

USSR

Gorbachev Shows Resolve as Party Conference Approaches

In a show of strength and resolve on the eve of the upcoming party conference, General Secretary Gorbachev has forced through a series of important regional personnel changes. Also as an apparent part of his effort to influence the conference, Soviet media have recently published a number of articles by supporters of reform that lay out an agenda for change in the Soviet political system going far beyond that outlined in the official proposals for the conference. Coming after Gorbachev's apparent failure to obtain the election of significant numbers of proreform delegates to the conference, these moves apparently are meant to be a warning to the apparatus and an effort to radicalize the debate at the conference despite the probable conservative leanings of many delegates.

Within the span of one month, the Gorbachev leadership has removed three republic and six provincial first secretaries. The present series of changes began on 21 May, when the first secretaries of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the leaders of the Gorno-Altay and Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblasts were all replaced. These ousters were followed by the removal of the Sakhalin and Astrakhan leaders on 27 and 31 May, respectively, and the 16 June removal of the Estonian, Gorkiy, and Sverdlovsk first secretaries.

The regional shakeups are the result of multiple factors, including nationalist agitation, but the common thread for most of them appears to be the respective leaders' failure to give adequate support to *perestroika*. Although the precipitating causes for the removal of the Gorno-Altay, Karachay-Cherkess, and Sverdlovsk leaders are unclear,¹ the other leaders had obviously fallen into disfavor. Armenian leader Demirchyan and Azerbaijani leader

¹ The reasons for the removal of Sverdlovsk leader Yuriy Petrov are especially puzzling since he has clear ties to top leaders. He worked as deputy head of the CPSU cadres department while Gorbachev supervised cadre work and Ligachev headed the department in 1983-1985. He has also appeared to be supportive of reform, for example, by speaking out in a 5 January *Pravda* article against the stifling of reform by central ministries. He has been transferred to unspecified diplomatic work (*Pravda*, 17 June).

Bagirov were victims not only of recent nationalist disturbances in their republics, but Moscow had made clear its dissatisfaction with their leadership on other counts on numerous occasions. Estonian leader Vayno had been under pressure from both nationalist and proreform forces.² The Sakhalin and Astrakhan leaders fell after protests over the lack of democracy in selecting delegates to the conference.³ The Gorkiy chief, Yuriy Khristoradnov, a Brezhnev appointee, had not been playing a prominent role under Gorbachev and recently was pushed into semiretirement when he was elected chairman of the Council of the Union at the May Supreme Soviet session.

New Leaders Although the ostensible reasons for the various replacements may vary, the changes appear to benefit Gorbachev by breaking up entrenched leaderships and installing new people who will probably be more receptive to his ideas. Although Gorbachev's involvement is not clear in most cases, he had harshly assailed Armenian First Secretary Demirchyan, and he expressed indirect approval of Sakhalin First Secretary Tretyakov's removal at a 1 June press conference. A conspicuous feature of the new appointees is that almost all of them are more or less outsiders—either persons with no tie to the area or locals who have been serving outside their new bailiwicks:

- New Astrakhan First Secretary I. N. Dyakov appears to be a protege of Razumovskiy, the CPSU secretary for cadres. He worked as Krasnodar city first secretary while Razumovskiy was the kray first secretary from mid-1983 to mid-1985. In recent months he has worked as a Central Committee inspector, presumably in Razumovskiy's department.
- New Sakhalin First Secretary V. S. Bondarchuk (appointed 17 June) also worked in the cadres department under Razumovskiy (he was identified as a sector chief in December 1985).
- New Gorkiy First Secretary G. M. Khodyrev first appeared in the Gorkiy leadership only last March (identified as an obkom secretary in a March issue of *Partiyaya Zhizn*), suggesting he is an outsider or had been raised from a low-level job.
- New Karachay-Cherkess First Secretary V. Ye. Lesnichenko was a secretary of neighboring Stavropol Kray.
- New Gorno-Altay First Secretary D. Ye. Nartov was a raykom secretary in adjoining Altay Kray.

² The change of Estonian leaders is discussed in the following article.

³ See the *Trends* of 8 June, pages 8-9.

Several locals who had left the area—sometimes under conditions suggesting conflict with the established first secretary—were brought back and made leaders:

- New Estonian First Secretary V. I. Vyalyas left Estonia shortly after Vayno was installed as first secretary in 1978, and had been relegated to minor diplomatic posts until he was called back to replace Vayno.
- New Azerbaijan First Secretary A. R. Vezirov, although originally in the republic party organization, had been in diplomatic work since 1976.
- New Sverdlovsk First Secretary L. F. Bobykin, although previously a second secretary in Sverdlovsk, has been deputy head and then head of the Central Committee's Light Industry and Consumer Goods Department since 1983. (There is no hint that he left Sverdlovsk as a result of disagreement with local leaders, however.)
- Even new Armenian First Secretary S. Arutyunyan, who was working as first deputy premier in Armenia prior to his election, had served in Moscow from 1978 to 1986, where he was head of the mass political work sector of the CPSU Propaganda Department (identified January 1984). In his last months there, he worked under new department head and future senior Secretary Aleksandr Yakovlev, who was also present for his installation as Armenian first secretary.

These recent removals are all the more striking because the nationwide plenums held from November to January to discuss *perestroyka* and replace conservative leaders had replaced almost no one. The fact that numerous changes in key party organizations can now be made is a sign of the strength that Gorbachev has apparently acquired in recent months, especially since early April. It also suggests that Gorbachev has recently decided that it is politically necessary to issue an indirect warning to the party apparatus prior to the conference that failure to support his program will not go unpunished and that, if required, he will use local popular agitation to remove recalcitrant party leaders.

**Radical Reform
Proposals**

In addition to personnel moves, Gorbachev appears to be exerting pressure on the conference by encouraging publication of new, more radical proposals for the conference to take up. Stretching the limits of ideas under public discussion will presumably influence the course of debate at the conference by pulling it

FBIS TRENDS
22 June 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

in a more reformist direction and making the proposals he will present to the conference appear more moderate and easier to approve.

Thus, recent articles have called for reinterpretation of democratic centralism to allow advocacy of a variety of views (*Pravda*, 3 June), abolition of the nomenklatura system (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 21 May), making two-candidate elections mandatory instead of only permissible (*Izvestiya*, 2 June), and abolition of Central Committee departments dealing with economic issues (*Izvestiya*, 31 May). Reformer Fedor Burlatskiy, who certainly has ties to the Gorbachev camp, used a 15 June *Literaturnaya Gazeta* article to outline proposals for making the Soviet system into virtually a Western-style presidential-parliamentary system. Proposing a change to "the presidential principle," he argued that the general secretary should be elected by delegates at a congress (rather than by the Central Committee); that the general secretary should then run for state president in a direct, secret national election; that a vice president should also be elected to provide a clear successor to the leader; and that the powers of parliament, the president, and the judiciary should be separated.

Gorbachev Stymied in Elections

Gorbachev's increased aggressiveness in pushing for the ouster of several first secretaries and condoning the publication of radical reform proposals follows and may have been provoked by his unsuccessful attempts to get party organizations to elect reformers as delegates to the party conference. Press reports indicate that despite Gorbachev's call for giving the party rank and file and even the public outside the party a major role in selecting delegates, almost everywhere the local party apparatus (usually the obkom bureau or raykom secretaries) chose the delegates and often blatantly overrode candidates suggested from below.⁴ Moreover, as local papers published lists of their delegations in late May it became clear that most delegations included all members of the local power structure and large numbers of obkom, raykom, and gorkom secretaries.⁵ The composition of most delegations is similar to that of the delegations usually sent to past congresses: all the local party and government powerholders, plus large numbers of carefully selected factory workers and farmers.

⁴ See the *Trends* of 8 June, pages 7-12.

⁵ The delegations of all republics except the RSFSR, Ukraine, Belorussia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan (big republics where the delegates were elected at obkom plenums instead of republic plenums) were listed in the republic papers. Moscow and Leningrad papers carried lists of their delegates.

CONFIDENTIAL

A particularly obvious negative signal for Gorbachev was that the delegations include very few intellectuals—the scholars, writers, artists, and journalists who form the core of outspoken supporters for his reforms. Even the delegations of Moscow and Leningrad—where scientific and cultural intelligentsia are concentrated—are heavy with apparatchiks but include few intellectuals:

- The 319-member Moscow delegation includes all 33 raykom first secretaries and all obkom bureau members, but only a dozen or so intellectuals. Moreover, these include conservatives such as *Moskva* editor Mikhail Alekseyev, *Molodaya Gvardiya* editor Anatoliy Ivanov, former Moscow Writers Union head Feliks Kuznetsov, Writers Union Chairman Georgiy Markov, Composers Union head Tikhon Khrennikov, and *Pravda* editor Viktor Afanasyev, as well as liberals.
- The 176-member Leningrad delegation includes dozens of obkom, gorkom, and raykom apparatchiks, but only four well-known intellectuals (conservative *Literaturnaya Gazeta* editor Aleksandr Chakovskiy, plus liberals Georgiy Arbatov, writer Daniil Granin, and Theater Workers Union head K. Yu. Lavrov).

Press articles have played up the exclusion of intellectuals and reformers, as well as the local apparatus's failure to follow the partially democratized procedure prescribed by Gorbachev. *Sovetskaya Kultura* on 26 May contended that its reporters could not find even one case where a party organization had followed Gorbachev's instructions. The striking assertions in the press apparently prompted the Politburo to try to counter the impression of widespread disobedience of Central Committee instructions. On 13 June *Pravda* carried an interview with Yevgeniy Razumov, first deputy head of the CPSU cadres department, in which he twice declared there were "no deviations" by local party organizations from the procedure laid down by the Central Committee and dismissed most of the complaints of selection imposed from above as "groundless." In a clear indication of official sponsorship, the interview was reprinted the following day in several papers, including *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya*, and even the reform-minded *Sovetskaya Kultura*.

Gorbachev's Stance Despite the apparently unfavorable lineup of delegates, Gorbachev appears to be going into the conference in an aggressive and relatively strong position. He won formal Central Committee approval at the May plenum for "theses" endorsing many

FBIS TRENDS
22 June 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

of his political reform ideas, suggesting a Politburo consensus for considerable reform.⁶ In addition, since then he has won public endorsement for various reform ideas by two of the most conservative members of the Politburo:

- Ukrainian First Secretary Shcherbitskiy, head of the largest delegation (891 members), used an early June speech to endorse further democratization and *glasnost*, reform of the political system, return to Lenin's interpretation of democratic centralism, reinterpretation of the party's leading role and limitation of its role in society, and condemnation of the abuse of state orders by the ministries to hamper economic reform (*Pravda Ukrainy*, 11 June). He even endorsed limits on the terms of office for officials—something that would presumably require his own retirement.
- Conservative leader Ligachev in a 4 June speech, while assailing radical proposals for change to a multiparty system or market economy, spoke in favor of political reform, changes in the election system, and legal reforms. At the same time, he appeared to go out of his way to endorse Gorbachev as the leader, declaring that there is unity in the leadership "headed by M. S. Gorbachev" (*Pravda*, 5 June). Ligachev had specifically endorsed Gorbachev's theses earlier, in a 24 May speech.

Gorbachev's sudden ouster of several republic and regional leaders adds to an impression of strength and determination and may impress or even intimidate party officials at the conference, especially if they see Ligachev and other conservatives in the top leadership unable or unwilling to protect apparatchiks from retaliation for dragging their feet on reform. (U/FOUO)

⁶ See the *Trends* of 2 June, pages 1-8.

6
CONFIDENTIAL