wife also apparently made a tourist trip to Italy and France by car in the early '70s.)

VI. To Moscow as Central Committee Secretary, 1978

16. In July 1978 Kulakov, by then a Full Member of the Politburo, died suddenly, aged 60. Gorbachev was one of the speakers at his funeral. At the next routine Party Plenum on 28 November 1978 Gorbachev (then 47) was elected a Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU. (Though, as is customary, his responsibilities were not disclosed, it was clear that he was to supervise agriculture in place of Kulakov.)

17. There was a large element of luck for Gorbachev in this crucial promotion. Had Kulakov lived, Gorbachev might well have stayed on in Stavropol until at least Brezhnev's death, since movement of Party officials was becoming more and more sluggish. The choice of Gorbachev as Party Secretary supervising agriculture was probably dictated partly by his connections with the top leadership and partly by his ability. Gorbachev's connections will have been enhanced by having his former chief, Kulakov, in the centre, but the latter could obviously not have contributed directly to his promotion to Secretary. Gorbachev also had an unusual advantage in that Stavropol Krai includes the famous spas of Kislovodsk and Pyatigorsk, to which members of the leadership (Andropov regularly) repaired. Gorbachev will undoubtedly have seen to their comforts and visited them there. Gorbachev may also have had the backing of Suslov, who had been first secretary of the Stavropol Kraikom during the war and whose continuing interest in Stavropol was signalled by his representing the Politburo at the 100th anniversary celebrations

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of the town of Stavropol in May 1978. Finally, Gorbachev seems to have enjoyed Brezhnev's confidence, and this confidence was probably based to a large extent on Brezhnev's assessment of Gorbachev's ability, since it was not in Brezhnev's interest to choose anyone less than competent for the difficult post of agricultural Secretary. There were other regional Party Secretaries closer to Brezhnev who could have been chosen. Brezhnev showed particular warmth when presenting Gorbachev with an award in December 1978 for "working in one of the main granaries in the country, Stavropol". Brezhnev hoped that "in his new, responsible post of Central Committee Secretary, Mikhail Sergeevich will display his characteristic qualities of initiative and selflessness".

VII. Rise in the leadership under Brezhnev and Andropov, 1978-1984

18. At 47, Gorbachev was not exceptionally young to be elected a Central Committee Secretary. Katushev had been made a Secretary in 1968 at the age of 41, Dolgikh in 1972 aged 48 and Ryabov in 1976 aged 44. But Katushev lost his place on the Secretariat after 9 years and Ryabov after 3, while Dolgikh spent 10 years as a junior Secretary before being promoted to candidate membership of the Politburo in 1982, where he remains. Gorbachev, by contrast, rose exceptionally quickly in the Party hierarchy. He was made a Candidate Member of the Politburo in November 1979, one year after becoming a Secretary, and a full member a year later in October 1980. He thus became one of the select group of Party Secretaries who are also members of the Party's top decision-making body, the Politburo, and thus at the apex of the power structure of the Soviet Union.

19. Gorbachev's initial rise was not accompanied by any broadening of his responsibilities and must be attributed to his general acceptability to the rest of the Politburo and in particular to Brezhnev's desire to fill the gap in the Politburo left by Kulakov's death with a competent lieutenant overseeing the ever difficult agricultural sphere. This much can be deduced from Brezhnev's commendation of Gorbachev when presenting him in March 1981 with the

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Order of Lenin which he had (routinely) been awarded on his 50th birthday:

"This is an energetic and go-ahead man, who knows the economy. But the sector of the Party's management entrusted to him by the Politburo does indeed demand great energy, initiative and the search for effective solutions. I am talking about agriculture, the agro-industrial complex as a whole."

20. The nature and effect of Gorbachev's contribution to Soviet agricultural policy (and to other political matters) during this period are hard to determine. Under Brezhnev and since, all initiatives have been ascribed to the General Secretary and little room has been left for the public display of the political talents of other leaders. Gorbachev will undoubtedly have played a large part in formulating the major agricultural policy document of Brezhnev's latter years, the Food Programme, adopted in May 1982, but he is unlikely to have been equally involved in all aspects of this wide-ranging programme. Since becoming General Secretary he has strongly reaffirmed it and has endorsed two of its decentralising elements in particular: he has insisted on the genuine reorganisation of agriculture at the local level into territorially based agro-industrial associations (RAPO's); and Gorbachev has also been a consistent advocate of the "link", or "collective contract" system, as it is now called, which has always met with some reservation in Party circles because of the spectre of peasant private enterprise which it raises. It may be significant that while the system was formally endorsed at the May 1982 Plenum, it was Gorbachev who first explained its advantages authoritatively and cogently at a provincial conference in March 1983. On the other hand, Gorbachev has been critical of the poor implementation of the drainage and irrigation provisions of the Programme and it seems unlikely that he fully approved their further endorsement and extension under Chernenko at the October 1984 Plenum.

21. As Gorbachev rose in the Party, so he accumulated status in the Supreme Soviet. Having served as a member of 2 Commissions (Environmental Protection and Youth), he was made Chairman of the Legislative Proposals Commission in 1979 (the only formal use that

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has been made of his legal training) and of the Foreign Affairs Commission in 1984 (see paragraph 26 below for the political significance of this move). In 1980, in common with the other Politburo members, he was also elected a Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR for another, but less successful agricultural region, the Altai Krai in Southern Siberia (which he exchanged in February 1985 for a Moscow constituency).

22. Thanks to the death and retirement of his seniors, Gorbachev steadily improved his standing among the Party Secretaries. From the beginning of 1982, with the successive departure of Suslov and Brezhnev through death, and Kirilenko through retirement, Gorbachev's position improved, although in May 1982 Andropov was brought in from the KGB and placed ahead of the other senior Secretaries (probably because of his having served in the Secretariat earlier). When Andropov took over as General Secretary in November 1982 Gorbachev became third in line after Chernenko. The latter was absent for much of the Summer of 1983, and though a new secretary (Romanov) was brought in in June, the breadth of Gorbachev's responsibilities continued to increase. There were indications that he had taken on broader economic responsibilities and had some role in supervising Party organisation. Thus, whether or not stories that he enjoyed the particular confidence of the ailing Andropov are true, much of the burden of running the Party's affairs must have fallen on Gorbachev in the summer of 1983.

23. As a Senior Party Secretary, Gorbachev represented the CPSU at the Mongolian (1981), Vietnamese (1982) and the Portuguese (1983) Communist Party Congresses. He paid a more substantial, though less publicised visit to Hungary in October 1983 (according to a Hungarian official this was one of 3 visits, the others unpublicised, to look at agricultural reform).

24. In May 1983 Gorbachev visited Canada at the head of a Supreme Soviet delegation, his first visit to the West as a representative of the Soviet State, rather than Party. He had talks with Prime Minister Trudeau and toured Canadian agricultural enterprises, impressing his hosts with his detailed knowledge of the subject and with his unruffled reaction to their forthright assertions of the

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superiority of private farming over the Soviet system. He also appeared before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence of the Canadian House of Commons, at which he replied to questions, some hostile, while a verbatim record was taken. For a Soviet politician this is an unusual ordeal, and for Gorbachev to have agreed to submit to it reflects not only his own self-confidence but his knowledge of having the confidence of his Politburo colleagues.

VIII. Under Chernenko as General Secretary, February 1984-March 1985

25. Andropov died in February 1984, and Chernenko, the next in line of the Party Secretaries, succeeded him as General Secretary. This was a safe and, in terms of precedence and protocol, an uncontroversial choice. Nonetheless, it looked very much like the "old guard" choosing one of their own generation, an impression strengthened by the fact that Chernenko was proposed for the office by Prime Minister Tikhonov and not, as had been the case in the previous succession, by the next most senior Party Secretary, who on this occasion would have been Gorbachev. There were rumours of a disputed succession and indications of some dismay in Party circles that another elderly General Secretary had been chosen in preference to Gorbachev. The Plenum proceedings published in booklet form a few days later contained Gorbachev's previously unpublished speech from the Chair closing the Plenum, in which he had duly supported the choice of Chernenko; this was presumably done to dispel such rumours within the Party.

26. It is in fact unlikely that Gorbachev would have squandered his accumulated political capital by mounting a premature challenge to Chernenko, and his subsequent rise indicated that he retained the confidence of the rest of the leadership. When Chernenko was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in April 1984 and thus relinquished his chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Council of the Union of the Supreme Soviet, Gorbachev was elected in his place. This post, which of itself accorded Gorbachev status, not power, indicated that he had taken over the responsibility in the Party Secretariat for the broad area of ideology and foreign policy, particularly towards the "Socialist" countries, exercised by Chernenko, Andropov and Suslov before him.

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In addition, Gorbachev maintained his supervision of agriculture; of general economic questions; and of Party organisation. This was an exceptionally broad range of responsibilities, which was partly dictated by there being only 2 senior Party Secretaries, Gorbachev and Romanov, apart from the General Secretary himself.

27. In the Party Secretariat Gorbachev now ranked immediately below Chernenko and substituted for him when he was away, most notably at the opening of the "friendship" games in Moscow on 18 August 1984. As Chernenko's health deteriorated, the likelihood that Gorbachev would succeed him as General Secretary increased. Gorbachev's special position was communicated to the Soviet public in thinly disguised form in the "election campaign" for the Supreme Soviets of the Constituent Republics of the USSR at the end of 1984 and beginning of 1985: he received more "honorary nominations" than anyone else in the Politburo apart from Chernenko and Tikhonov as leaders of the Party and Government respectively. For the West the message was rubbed in when Western correspondents were invited to witness the Gorbachev family voting at the elections on 24 February 1985 rather than Chernenko (who was shown on Soviet television apparently casting his vote in a sanatorium). As Gromyko later revealed in his remarkably frank and illuminating speech recommending Gorbachev for General Secretary (Annex A), Gorbachev had been chairing Politburo meetings in Chernenko's absence and had thus in effect been acting General Secretary.

28. This did not mean that Gorbachev was in any way dictating policy or in sole command. The October 1984 Plenum on land improvement (para 20 above) and the approval of the 1985 Plan and Budget at an extended Politburo meeting (rather than the usual Plenum) on 15 November while Gorbachev was on holiday indicate as much. Moreover, some tough language from Gorbachev on how to deal with "moral degenerates" in the Party in an important speech on 10 December 1984, evidently went too far for his colleagues and was toned down for publication.

29. In December 1984 Gorbachev visited the United Kingdom at the head of a Soviet parliamentary delegation. He demonstrated the same self-confidence, informality and keen interest as he had on his

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Canadian visit, this time in the face of much greater press interest, prompted by the fact of Gorbachev's now being the potential General Secretary and by the presence of his wife. Gorbachev proved himself a skilful exponent of Soviet policies, capable in debate (often speaking extempore without briefs or notes) and adroit in handling sensitive questions on human rights. He had sufficient confidence and personal command to give his delegation members opportunities to take the lead from time to time in debate. He appeared to be both respected and liked by his delegation.

IX. As General Secretary, March 1985 -

30. Chernenko died in the evening of 10 March 1985. Within 24 hours, with unprecedented speed, the election of Gorbachev as General Secretary at a Central Committee Plenum had been announced (it took twice as long to announce the election of Andropov and almost 4 times as long in the case of Chernenko). One member of the Politburo (Shcherbitsky, on a parliamentary visit to the US) was not able to return in time for the Politburo meeting, and a number of members of the Central Committee from outlying areas were not able to reach Moscow in time for the Plenum. Despite the suspicion that this haste may have been necessary to forestall a potential move against Gorbachev, the evidence of the previous months points to his election having been a foregone conclusion and the speed of it having been designed to deflect attention from the death of yet another Soviet leader.

31. As General Secretary Gorbachev made an immediate impact through his style of leadership, the quick consolidation of his power and his urgent call for an improvement in Soviet economic performance.

32. As the first General Secretary for a decade to be fully fit and active it was not difficult for Gorbachev to demonstrate that the Soviet Union now had a robust and articulate leader, but he has exploited this circumstance to the full. Before going on holiday on 13 July he had made tours of Leningrad, Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk and Minsk - the first visits outside Moscow by a General Secretary since September 1982 - and been to Warsaw for the renewal of the Warsaw Pact on 26 April, the first foreign trip by a General Secretary since January 1983. He has made full use of television to deliver

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largely extempore homilies and be shown meeting the people in a way no Soviet leader has attempted since Khrushchev. At the same time he has been careful to avoid any suggestion of a personality cult. The newspapers, apparently at his own behest, have published few photographs and rarely quote him. Nor has there been any of the traditional flattery of him in the speeches of other Party leaders.

33. Gorbachev has not only projected a new dynamic image as Party leader but has moved rapidly and skilfully to consolidate the substance of his political power. Party Plenums on 23 April and 1 July and a Supreme Soviet session on 2 July saw the elevation to the Politburo of two Party Secretaries - Ligachev and Ryzhkov - who had been working directly under Gorbachev in the Secretariat before he became General Secretary; the election of 3 new Party Secretaries (Nikonov, Zaikov and Eltsin); the removal of Romanov (formally the next senior Party Secretary and responsible for the defence industry, military and security affairs - see paragraph 34 below); and the elevation of Gromyko to Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (President) and his replacement as Foreign Minister by Shevardnadze (Georgian First Party Secretary) along with the latter's promotion to full membership of the Politburo. These changes will increase Gorbachev's freedom of manoeuvre in the conduct of domestic and foreign policy. Gorbachev had been expected to take the Presidency himself, following the precedent set under his 3 predecessors, but instead he seized the opportunity offered by the vacancy to ease Gromyko into semi-retirement without any loss of face. Gorbachev himself was elected a member of the 21-strong Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (constitutionally the collective apex of the State structure), which gives him the requisite accoutrements for eg his state visit to France in October.

34. Gorbachev also became Chairman of the USSR Defence Council by virtue of his election as General Secretary. A Soviet spokesman confirmed this to Western correspondents (it has not yet been made public in the Soviet media) at a press conference on 1 August. A more significant indicator of Gorbachev's emerging authority over the military was his trip to Minsk, where on 10 July he addressed a gathering of military leaders. He was accompanied by the Minister of Defence, Marshal Sokolov and one of the new Party Secretaries,

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L N Zaikov, indicating that the latter, a Gorbachev appointee, has taken over Party supervision of the military from Romanov.

35. As to personnel changes at lower levels, Gorbachev has called for a policy which would avoid both inertia and stagnation (as under Brezhnev) and "adventurism and voluntarism" (as under Khrushchev). But the accent is undoubtedly on movement, and there has been a steady turnover of regional Party Secretaries and Ministers since Gorbachev came to power. This process may well have been taken quite far by the time a new Central Committee is formed at the Party Congress in February 1986.

36. The essence of Gorbachev's economic policy, which he has expounded with a marked sense of urgency in a number of speeches, is that the Soviet Union must overcome the slowdown in its rate of growth by a) drawing on readily available reserves which are currently being squandered by waste, indiscipline and irrational practices, b) shifting investment priorities to civilian machine building as the sector of the economy which is capable of laying the basis of overall technological advance (Gorbachev has held up the draft Five Year Plan to effect the necessary changes), and c) reorganising the system of management so as to shift the centre of gravity from the bureaucratic apparatus to the productive enterprises. Gorbachev has explicitly renounced the market mechanism as an instrument to this end in favour of a more sophisticated use of the established system of central planning (drawing on Eastern European experience, particularly that of the GDR).

37. Gorbachev's views on foreign policy issues have been slower to emerge. This is not surprising, since a key aspect of Gorbachev's thinking is that the Soviet Union can only make its influence felt on the world arena if its economy is strong. In his speech at the 23 April Plenum summing up his critique of the economic situation, he went so far as to say that the "historic fate of the country and the positions of socialism in the modern world depend to a large extent on how we manage things from now on". His main influence outside the borders of the Soviet Union so far has been in reasserting Moscow's leadership of the "socialist" countries

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following a period of drift, and in using his own qualities to give the presentation of policy a new edge. The announcements of Gorbachev's forthcoming visit to Paris in October and summit with President Reagan in November, coming as they did immediately after the change of Foreign Minister described in paragraph 33, signalled Gorbachev's intention to take a close hand in foreign policy issues.

X. Family

38. Gorbachev met his wife, Raisa Maksimovna (née Titorenko) at Moscow University, where she was studying philosophy (she now holds the title Doctor of Philosophy). She is one year younger than he. Her father is Ukrainian, a former railway official, her mother is from Siberia. Although born in the Altai region, in Southern Siberia, she had a mobile childhood owing to her father's work. According to Mlynář, Raisa Gorbacheva has played a part in her husband's political career: he says that it was on her initiative that basic sociological research was undertaken in the Kolkhozes in Stavropol Krai, which contributed to the development of the "link" system there. (She is indeed recorded as having had a small book published in Stavropol in 1969 entitled, "The Way of Life of the Kolkhoz Peasantry; a Sociological Study".) Mrs Gorbachev is certainly now playing a part which goes far beyond that of the wives of previous Soviet leaders. As noted above, her husband brought her to the UK and in a further break with tradition she has continued to figure publicly at Gorbachev's side since he became General Secretary.

39. The Gorbachevs take a strong pride in Russian national achievements and are fond of the art of the Russian nationalist and realist school, currently exemplified by the painter Ilya Glazunov. Gorbachev made a revealing slip of the tongue when in Kiev he was heard on television to refer to the Soviet Union as "Russia" before correcting himself. The Gorbachevs have one daughter, Irina, aged 27, who is a Doctor married to a cardiovascular surgeon and who has a 4 year old daughter, Oksana. The family lives together; Mrs Gorbachev's parents also live with them for much of the time and Gorbachev's mother for some of the time. Gorbachev himself is said to go down to his home region of Stavropol every year for his birthday. The Gorbachevs are not linguists: he learnt some German

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in his youth and she some English, but for practical purposes they speak only Russian.

XI Conclusion

40. Mylnář has described Gorbachev the student as intelligent and open, not arrogant, and prepared to listen. He was loyal and personally honest, conscious of his own worth and with an air of spontaneous authority. Gromyko has described Gorbachev the politician as a man of "strong convictions...an acute and profound mind", with the ability to analyse problems and draw conclusions, and who nonetheless has the gift of finding a common language with people. Western politicians who have met Gorbachev agree that the Soviet Union now has a leader with an array of talents unusual for a man who has risen through that system. To add to his ability, the good fortune which has helped him in his political career has brought Gorbachev to power at a propitious moment, when a succession of elderly leaders was beginning to prove a severe embarrassment to the Soviet Union domestically as well as internationally.

41 . There is no doubt that Gorbachev, still the youngest member of the Politburo, belongs to a new generation of leaders. He became the first Politburo member who was not old enough to fight in the war or to hold political office under Stalin, and the first in recent history to have had a university degree. This generational gap should not be exaggerated. If too young to fight in the war, Gorbachev was certainly directly affected by it. His handling of the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the end of the war in May 1985 showed that, like his predecessors, he wants to exploit and build on the patriotism that memories of the war still evoke. His reference to Stalin on this occasion also showed that, whatever his personal views, he is not yet prepared or able to challenge the concept of Stalin that emerged under Brezhnev (although he is credited with having intervened to prevent Volgograd from reverting to its former name of Stalingrad). Most significantly, Gorbachev has made his entire career in the Party apparatus, whose traditionally cautious and secretive methods of operation have not been relaxed with the years. This said, Gorbachev does represent a new type among Soviet politicians. He reached political maturity in the Brezhnev years when, in contrast to the Stalin and Khrushchev

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years, the Party leadership recognised the complexity of the domestic and foreign issues it was dealing with, sought and listened to specialist advice and attempted to come up with solutions that as nearly as possible satisfied all the interests involved. Gorbachev has thrived in this atmosphere, where his intellectual capacity seems to have stood him in good stead.

42. On the evidence of Gorbachev's background and of his first speeches and actions as leader, he will continue to work through rather than against the system that he has exploited successfully so far. His attitude is, as it must be, that there is nothing radically wrong with the Soviet system, but that its performance can be significantly improved if those principles to which lip service has been paid - the decentralisation of decision-making to the extent possible in a planned economy; the "scientific-technological revolution" as the motor of economic progress; hard work and self-denial among officials and the workforce alike; the "language of truth", however unpalatable, among propagandists; the bolstering of the Soviet Union's international position by the force of its example at home - are actually put into practice. He seems to see his own relative youth, energy and ability as a catalyst in this process and has used them to greater effect than had been expected in the first months of his incumbency as General Secretary.

Annex A

SPEECH BY COMRADE A A GROMYKO [AT THE CC, CPSU PLENUM 11 MARCH 1985]

1. Comrades! I have been instructed to present for the consideration of the Plenum of the CC, CPSU a proposal on the question of the candidacy for the General Secretary of the CC. The Politburo unanimously (edino\_dushno) expressed itself in favour of recommending Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev for election as General Secretary. (Prolonged applause.)
2. I would like to convey to the members of the CC, CPSU, candidate members of the CC, members of the Central Revision Commission and all who are present the content of the discussion of this question and the atmosphere in which this discussion took place.
3. First of all the thought was emphasised that all the activity of Mikhail Sergeevich in implementing our internal and external policy confirms that he is worthy for election as the General Secretary of the CC, CPSU. It was stressed that he has enormous experience of Party work. First of all at Krai level and then here, in the centre, in the Central Committee: first as a Secretary, then as a member of the Politburo. He led the Secretariat, as is known. He also chaired the meetings of the Politburo in the absence of Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko. He conducted himself brilliantly, without any exaggeration.
4. What else was stressed? Together with his Party experience, and this is an invaluable gift, it was stressed that this is a man of principle, a man of strong convictions. Anyone who has met him and discussed the relevant questions can confirm this. I can confirm this personally. He always keeps attention focussed on the nub of the question, its content and on the principles, and he states his position directly, whether it is to the liking of his interlocutor or, perhaps, not entirely to his liking. He states it with directness, Leninist directness, and it is up to his interlocutor whether he goes off in a good or not so good mood; if he is a real Communist then he should go off in a good mood; that is the way it has been, by the way, and this was also stressed.
5. During the discussion of this question in the Politburo it was also said that Mikhail Sergeevich is a man of a sharp and profound intellect, and anyone who knows him, even if he has met him only once, will confirm this. After all, it often happens that questions - both internal and external - are very difficult to consider if one is guided by the law of "black and white". There can be intermediate colours, intermediate links and intermediate decisions. And Mikhail Sergeevich always knows how to find such decisions, which accord with the Party line. This was stressed unanimously. And for him it is precisely this which has been and remains the main criterion in assessing the position of this or that comrade, this or that institution, or in assessing the problem at issue.
6. This too must be said. Perhaps this is somewhat clearer to me by virtue of my function than to some other comrades. He grasps very well and quickly the essence of the processes taking place outside our country, in the international arena. I myself have often been struck by his ability, quickly and accurately to grasp the

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essence of a matter, and to draw conclusions, correct, Party conclusions.

7. Mikhail Sergeevich - and this is also well known - is a man of broad erudition both through his education and through his work experience. All of this of course makes it easier for him to find the correct solutions. And another illustration; if what was taking place in this auditorium now was, say, a scientific forum, everybody would probably say: this man knows how to approach problems analytically. That is the absolute truth. He has brilliant ability in this respect - he can sort a question out into compartments, into parts before drawing a conclusion. Not only does he analyse problems well, he can also sum them up and draw conclusions. Politics sometimes require one not only to sort questions or parts of questions out into their compartments - if one did, they would lie inert - but also to draw conclusions, so that these conclusions can be put to the service of our policies. He has demonstrated this more than once at meetings of the Politburo, and at meetings of the Secretariat of the CC.

8. Further, the comrades stated unanimously that Mikhail Sergeevich has a Party approach to people, a great talent for organising people and finding a common language with them. This is not given to everyone. Call what you wish - a gift of nature or a gift of society. It's most probably a gift of both. Not everyone is given it. At least not everyone to the same degree. This quality is to be found in him.

9. Further, we live in the sort of world where there are trained on the Soviet Union, figuratively speaking, various telescopes, and a lot of them, large, small, close range and long range. And possibly more at long range than at short range. And people look to see whether they can eventually find any sort of cracks in the Soviet leadership. And I assure you that dozens and dozens of times we have been advised of instances of this and have observed them. If you like, we have been witnesses of conversations, whispered and semi-whispered guesses; some people abroad are thirsting to spot disagreements in the Soviet leadership. Of course this did not originate today or yesterday. This phenomenon has been observed over the course of many years. The unanimous opinion of the Politburo is that on this occasion again we, the Central Committee of the Party and the Politburo, will not give our political oponents any satisfaction on this score. (Applause).

10. Mikhail Sergeevich very many times, including in the Politburo, expressed himself in favour of the need for us, as they say, to keep our powder dry. The corresponding decisions of our congresses, plenums of the Central Committee, and of the Politburo orient the Party and the people towards this policy.

11. The judgements of Mikhail Sergeevich are always distinguished by their maturity and tenacity, in the best sense of this word, Party tenacity. He always defends the point of view that holy of holies for all of us is to struggle for the cause of peace and keep our defence at the necessary level.

12. The ability to see the main links and to subordinate what is

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secondary to what is primary is in the highest degree innate in him. This ability is a virtue, and a great virtue. So the conclusion which the Politburo drew is a correct conclusion. In the person of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, we have a figure of a broad scale, an outstanding figure, who will worthily occupy the post of General Secretary of the CC, CPSU. (Prolonged applause) I would like to express confidence that the plenum of the CC, like the Politburo, will unanimously support and approve the proposal which has been put forward. (Prolonged applause).

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Annex B

Gorbachev's aides

1. In the later years of Brezhnev's tenure of office the aides to the General Secretary (pomoshchniki Generalnogo sekretarya) began to feature more prominently and to achieve political standing of their own (as members of the Party's Central Committee and Deputies to the Supreme Soviet).
2. Andropov and Chernenko took over some of their respective predecessors' aides, brought in their own personal aides and took on some new ones. At his death Chernenko probably had 6 aides (A M Aleksandrov-Agentov, V V Pribytkov, V V Sharapov, V A Pechenev, P P Laptev and A I Volsky).
3. When Gorbachev became a Party Secretary in 1978 he inherited his predecessor Kulakov's aide, A P Lushchikov (born 1917), a former Deputy Head of the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee. Lushchikov was last identified in September 1984 and may have been replaced by V I Boldin, a former economic observer specialising in agriculture on the staff of Pravda. (Boldin was responsible for the brochure version of Gorbachev's 10 December 1984 speech on ideology.) Another aide who may have joined Gorbachev is L I Grekov (not to be confused with the Soviet Ambassador to Bulgaria), who was replaced in April 1984 as responsible secretary to the editorial board of the journal "Questions of Philosophy" and has since appeared as responsible for the brochure version of Gorbachev's 17 May 1985 speech in Leningrad.
4. Gorbachev, however, brought no aide with him to the UK in December 1984, and since his election as General Secretary only Aleksandrov-Agentov and Sharapov (both dealing with foreign affairs questions) have appeared and been named as his aides. On the other hand, 3 of Chernenko's aides have been given new jobs; Pribytkov as Deputy Head of Glavlit (the Soviet censorship office), Pechenev as Deputy Editor of the CPSU journal Politicheskoe Samoobrazovanie and Volsky as Head of the Central Committee's Machine Building Department (a downgrading for the first two, who were Chernenko's personal aides, and an upgrading for the last named, a former First Deputy Head of the Department, who was taken on by Andropov and inherited by Chernenko).
5. Thus of Chernenko's 6 aides, 2 have gone to Gorbachev, 3 to other work, and the fate of one, Laptev (inherited from Andropov), is unclear. It is not yet clear how many other aides Gorbachev has, but the evidence so far is that he has trimmed down the personal staff which his recent predecessors have had.

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