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Gorbachev's Approach to Societal Malaise: A Managed Revitalization



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An Intelligence Assessment

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted] the
Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are
welcome and may be directed to the Chief,
Domestic Policy Division, SOVA, [redacted]

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 24 July 1985
was used in this report.*


During his first four months in power Gorbachev has begun to outline the basic dimensions of his policies on key societal issues. The social policies he appears to favor complement his central objective of making the economy more productive. So far he has focused attention on four broad social issues:

- **Labor Discipline, Corruption, and Crime.** The labor discipline and anticorruption campaigns, initiated by Andropov, have been reinvigorated, and a new cadres policy reportedly is being used to break up corrupt regional party machines. Gorbachev has supported the continued strengthening of the militia and suggested that new laws are being prepared to ferret out illegal income.
- **Consumer Issues.** The Soviet leader has been closely associated in the past with efforts to improve living conditions in rural areas. He has pledged support for the Food Program and has promised an integrated consumer program in the "near future." In May the regime raised levels of aid to needy families and the elderly.
- **Alcoholism.** A comprehensive program has been mounted, which includes penalties against alcohol abuse and illegal production as well as incentives for sobriety, educational programs, and upgraded recreational facilities to provide alternative leisure activities.
- **Disaffection of Youth.** Gorbachev appears seriously concerned about the cynicism and alienation of young people. His determination to inculcate youth with the work ethic and patriotism was reflected in the 1984 Education Reform. The new educational program was drafted by a Politburo commission of which Gorbachev was first a member, then its chairman. 

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Gorbachev has yet to reveal any integrated program for dealing with the web of interrelated societal problems. His comments, nevertheless, suggest that he believes social problems are serious and that they require immediate attention. His message, in fact, is so insistent on this score that he is seemingly impelled to follow through—in much the same way he has done on the personnel front. In two areas, moreover—alcohol abuse and corruption—he has acted with vigor. 

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Gorbachev's attempt to bolster popular support for the regime carries political risk. His direct appeal to the public could generate concern within key bureaucracies that they are being circumvented, and generate popular expectations for change that he may not be able to satisfy. A key issue in coming months will be the question of political will and political power—whether Gorbachev places a high enough priority on the alleviation of social problems to devote energy and resources in this area at the expense of other important projects, and whether he is able to marshal sufficient political support to do so. 

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Preface

This paper surveys the record of Gorbachev's statements and policies during his first four months in power in an attempt to map out the new General Secretary's general approach to social problems, to identify his overall level of concern and problems he has targeted for early attention, and to draw attention to stands he has taken on particular social issues that may be difficult to reconcile with regime priorities in other areas. These initial observations and appraisals can provide a benchmark for evaluating Gorbachev's future direction on societal issues and can also serve to suggest areas that deserve close monitoring as Gorbachev's social policy develops.



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Societal Conditions Confronting Gorbachev ¹

Since World War II the Soviet regime has been very successful in maintaining social stability. There are three main reasons for this. First, the Soviet regime has powerful instruments of control and indoctrination. Second, for most of the time since Stalin's death in 1953, the regime has provided its citizens with what most of them cherish above all—peace, public order, personal security, and a gradual improvement in the standard of living. Third, habits and attitudes that are deeply rooted in Russian history make it easier for the regime to maintain social control. The population lacks any tradition of individual rights or political democracy and has generally exhibited a high level of endurance for material deprivation. [Redacted]

As a consequence of these developments, the mood of the Soviet population has shifted. The optimism of the 1960s and early 1970s has given way to deep social malaise. Soviet society has become more demanding, less believing, and less pliable, as manifested in a variety of related phenomena: low worker morale, increased materialism and withdrawal into private affairs such as black-market activity beyond the regime's purview, rising crime and alcohol abuse, a burgeoning of religious feeling, youth involvement in various types of delinquency, increased pacifism, and attempts of minorities to emigrate. [Redacted]

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Gorbachev's Appraisal of the Current Situation

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Despite these strong forces for social stability in the USSR, developments over the past decade have weakened several props to the system and given rise to greater public discontent about internal conditions. Beginning in the 1970s the economy began to slow down, leading to a virtual stagnation of consumption growth by the end of the decade and reducing opportunities for upward social mobility. During detente the Soviet people also gained greater access to information from the outside world, enabling them to compare their lot with that of populations enjoying a higher standard of living and to evaluate Soviet media claims more critically. Unfulfilled regime promises (such as the promise in the Communist Party program of attaining the world's highest living standard by 1980) made most citizens extremely cynical about official propaganda, according to [Redacted]

Although Gorbachev has not yet set forth an integrated social program, a tone of urgency pervades his public discussion of key societal problems. Most recently, for example, in his June speech to the conference on science and technology, he referred to the "anxiety" of the Soviet people that the country's "social and economic development" be accelerated, stated that "none of the problems we must solve today can be put off until tomorrow," and insisted that there must be "no delay, no waiting because there is no time left for warming up—it was exhausted by the past." [Redacted]

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[Redacted] US Embassy reporting. Some Soviet emigres report that there has been a decline in the level of fear as well, leading some youth who have no personal memories of the Stalin purges to speak out more freely in criticism of internal conditions. As corruption has grown throughout officialdom, [Redacted] [Redacted] the population has increasingly come to resent the privileges of the ruling elite. [Redacted]

Gorbachev's remarks suggest that he is strongly committed to following through with a program of action. Describing the present as a critical "turning point," he has said that "the historic fate of the country and the position of socialism in the modern world depend to a large extent on how we manage things" in this "terribly difficult" period. He has repeatedly said that the party must act decisively to remedy internal problems, insisting that "there is no other way," that there are "tasks that cannot be put aside," and that the regime must pass "from talk to practical actions." Invoking Lenin's admonition to deal with "maladies" in a determined fashion without "panic," he has

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indicated he will not be deterred from taking firm corrective measures. [redacted] Gorbachev realizes that social conditions in the USSR are poor and is therefore willing to make unpopular decisions to solve internal problems. [redacted]

manage and defuse ethnic, generational, and economic tensions within society and within the elite itself. [redacted]

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Gorbachev evidently attributes the current adverse state of affairs in large measure to past inertia and neglect of urgent matters. He has implicitly blamed the Brezhnev leadership for failing to sense that domestic problems had become so acute as to require a new integrated approach. At the April 1985 Central Committee meeting, for example, he said that the "main reason" for internal difficulties was that the need for change "was not appraised in the required way at the right time and, what is especially important, there was no urgency displayed." More recently, in June he said that the "main reason" for having to speed up social and economic development was that "a proper assessment" had not been made of the situation earlier. Noting that "for many years there has been talk" of remedial measures, he lamented that "the measures adopted were half measures, inconsistent measures, and were not implemented fully . . . thanks to inertia." He has also implicitly criticized Chernenko for neglecting to strengthen law and order, observing at the April meeting that "it has to be bluntly stated that of late the attention given to this most important question has lessened somewhat." [redacted]

This approach is consistent with Gorbachev's insistence that problems be vetted and discussed somewhat more openly. For a number of years the Soviet leadership has recognized that for Soviet propaganda to become more effective it must become more credible, which requires more open admission of problems to interpret them in ways that put the regime in the most favorable light. But different leaders have voiced different points of view about how far to go in this regard. Chernenko, for example, despite his heavy emphasis on propaganda as an instrument for mobilizing popular support for the regime, warned of the danger of "dramatizing shortcomings" of the regime and "belittling" achievements on the grounds that "unprincipled" criticism would play into the hands of "bourgeois" propagandists and internal critics. [redacted]

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Unlike Brezhnev, Gorbachev appears to view attempts to maintain the status quo as more destabilizing than attempts to change the situation. In his speeches he seems to be arguing that a policy of stasis designed to repress societal conflict runs the danger of building up pressures that could erupt into more threatening conflict at a later stage. Thus, at the December 1984 party ideology conference he said that failure to take the initiative in confronting "contradictions" (problems, conflict) "may result in a worsening of the economic and social situation." Going further, he argues the regime must address the interests of different societal groups to prevent their "perversion" and "degeneration" into opposition to the interests of the regime. By encouraging not the suppression of conflict but an attempt to divert it into "progressive" channels, Gorbachev appears to be seeking ways to

By contrast, Gorbachev has warned that public confidence in the regime is eroded when serious problems are glossed over. He maintains that it is precisely the failure to address problems directly that "opens up a loophole for hostile propaganda." He maintains that—because of the very successes of the Soviet system in educating the population to a higher level of culture and sophistication—the Soviet public no longer accepts "oversimplified answers to questions and clearly recognizes falsehood resulting from . . . fear of disclosing . . . the source of problems." [redacted]

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Gorbachev's advocacy of greater attention to public opinion is primarily manipulative in character. He has encouraged the work of social scientists studying the "economic and sociopsychological features" and attitudes of various social groups and pushed for more and better public opinion research to assist the regime in identifying problem areas, refining propaganda, and generally improving public relations. [redacted]

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There are also indications in Gorbachev's statements that, to set parameters for group interests and harness them to regime policy, he will push for reinvigoration

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of the organizations that have traditionally in the Soviet system acted as "transmission belts" of party policy to various groups in the population. He stated at the April Central Committee meeting that party control will be strengthened over the soviets and mass organizations. Earlier, at a December 1984 ideology conference, Gorbachev indicated—as have other leaders in recent years—that the work of trade unions, Komsomol, and other mass organs must be so structured that "not a single vitally important problem" remains outside their purview. These remarks could be interpreted as a reflection of concern that more and more areas of Soviet life have slipped beyond direct party regulation, and that these regime institutions should act forcefully to expand their activities to better mobilize, socialize, and indoctrinate the population. [redacted]



Gorbachev made an especially direct linkage between economic development and work discipline in his May speech to Leningrad party workers, asserting that the first stage of more rapid economic development requires squeezing more out of the economy through increased order and improved discipline. Gorbachev went on to amplify this "first stage" as meaning better organization and "activating first and foremost the human factor" so that "each person" attains a more conscientious and responsible attitude to his work. He specified that these changes demand "a whole system" of educational, organizational, and economic measures, which "naturally" include material incentives. These remarks suggest that Gorbachev may go beyond Andropov's energetic but ad hoc efforts and develop a comprehensive series of measures to curb indiscipline and change workers' attitudes, although as yet no coherent strategy has become evident. [redacted]

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Gorbachev's general orientation toward societal problems is congruent with his assessment of Soviet economic shortcomings. The social policies he appears to favor support his central aim of making the Soviet economy more efficient and productive. His attack on alcoholism, attempts to raise personal and professional requirements for party officials, effort to curb corruption and break up entrenched regional cliques, call for a more differentiated system of material incentives, attention to consumer demand and public opinion, drive to upgrade the effectiveness of regime instruments of mobilization and control—all are in service of an energized, thrifty, and better managed economy. [redacted]

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Gorbachev evidently also recognizes the need for a coherent program to curb corruption within the economic bureaucracy and even within upper levels of the party organization:²

- In his February election speech, Gorbachev denounced the economic crimes of embezzlement, bribery, and speculation, and stated there could be "no exception for anyone" in the observance of discipline and public order (a phrase which was omitted in the *Pravda* version of his speech). By contrast, the election speeches of most other leaders demonstrated less enthusiasm for the campaign against corruption among high officials.

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Labor Discipline, Corruption, and Crime

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[redacted] Gorbachev's own actions and statements indicate that he intends to take strong action to bolster discipline and order. Although he did not come out in public any earlier or more forcefully than some other Politburo leaders in calling for greater managerial and worker discipline—perhaps because his early career responsibilities afforded him little occasion to speak on the subject—Gorbachev has emphasized this theme during the past year. [redacted]



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- According to a TASS account of his April speech to economic managers sent to the Far East, Gorbachev declared that the party would become more authoritative if it used party rules, the law, and public opinion to rid itself of “those who do not value party principles” and “moral degenerates.”

- In Gorbachev’s April speech to the Central Committee he implicitly criticized Chernenko for neglecting the struggle against corruption within officialdom, and he pointedly told Leningrad party workers a few weeks later that “in some places discipline and responsibility have become lax, even among our party workers and our leading cadres.” He served notice that the effort would continue.

- The chief editor of *Sovetskaya Rossiya* told Embassy officers in April that the Politburo has decided to fight corruption by replacing Brezhnev’s cadres policy—of promoting new regional leaders from within the same organization—with a new “horizontal” approach involving greater circulation of tested party officials from oblast to oblast and from the center to the provinces.

- Gorbachev clearly signaled his determination to press for further removals of corrupt officials in a May speech in Leningrad, when he asserted that leaders “not capable of guaranteeing discipline and order . . . should not hold a leading post.”

- Since Gorbachev became General Secretary, among the many personnel actions taken, a number have been related to individual corruption—for example, the removals of the USSR Minister of Electric Power and the longtime party chief of the Kirov region.

- The theme of order and discipline has received a striking amount of editorial attention since mid-March and was the topic of a series of recent regional party meetings.

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In addition to reasserting both the discipline and the anticorruption campaigns, Gorbachev has pledged an “implacable struggle” against “vagrancy and hooliganism” in the population at large and against “labor and social passivity, parasitism, and moral nihilism,” that have often been linked by Soviet leaders to

foreign “capitalist” influences. *Pravda* in December quoted Gorbachev as calling for “political vigilance and intolerance of alien views.”

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Gorbachev is also concerned about the broader social and political implications of economic crime and sees a need to arrest erosion in popular respect for the system and to curb alienation from official values. Persons who commit such “deviations,” Gorbachev stated, “challenge honest workers and scorn our values” and must be corrected by the “force of the law.” At the same time, he has indicated that he believes the alleviation of societal problems would have a positive effect on economic productivity.

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Gorbachev has denounced deviations from “socialist principles of distribution and management” that require that goods be distributed according to work performed, and apparently sees two major modes of attack on economic crime: adoption of a more performance-driven differentiated wage scale and some form of monitoring of unearned income. In his April speech to the Central Committee, Gorbachev suggested that he intends to eliminate “wage leveling” and “unearned incomes,” both of which he characterized as running counter to the moral norms of Soviet society. Earlier, on 10 December, he was more specific, stating that “numerous” letters from workers discussing the need to make it impossible for an individual to “conceal sources of wealth” and to “enable us to judge” if he is living on illegal income raise an issue that warrants “serious attention.” It is necessary, he said, to study and eliminate the legal and administrative flaws that facilitate “uncontrolled movement of monies and material valuables.” Gorbachev hinted that he is pushing preparation of decrees to this purpose in his May speech in Leningrad, when he charged that the public is “particularly indignant” about cases of unearned income and asking for corrective legislation.

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Building on measures taken during Andropov’s tenure—which went a long way toward rebuilding a less corrupt and more prestigious Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD)—Gorbachev has implicitly endorsed

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the strengthening of the militia, and the MVD chief, Gen. Vitaliy Fedorchuk, continues to speak out on these issues. According to the US Embassy, Moscow traffic police have recently begun to wear large numbered badges. This measure, by making it possible for citizens to identify and report illegality by militiamen to their superiors, is apparently designed to lessen corruption and to make the militia more accountable for their actions. [redacted]

health care institutions on the basis of proposals he said were "now being prepared." In his speech at the Central Committee meeting in April, Gorbachev re-emphasized the need to raise "people's prosperity." He specifically highlighted the Food Program, saying it could not be further delayed nor could local authorities continue to shift responsibility for its implementation onto central bodies, and once more pledged that an integrated program to develop consumer goods and services would be adopted "in the near future." [redacted]

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Consumer Issues

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Presumably because of Gorbachev's responsibility for agriculture, his past remarks about living conditions have focused on the Food Program and on the need to improve the very low standard of living in the rural backwaters of the Soviet Union. His remarks suggest that he thinks the low quality of rural life compounds a variety of social problems and accelerates the flight to cities of large numbers of young, able-bodied farm workers. At a national ideology conference in April 1981, he complained that the proportion of capital investment dedicated to rural nonproduction construction (housing and schools, for example) was "manifestly inadequate." Although he acknowledged there had been some improvement in allocation of resources during the interim, Gorbachev two years later (at Kursk, July 1983) was still critical of how work to upgrade services in the countryside was being carried out. [redacted]

Gorbachev clearly sees a connection between consumer shortages and labor productivity. He has blamed official shortcomings in the provision of goods and services for problems of public morale, social deviance, and poor worker attitudes. In his December ideology speech, he asserted that workers often find themselves "in the position of petitioners" for consumer services, and that the failure of supply to meet demand causes workers to take time from their jobs to shop and engenders moral "negative phenomena." In his May speech in Leningrad, he warned that increasing consumer goods and services has "immense social and political significance." [redacted]

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Beyond his particular concern about rural conditions, there are indications that Gorbachev accords a high priority to improving the living standard of all Soviet citizens. [redacted] an authoritative Soviet media spokesman stated recently that Gorbachev "is determined to improve the Soviet standard of living." In his December ideology speech Gorbachev addressed some broader concerns regarding the quality and quantity of goods and services. He pledged that the party will "increase its efforts" to meet the demand for consumer goods and services through the "comprehensive program" now being developed—a reference to the long-range consumer goods program first announced in 1983. He particularly focused on the need to improve medical services, a key target of public criticism in recent years, asserting that party and state organs should revamp

Gorbachev's determination to use material incentives to boost worker productivity was clearly demonstrated in his June report to the science and technology conference. He stressed the need to develop the consumer's influence on production and to extend the range of goods available, which would raise the worker's incentive to produce. Gorbachev castigated the present incentives system—as "extremely confused, cumbersome, and inefficient"—and complained that, because bonuses are often given out routinely to everybody regardless of their performance level, the "stimulating role" of the bonus is lost. [redacted]

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Gorbachev has also pointed to a causal linkage between the "poorly structured setup" of consumer goods and services and the widespread theft, corruption, and moonlighting that have become commonplace solutions to shortages. He gave a graphic example on 17 May. "Try to get your apartment repaired,"

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he challenged. You will "definitely" need a moonlighter, who will steal materials from a construction site, but the materials "come from the state anyway."

[redacted]

The state's failure to provide adequate recreational facilities for its citizens has elicited expressions of concern from the new General Secretary. He presumably believes that to the extent that the regime fails to provide ideologically "healthy" and politically innocuous leisure activities for the population, it will pay a price in terms of low public morale and the involvement of larger numbers of people in activities the regime disapproves of—such as dissent, crime, the black market, and religion. Gorbachev warned, in his speech to the ideology conference, that stricter demands would be made on leaders who limit their activities to the economic sphere while neglecting social and cultural resources, which they should recognize are important elements in inducing public "happiness and a good frame of mind." Although the new leadership has not mounted a comprehensive program to deal with leisure and cultural issues, a commitment to construction of recreational facilities is an important part of the recent decree on alcoholism.

[redacted]

The Gorbachev regime has already moved to improve living conditions with a program for some of the Soviet citizens who are least well off. Following Politburo discussions reported on 28 March and 14 May, an official resolution of 21 May stepped up state aid to families with children and single mothers, raised the minimum pension for workers on collective farms, and provided other amenities for the country's elderly.

[redacted]

Alcoholism

Alcohol consumption serves some positive functions from the regime's standpoint—by serving as a safety valve for popular frustrations and (literally) dampening demand for other consumer goods in short supply, as well as by generating state revenue. However, alcoholism aggravates a number of social and economic problems—rising crime rates, low labor productivity, poor worker discipline, a higher rate of male

mortality—that are becoming ever more burdensome to the Soviet economy under conditions of manpower and resource constraints.

[redacted]

Gorbachev has evidently assessed the economic and social ills associated with alcohol abuse to be serious threats to his goals of economic efficiency and higher worker productivity. He has identified himself personally with an aggressive policy initiative to curtail alcohol consumption, going considerably beyond the policy of his predecessors. In 1979 Brezhnev raised prices on alcohol, but illegal production reportedly increased. Andropov's discipline campaign stiffened sanctions against drunkenness on the job but stopped short of putting forth any systematic program. Chernenko made a plea to the people's controllers for help against the "great evil" of alcohol but typically specified no concrete measures.

[redacted]

At its third reported meeting under Gorbachev's leadership on 4 April, the Politburo "comprehensively studied" the matter and approved a broad set of major social, political, economic, and medical measures. The Politburo's action was followed by a raising of the penalty for production of moonshine from three to five years, contracts for increased importation of soft drinks, and regime moves to assure more beer production as a substitute for hard liquor. A party-state decree of 17 May detailed a comprehensive antialcoholism program, which acknowledged that the problem had worsened in recent years and that the efforts of law enforcement and propaganda organs had been seriously flawed. This decree mandated a broad array of measures designed to lower both production and consumption of hard liquor, to penalize alcohol abusers, to establish educational programs and incentives for sobriety, and to provide more options for leisure activities—particularly for young people. The decree has been followed by a media blitz.

[redacted]

There is evidence in Embassy [redacted] reporting, as well as in statements by Soviet officials, that the antialcohol program is being energetically pushed by the regime and is already making some impact. MVD chief Fedorchuk stated in mid-July that 200

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salespersons had been fired and faced criminal charges for violating the new rules on liquor sales. Fedorchuk's deputy reported a spectacular (nearly 14 times) increase in the number of persons charged with inciting minors to drunkenness. *Pravda* reported at the beginning of June that almost 2,500 moonshiners had been placed on a warning list and 540 stills shut down in a single province in the Russian Republic. In June, comments by Soviets as well as visitors to various parts of the USSR recounted strict enforcement of the new laws. [redacted] no hard liquor, or even wine, is being served at Soviet diplomatic or other official gatherings involving foreigners. According to an official mid-July report of the Ukrainian Central Committee, party members guilty of "hard drinking" are being severely disciplined and in some cases expelled from the party.

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Nationalities

Gorbachev recognizes the enduring force of non-Russian ethnic identity. He has acknowledged that problems and tensions continue to plague nationality relations, stating that "as long as nations exist, new questions will appear" concerning their interrelations.

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He has not—nor did Chernenko—pick up on Andropov's December 1982 unusual reference to the *sliyan-iye* (merger) of nationalities as the ultimate goal of Soviet ethnic policy. Nevertheless, in his December ideology speech Gorbachev characterized as "of primary importance" the anticipated "further integration" of regional economic resources into a general economic system. He also called for "mutual" cultural "enrichment" between Slavs and minority nationalities—codewords for a policy of downplaying the independent cultural heritages of non-Russian groups. On a previous occasion he had been more forceful regarding the desired pace and degree of integration. Speaking at a 1980 celebration of the 40th anniversary of the incorporation of the Lithuanian Republic into the USSR, he asserted that at the present stage of "mature socialism" the "internationalization" process becomes accelerated and "intensive rapprochement" (that is, Russification) occurs. These remarks suggest that Gorbachev intends to press harder for nationwide economic centralization and cultural homogenization. [redacted]

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At the operational level, accelerated national integration of the economy would entail an even greater emphasis than is currently the case on the regime's countrywide objectives, rather than on regional preferences in decisions about production priorities and location of industry. For example, Gorbachev might be inclined to urge a greater degree of regional economic specialization against the wishes of some leaders of non-Russian republics who have tended to seek more balanced economic development for their areas. Gorbachev might also be inclined to deemphasize the placement of more light industry in densely populated areas, a strategy for which republic leaders have lobbied to absorb surplus local labor without resort to large-scale migration. [redacted]

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Issues of resource allocation for development of regional economic assets have been on the leadership's agenda for several years. Central Asian leaders in particular have become vocal in demanding more from Moscow. Heavy lobbying for river diversion projects by three republic party leaders at the 26th Party Congress (February-March 1981) apparently secured a commitment in the 1981-85 economic plan guidelines to continue studies on this project. [redacted]

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[redacted] the regime would press forward with a controversial project for rechanneling some water from Siberian rivers to Central Asia and Kazakhstan. However, the central leadership has not implemented any specific measures in Central Asia, and Gorbachev charged in June that the country had embarked on "too many projects"—some of which should be delayed. Several highly placed energy and resource specialists, academic officials, and a writer in Siberia recently expressed to visiting US officials strong opposition to the river diversion plans and skepticism that they would be implemented.

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Whether or not Gorbachev has an emotional identification with Russian nationalism, he is evidently aware of its utility as a force for cohesion in the country. Gorbachev reportedly has stated on several occasions that without a firm grip at the center the many races in the Soviet Union would have flown apart and produced chaos. [redacted]

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Disaffection of Youth

Gorbachev's public statements have expressed concern that the material demands of many young people have risen beyond the regime's ability to satisfy them. As an antidote, he has focused on the need for measures to inculcate the work ethic and patriotism in young people.

25X1 Gorbachev's statements suggest that he attributes low morale among youth to the inflated claims of Soviet propaganda and to the adoption by youth of a new standard of comparison for their living conditions. In his speech at the ideology conference, he said that Soviet young people, growing up "under constantly improving material conditions" and "four decades of peace," do not fully appreciate that the Soviet Union's "great victories" were achieved only at the cost of years of hardship, hard work, and some "mistakes." They are accustomed to compare "our reality not with the past, but with the highest criteria of socialism." Thus, he implicitly acknowledged that earlier advances in the living standard, and Soviet propaganda promising an ever brighter future, had created false hopes among postwar generations, which had come to regard an expanding economy and a rising living standard as automatically guaranteed.

25X1 To remedy this situation, Gorbachev stressed in his 27 June 1984 speech in Smolensk that it is necessary to teach younger generations that they must work to achieve a high standard of living. He has also emphasized that young people must be prepared for defense and taught military affairs and "loyalty to their military duty." In such remarks, Gorbachev has remained close to positions taken by Andropov and Chernenko.

25X1 Despite some similarities, however, the general tone and approach to youth taken by Gorbachev is more optimistic than that of his elderly predecessors—perhaps, at least in part, because of the age differential. He recently praised the youth of Leningrad for actively reaching out "toward scientific-technical progress" and related an upbeat story of a young worker who, at personal financial sacrifice, transferred to another section of his factory to be part of the development of a new technical process. Gorbachev was even more explicit in his speech to the

science and technology conference, remarking that "we especially expect a lot from young people," with their high energy and interest in the new and progressive.

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Gorbachev—first as member, then chairman, of the Politburo commission that drafted the 1984 Educational Reform—has been deeply involved in designing changes in the school system. A primary goal of the reform is to tie education more closely to the needs of the economy—by greater emphasis on scientific-technical education and vocational training and bringing more people into jobs at an earlier age. But development of better labor attitudes through apprentice work programs and increased ideological training is of equal importance. The reform has been sold to the Soviet public as a way of affecting the social attitudes and behavior of youth as much as an attempt to improve their knowledge and skills.

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Opportunities and Risks

The widespread concern, within segments of the elite and even within sections of the population, to strengthen the orderliness and cohesiveness of Soviet society offers the possibility that Gorbachev will be able to marshal support for more vigorous and wide-ranging action than his predecessors were able or willing to take. Gorbachev's political style—his energetic confrontation of sensitive societal issues and particularly his skillful use of personal appearances and management of the media to build the image of a leader seeking direct and informal contact with the public—gives him significant advantage in pushing forward his social policies and programs.

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These same practices, however, may also harbor political risks for his rule. Gorbachev's direct appeal to the population, and calls for greater attention to the work of social scientists, imply a circumvention of the bureaucracies responsible for carrying out his policies. This could cause resentment among middle-level officials whose support Gorbachev will need to implement his policies.

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There is also a danger that Gorbachev may mismanage popular expectations. He is attempting both to combat cynicism and pessimism about the future and to keep hopes from getting out of hand. He evidently intends to use the new party program as a mechanism for achieving both objectives. He wants to reshape the program,³ which currently embodies totally unrealistic goals for consumer welfare, into a document that sets forth goals that are less ambitious but that the population will take seriously. Nevertheless, Gorbachev's statements may raise the expectation level—on such issues as improved living standards, reduction of drunkenness and corruption, and popular input into the political process—beyond the regime's ability or willingness to deliver. In that event, the pressure of unfulfilled expectations might trigger unrest⁴ and would certainly complicate the process of political trade-offs that will accompany the further articulation of policies. In addition, Gorbachev risks a spillover of public questioning into areas that deal with longstanding regime policies. Although willing to encourage dialogue on improving performance, by all indications he has no desire to reshape the system in any fundamental way and will be highly intolerant of those who propose doing so. []

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Broader political risks could arise as Gorbachev defines his social policy more fully in future months. He stated flatly on 11 June that the regime "cannot" curtail social programs. Nonetheless, economic resources are stretched to the limit, and there are powerful competing claimants for resource allocations, including heavy industry and the military establishment. Gorbachev is probably loath to challenge these rival interests, and, in any event, he himself may not have completely sorted out his resource priorities. []

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As he fleshes out his programs, Gorbachev will have to reckon not only with vested bureaucratic interests opposing change and competing for resources but also with ingrained habits and attitudes in society at large

³ The program of the CPSU—setting out the party's tasks and goals—was adopted in October 1961. []

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that will be difficult to alter. For example, his energetic anticorruption drive will probably be resisted by regional party officials and state and economic bureaucrats for whom corruption has become an essential operational tool or who stand to lose their lucrative protective networks. Some of these individuals have already been replaced, but others may make common cause with central and regional leaders apprehensive that replacement of corrupt leaders is only the first phase of a more ambitious design to retire most older leaders or the opening wedge for broad economic reform. []

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In sum, Gorbachev has yet to reveal any integrated program for dealing with the web of interrelated societal problems. He has articulated an assessment that social problems are serious and that they require immediate attention, and he has acted with vigor in attacking certain problems—alcohol and corruption. A key issue in coming months will be the question of political will and political power—whether Gorbachev places a high enough priority on the alleviation of social problems to devote energy and resources in this area, and whether he is able to marshal sufficient political support to do so. He may be inclined to concentrate on areas where he believes he can effect change without major commitments of resources—for example, by moving even more forcefully against poor worker discipline and official corruption, initiating a campaign against violent crime, increasing ideological indoctrination of school children, and following through to enforce the antialcohol campaign with punitive measures against drinking at the workplace and public drunkenness. Significant progress in improving the lot of the consumer would require a major redirection of resources and may consequently come slower. []

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