

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: FEB 2001

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[REDACTED] Briefing
Summer 1984

Political Stability

The Soviet regime possesses enormous powers of coercion and control: a vast propaganda and censorship apparatus; a huge police network; a party organization that penetrates all segments of society. Overall, since World War II the Soviet population has been one of the world's most politically quiescent. Although we by no means exclude the possibility of major localized disturbances (along the lines of the Novocherkassk riots of 1962) over the next decade, if the economy grows [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] we do not believe that popular unrest will become widespread. [REDACTED]

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Despite the regime's residual strengths, however, societal strains have increased in recent years and the regime seems somewhat less able to cope than in the past.

- Control of information has weakened with expanded contact with West.
- Ideology is virtually dead as mobilizing force.
- There has been a palpable decline in level of fear and increased popular assertiveness.
- Standard of living problems, declining opportunities for social mobility, heighten disgruntlement.
- Events in Poland attract great interest.
- Some areas of life appear to be slipping beyond regime

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regulation (e.g., labor mobility, youth subcultures). [REDACTED]

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Soviet leaders may be primarily concerned about the impact that low public morale is having on economic productivity. But they also seem more worried than at any time since at least the mid-1950s about the possibility of public disorders that could threaten political stability. [REDACTED]

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--Andropov and Chernenko both warned that failure to address popular demands could produce social "collisions" or political "crisis." [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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-- [REDACTED] pervasive pessimism within elite about future of the country. [REDACTED]

Apprehension about popular mood has probably underpinned much of regime policy over past several years. It accounts at least in part for:

--priority for Food Program.

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- massive grain imports.
- attempts to strengthen worker discipline.
- high profile for KGB.
- attempts to curtail contacts between Soviet citizens and Westerners (e.g., jamming, broadening definition of treason to include the unauthorized disclosure to a foreigner of virtually any kind of information).
- attacks on more blatant forms of corruption and official abuses of power.



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