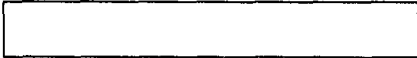




SPECIAL ANALYSIS


(b) (1)
(b) (3)


USSR: Institutional Factors in the Succession




Maneuvering in the Kremlin over the succession to President Brezhnev clearly is under way. The party, government, KGB, and military involved have parochial interests at stake. Their influence in the succession will depend largely on the status and ability of their representatives in the Politburo. 

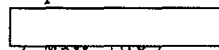
The Politburo, composed since Stalin's day of 12 to 16 full members and six to nine candidates, is the key forum in the succession struggle. Its members currently hold top positions in the Secretariat, Council of Ministers, important regional organizations, and the military and security organizations. 

Despite the formal appearance of equality, the influence of individual leaders varies according to the importance of the institutions they represent. The general secretary, as the nominal head of the Secretariat, has usually been the dominant figure--a status that at times, such as the latter part of Brezhnev's tenure, has enabled him to direct its activities, prepare its agenda, and preside over its meetings. 

During the three previous successions, control of the Secretariat has ultimately allowed its leaders to dominate the Politburo. The Secretariat, which is composed of the general secretary and usually from seven to 10 secretaries, directs a party apparatus of some 200,000 officials that monitors the activity of the government ministries, the military, security organs, and all other institutions. 

This monitoring function gives the Secretariat the leading role in implementing party policy and dispensing political patronage. As a result, it provides the general secretary with a strong position in succession infighting. 

--continued



[redacted]

The recent depletion of the Secretariat, through the death of Suslov and the declining role of party Secretary Kirilenko, has made it necessary to fill key portfolios, possibly at a plenum later this month. This vacuum in the Secretariat's top ranks--from which all past party chiefs have been chosen--has opened up the succession process considerably. [redacted]

Politburo members who head other key institutions now have increased opportunity to maneuver for position and influence. Moreover, the weakened position of the Secretariat may have made it less able to monitor and control the activities of other leading institutions. [redacted]

The KGB

The KGB's involvement in high-level politics stems largely from its access to the leadership in fulfilling security and communications functions. Its professional leadership is proud of the status regained under Brezhnev and will seek to preserve it. [redacted]

A strong political leader could use the KGB by exploiting the privileged information it acquires for blackmail. To protect his own position, Brezhnev placed cronies in key positions in the KGB. Although this maneuver may provide Brezhnev some ability to keep tabs on his colleagues, he does not appear to have used the KGB against political opponents. [redacted]

Brezhnev's control over the KGB may be slipping.

[redacted]

[redacted] While the political leadership has in the past been remarkably successful in preventing KGB chiefs from using the organization for political advantage, they still played key roles in the successions of 1953 and 1964. [redacted]

The Military

The military establishment will try to ensure the availability of resources and the maintenance of a clear chain of command during the succession. Professional

--continued

[redacted]

military officers have less access than the KGB to the political leadership, however, and have generally avoided involvement in high-level political maneuvering. [redacted]

Only two professional officers--Marshals Zhukov and Grechko--have ever been elected to the Politburo. Military support has nevertheless been essential in important leadership changes, as illustrated by Zhukov's help to Khrushchev during his fight with the "antiparty" group in 1957 and the military's apparent acquiescence in the coup in 1964 against Khrushchev. [redacted]

Since 1976, the party leadership has had a civilian--Dmitriy Ustinov--at the head of the military establishment. His position and leadership status will ensure that the military's interests are protected and will enable the party to control the military during a period of political flux. [redacted]

The Presidium of the Council of Ministers

The chief political concern of the Council of Ministers seems to be the protection of the economic bureaucracy from excessive party intervention and efforts to decentralize its authority. It presumably would oppose the leadership of someone--such as Kirilenko--who advocates forceful party intervention in economic affairs. [redacted]

For the Council of Ministers to exert major influence in the struggle, however, its leaders would have to be strongly represented in the Politburo at the same time that the central party apparatus was weak. Such a situation last prevailed in the immediate post-Stalin period, when Premier Malenkov was briefly in ascendancy. [redacted]

The Council of Ministers currently appears to be in a particularly weak position. Premier Tikhonov, one of Brezhnev's proteges, is the economic bureaucracy's sole representative on the Politburo. This minimal representation, combined with a strong party apparatus developed under Brezhnev, suggests that the Council of Ministers will play a minor role in the succession. [redacted]