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MACNEIL: To analyze Andropov's first year and the meaning of his present seclusion, we have first Lawrence Caldwell, who was scholar in residence at the CIA's office of Soviet analysis for the past two years. He now teaches at Occidental College in California, and is a staff member of the Arroyo Center of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. Dr. Caldwell, is Andropov, in your view, still running the USSR? LAWRENCE CALDWELL (Occidental College): It's hard to know, given the signals we've had about health. Think I would disagree with Jiri Valenta in his most recent statement there. He holds all the formal levers of power. Uh, there's no sign of a challenge to him. We did have signs during the six or eight months prior to the death of Brezhnev that there was some maneuvering and jockeying... jockeying. We haven't had those signs this time. So Andropov doesn't have an alternative at the moment. If he's in ill health, which, uh, seems increasingly apparent, uh, of course he probably isn't running the show. But there is no alternative.

MACNEIL: How much of a, uh, of a leadership void would you say that there is? I mean, they pointed, for instance, to the, uh, the uncertainties and the different voices in Moscow at the time of the Korean airliner. Did that reveal to you a serious lack of leadership? CALDWELL: No, I think the only substantial signal of a lack of leadership is the fact that Andropov has been out of sight. The only statements we've had from Andropov have come in the press, and those probably come from the central committee. Uh, as far as the handling of the KAL incident, I wouldn't interpret that as a signal that he hasn't been in charge. On the contrary, uh, it could well mean that he was, or the leadership as a whole was trying to disassociate him from an immediate responsibility from what was, no doubt, an embarrassing incident.

MACNEIL: Now obviously we can't predict how ill he is, say how ill he is, and we can't predict how long he may live. Suppose he does die sometime within the next few months or year. Are we in for a longer period of uncertainty? He'll be replaced by somebody, presumably. Is he likely to be replaced by somebody who will make a, a, who will take hold of the leadership and hold it for a long period of time, or are we in for a series of quick successions? CALDWELL: If he were to die now or if he were to become incapacitated and, and be replaced in the short run, then almost certainly we would be in for another intermediate stage of the leadership. The features that governed his succession, uh, the sort of institutional balance among the KGB and the military and the party and the ministry on foreign affairs, that remains in place. The people who are there who are the, his principal colleagues on the politburo are still quite aged. Consequently, uh, my guess is that if he were to have to step down or were to die, we would see another interim leader. We're in a process of succession, one that will continue for some time.

MACNEIL: Until the younger generation... CALDWELL: Until the younger generation. And there aren't many of the younger generation on the current politburo. The Soviets that I've talked to, uh, had hoped that Andropov would be able to weather this transition on his own, that he would be able to grab ahold of the policy levers, uh, to bring new people into the politburo, and that he would be the instrument of the succession. Obviously if he's incapacitated he won't be the instrument, and we'll see another one with a short term, I would gather.

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MACNEIL: Is this long period of uncertainty, is this good for the West, for the United States and the West? CALDWELL: In my opinion it's neither good nor bad. On balance, probably, it's bad, and it's bad in a couple of ways. First, uncertainty in Moscow, uh, given the severely, uh, degenerated nature of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, uncertainty in Moscow over the leadership question probably increases the possibilities of miscalculation. Uh, if indeed the, the hypothesis is correct that Andropov was incapacitated in September, perhaps the KAL incident was the first example of the Soviet incapacity to deal with crises. So in that sense, I think it's not good from the American point of view. In terms of the United States being able to exercise any leverage on the process, uh, I don't think anyone would argue that there's much we could do in that respect at all. On the other hand, I think the atmosphere of the relationship's important. No one gets points in Moscow by arguing in favor of improvement of the relationship with Washington, and I think that has a consequence. It says something about the environment within which the succession will take place.

MACNEIL: Thank you. Jim?

LEHRER: Another view of it now from Richard Pipes, former director of Eastern European and Soviet affairs at the National Security Council. He's served at the NSC for the first two years of the Reagan administration and has now returned to his teaching position at Harvard University. Dr. Pipes, first, with Andropov apparently, uh, incapacitated, who do you think is likely running the shots there now, calling the shots there? DR. RICHARD PIPES (Former Member National Security Council): You must realize tht Soviet Union is run by bureaucracy, and the bureaucracy is concentrated in the central committee, and basically they can run the country from day to day, from week to week without any leadership. Where the leadership is essential is to give a thrust forward, to make changes.

LEHRER: So nothing, then, of importance would be put on hold, so to speak, while Andropov either recovers or dies. PIPES: There is, uh, things will not be put on, uh, the day-to-day affairs will not be put on hold. But I think what you're going to find is that when the top leader is ill or when there is a succession struggle, the bureaucrats don't know who will be in charge and they tend not to stick their necks out. So there is a fear of doing nothing innovative, either in foreign or domestic policy.

LEHRER: Do you agree with the position that, that, uh, we're in, that assuming Andropov does not recover and dies or becomes incapacitated even further, that we're in for another interim leadership, or another inter... interim leadership figure? PIPES: Not necessarily. I was struck by the fact that a few months ago the party brought from Leningrad--the leader of the Leningrad party was Romanov, who has a very good name to be a Russian leader.

LEHRER: Ma. PIPES: Brought him to...

LEHRER: He has a direct lineage from the czar. PIPES: Well, it would seem so.

LEHRER: Yes. PIPES: ...Uh, brought him to Moscow and, uh, gave him a post on the secretariat. He's a young man; he's a man in his early 50s, and it almost looked as if they were saying, 'Well, Andropov is ill, he may not last, and we want somebody young to be on the spot.' Now he's one of three people who are both on the politburo and the secretariat; and the next leader is likely to come out of that group.

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LEHRER: And if it's him, that means that it could be for a long term and not for some interim period. PIPES: It could be.

LEHRER: What is your view of whether or not this period of certainty, uncertainty, that we're in is a plus or a minus for the United States? PIPES: I think it's a plus, uh, the reason being that as I've said, when the bureaucracy lacks a clear leader, uh, it tends not to be innovative and take initiatives. Uh, that applies to foreign policy as well. Uh, the, we have experienced in the, in the past during the, uh, succession struggles in the '20s after Lenin's death, the Soviet Union was less aggressive than either before or after. And the same thing happened after Stalin's death in the immediate few years. Uh, when the succession struggle is, uh, on its way, then these people have to so much concentrate on establishing a domestic base, they tend not to get too adventuresome abroad.

LEHRER: I see. And what, how, in specifics, do you think, uh, would this play itself out? If the United States, uh, were to use this opportunity, what kinds of things do you think could be accomplished now in this environment? PIPES: I think we should not try either to negotiate anything, because it is almost impossible to negotiate without a leader firmly in place. I think this has been our problem the last two, three years, that all our attempts at negotiating not just arms control, but any regional problems, have run into stone wall, because no one dares to make proposals, and they repeat the same old proposals. Uh, I would not try to do that until they have the new leader in place. Uh, basically I'd keep hands off; uh, go about our own business, whatever we have to do, and not try to intervere (sic), interfere in the internal processes there.

LEHRER: But not even any kind of external thing, we shouldn't do anything either, right? PIPES: Well, we should go about our business. We should re-arm. Ah, we should try to contain Soviet and Soviet-inspired expansion, as well as the rest of the world. We should see to it that we don't sell them military technology and all these things and let them resolve their own problems. Ah, my feeling is and always has been that the deeper the problems are at home, the less likely they are to become aggressive externally, the more likely they are to turn their attention to domestic problems, which are very pressing.

LEHRER: I see. Thank you. Robin?

MACNEIL: Mr. Caldwell, Dr. Caldwell, what about the young Mr. Romanov, Romanov?

CALDWELL: Well, we don't know very much about him in terms of foreign policy issues, for example.

MACNEIL: But is he, is he, in your view a potential candidate to, at that young age, to succeed Andropov? CALDWELL: Clearly. I think he's a bit older than Prof. Pipes suggested. I think his age is in the early 60s, not in the early 50s. Mr. Gorbachov, who is also a member of the politburo, is the youngest member of the, among the contenders. But still, ah, I would say they're both clearly contenders for exactly the reasons Prof. Pipes gave. To predict what kind of a policy impact they would have is very difficult.

MACNEIL: Yeah. Now, ah, what do you think of Dr. Pipes' prescription that, ah, it is a plus but not a time for us to negotiate but to keep hands off, go about our own business and let them go about theirs. CALDWELL: That depends a bit on your conception of what our business is. We are in a very difficult time in Europe right now. The Pershing 2 and Greenham cruise missiles are going to go in place for NATO.

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It may be that we have other reasons for trying to get some kind of negotiations completed in the INF context. Ah....

MACNEIL: The, ah, the intermediate nuclear force missiles. CALDWELL: The intermediate nuclear force missiles--right. I would argue that that is an agenda item, and Prof. Pipes may be right. It may be more difficult if there is leadership uncertainty in Moscow. On the other hand, my perception differs from his. The Soviet position in those negotiations has changed marginally but steadily, ah, during the past year in the direction that is probably favorable from a NATO point of view. Ah, contrary to the notion that we've been running into a brick wall, the Soviets have been clearly trying to get an agreement. Now, whether the environment is better in the case of Andropov's incapacitation to get an agreement favorable to United States interest or not, that I can't, can't be certain about.

MACNEIL: What about that, ah, Dr. Pipes, that, ah, although the Russians have moved marginally it has been in the direction we might like, which would argue against your feeling that the bureaucracy is afraid to move? PIPES: Well, neither of the two years that I was in the National Security Council or the years since I have left have I seen really any willingness on the part of the Soviet Union to come to terms with us on any outstanding issues. Basically, they don't compromise. They state their position and expect us to accept their position. And if we're not willing to accept their position, then we get nowhere. Ah, I ascribe this to certain lack of direction on top. And I'm not against negotiating, you know. The time is wasted perhaps; there's no harm in that. But I have very little expectation that until they solve the leadership problems we will get any agreement on any outstanding issue, whether this be arms control or Afghanistan or Caribbean or what have you.

MACNEIL: What about, ah, Dr. Caldwell's point earlier that this is in a sense a dangerous time because the Soviets may not know how to react to, to crises, as in the instance of the Korean airliner possibly as an example of that? PIPES: The Korean airliner is not an example of it, I don't think. Obviously that was a foul-up there somewhere. It's a military foul-up basically. And the, ah, as Mr. Caldwell said, the politicians wanted to disassociate themselves from it. They seem to be quite active in certain areas in Europe, in the Middle East and Syria right now. It is that just that they basically going along the same lines in which they've been going before. They are, they are totally devoid of new ideas. And when we confront them with new ideas and proposals, they shy away from them. And I ascribe that to the fear of the bureaucrats around the country to take initiatives to stick their necks out. But I don't think the situation is more dangerous now than it would be if we had Romanov or Gorbachov in charge. In fact, it is probably a rather good (inaudible) for President Reagan because he is under less pressure from the Soviets than he will be when the leader is firmly in the saddle.

MACNEIL: You agree, do you agree with that? CALDWELL: I agree with parts of that. Ah, I meant to say that earlier, that Prof. Pipes argument that they do not take initiatives in times of, of leadership transition, I think that's fairly clear the case, particularly with respect to domestic policy. The; the Soviets have, since Brezhnev came to power really, been locked into a kind of an institutional balance, which has prevented them from taking dramatic initiatives. And on the domestic scene, that's caused difficult for them. John Hart argued a moment ago that Andropov has had some success with the economy. He has, but it's been a kind of marginal tinkering kind of success. They haven't attempted any dramatic new domestic policies nor any dramatic new foreign policies. And I think Prof. Pipes is right. We're not likely to see those in the short run, so long as there is uncertainty within the leadership, but

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my point was quite a different one. Ah, and he called attention to the Middle East, which, as we all know, is a powder keg difficulties on a daily basis there. The Soviets have gotten themselves locked into a position of very substantial support for the Syrians. Ah, just yesterday the Syrians announced that they had shot out American aircraft flying off the, ah, Sixth Fleet.

MACNEIL: They did it again today. CALDWELL: Did it again today. Well, ah, I worry about an inexperienced leadership, leadership that, ah, has not dealt with foreign policy issues at the top in the short run when we had so many unresolved issues. And then, the atmosphere and relations between the two countries is really, ah, minimal. When the dialogue by which we might normally attempt to at least control crises, that dialogue is substantially, ah, ah, been reduced to nothing.

MACNEIL: Well, thank you, Dr. Caldwell and Dr. Pipes in Washington.