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AUTHOR: Jeremy R. Azrael
Rand Corporation/UCLA

CONTRACTOR: Rand/UCLA

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jeremy R. Azrael

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite numerous claims to the contrary, the Soviet secret police were not politically neutralized or brought under non-partisan "party control" after the death of Stalin. Although "hard" data are difficult to come by, the available evidence leaves little doubt that the KGB has been an instrument and arena of internecine conflict among Soviet leaders from the moment it was founded in April 1954. Thanks to their control of an immense arsenal of politically potent weapons, moreover, KGB cadres have clearly played important and sometimes decisive roles in the allocation of power and authority in the Kremlin under all of Stalin's successors.

The first head of the KGB, Ivan Serov, clearly owed his loyalty to Nikita Khrushchev, who had already relied on him to assist in the arrest of Lavrentii Beria and was now counting on him to assist in the ouster of other actual and potential rival candidates for supreme power. On assignment from Khrushchev, Serov and his lieutenants first proceeded to collect evidence implicating Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich in Beria's and Stalin's crimes and then mobilized the KGB against these leaders, when a majority of the Politburo backed them against Khrushchev. In addition, Serov helped Khrushchev to engineer the removal of Marshal Zhukov from the Politburo. By rendering these signal services, however, Serov created a situation in which he himself became expendable from Khrushchev's point of view. As a result, he was summarily demoted, when the remaining members of the leadership made this a condition for their acquiescence in Khrushchev's addition of the premiership to his other offices.
his own political career.

Given Andropov's increasingly obvious ambition, it is almost impossible not to suspect that the KGB may have had a sizeable hand in the plague of misfortunes that depleted the ranks of Brezhnev's most likely successors between 1978 and 1980. Many Moscow "insiders" have alleged that this was the case, and their reports have the virtue of being consistent with all the known facts. In any event, by the early 1980's, the contest to succeed Brezhnev had settled down to a two-man race between Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, who clearly had Brezhnev's backing. Although Chernenko was initially the front-runner in this race, Andropov's command of the KGB soon enabled him to close the gap. In effect, Andropov intimidated Brezhnev into giving him a lien on the general secretaryship of the party in return for a promise to defer collection for the remainder of Brezhnev's life and to observe a truce with the ranking "Brezhnevites" for a "decent interlude" thereafter.

As part of his deal with Brezhnev and the "Brezhnevites," Andropov agreed that they would have a major voice in the choice of his successor as chairman of the KGB. In consequence, when Andropov unexpectedly died, after serving only fifteen months as General Secretary, the KGB was not headed by an "Andropov loyalist." Instead, it was headed by Viktor Chebrikov, who had functioned as one of Brezhnev's watchdogs in KGB headquarters since 1967 and who had been appointed chairman shortly after Brezhnev's death, when Andropov's immediate, and clearly interim, replacement, Vitalii Fedorchuk, was named Minister of the Interior. Given Chebrikov's "Brezhnevite"
hesitation undoubtedly stems from his fear of provoking Chebrikov and his conservative allies into yet more militant opposition. But it may also reflect a recognition of how much coercion is likely to be needed in order to preserve political stability, while getting the Soviet system moving again. If so, the crux of the problem, as Gorbachev sees it, is almost certainly not to subordinate the KGB to greater party and/or public control. Rather it is to install one of his own followers as chairman so that he can turn the KGB on his opponents in the leadership and employ it more effectively than he has been able to employ it heretofore to shake the party and the public out of their lethargy.

Some knowledgeable observers anticipate that the KGB may become the dominant political actor on the Soviet scene in the not-too-distant future. When things have gone so far that Andrei Sakharov, not to mention the leadership of Pamyat', is prepared to single the KGB out for praise for its "incorruptibility," this is a possibility that must be taken very seriously. Whatever the future may bring, however, the developments over the course of the past thirty-five years have clearly left the KGB in a position to strongly influence the outcome.
Introduction

This report analyzes the participation of the KGB in Soviet elite politics. Because "hard" evidence on this topic is extremely scarce, many important empirical and analytical questions cannot be conclusively answered. Close scrutiny of the information that is available, however, often makes it possible to sharpen the questions and narrow uncertainty about their answers. In many cases, moreover, the findings turn out to be inconsistent with what has come to be accepted as "conventional wisdom." These findings do not always permit a reliable account of what actually occurred in any given instance. But they clearly undermine the validity of some very widely held assumptions. This pertains not only to assumptions about the power-political capabilities and activities of the secret police but also to assumptions about the pace and direction of political change since the death of Stalin.

With notable exceptions, Western specialists have tended to treat the involvement of the secret police in Soviet elite politics as a matter of purely historical interest.¹ Like its supposedly "all-powerful" Stalinist predecessors, the KGB is regularly identified as one of the "pillars" of the Soviet regime. As such, its activities in monitoring public opinion, repressing dissent, and stifling protest are often analyzed in great detail.² Similarly, its role in combatting economic crime and official corruption receives frequent mention.³ And, a great deal is written about its performance in the field of foreign

¹ Robert Conquest and Amy Knight are perhaps the most conspicuous exceptions.
² See, for example, Barghoorn (1976) and Reddaway (1983).
³ See, for example, Simis (1986).
present Soviet political system that the secret police [has been]
largely eliminated from the political process within the elite...." In
the same vein, Timothy Colton contends that the KGB has "never exercised
much independent influence over grand decisions," and is no longer even
influential enough to be courted by "warring groups within the party." "

Last, but not least, Jerry Hough has recently put it on record that,
"the secret police [has] as little right to become involved in factional
politics in the [contemporary] Soviet Union as the...FBI [has] in the
United States." To be fair, many "mainstream" scholars would probably
consider Hough's formulation at least slightly hyperbolic. To judge by
their writings, however, most of them would nonetheless subscribe to the
underlying, dismissive assessment of the political significance of the
KGB.

Unless it is drastically off the mark, the analysis in the
following pages will convincingly demonstrate that reports of the power-
political demise of the Soviet secret police are not only exaggerated
but highly misleading. In comparison with the Stalinist period, secret
police participation in the elite political process has certainly become
far less sanguinary -- a change that has both reflected and contributed
to significant modifications in the "rules" by which Kremlin struggles
are waged. Nevertheless, the secret police has been actively and almost
uninterruptedly involved in high-level politics throughout the post-
Stalin period.

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The possibility that some senior secret police officers played an active role in the conspiracy against Beria is rarely even considered by "mainstream" analysts. It is not, however, a possibility that can be excluded on the basis of what Khrushchev reports in the only available account of events by one of the conspirators, not to mention one with a considerable reluctance to admit to the use of "non-party methods." It is true that the only conspirators whom Khrushchev identifies by name other than fellow members of the leadership are Marshal Georgii Zhukov and Marshal Kiril Moskalenko of the Soviet army. But it is also true that he mentions the participation of nine other, unnamed, "marshals and generals" in the final showdown with Beria and implies that Colonel General Ivan Serov and Colonel General Sergei Kruglov of the secret police were among them. If these veteran "Chekists" had not been involved, it is difficult to understand why Khrushchev would have proposed that Beria be consigned to Serov's custody after his arrest or why, in explaining that his colleagues had preferred Moskalenko to Serov because of the latter's institutional affiliation, he would have included Kruglov in the explanation.

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14 See, however, Krasnaia Zvezda, March 18, 19, and 20, 1988, for a three-installment interview with a military officer who participated in the arrest and subsequent detention of Beria. According to then-Colonel, now-retired-Major General I. Zub, Serov did not participate in the physical arrest of Beria and was prevented from interrogating Beria without military observers present during the week Beria spent in Lefortovo Prison immediately following his arrest.
been considerably smaller than in the first. In light of later developments, however, this could well be a case where appearances are deceptive. In any event, it is a misleading oversimplification to describe the mid-1950’s as a period in which, with Beria out of the way, Stalin’s surviving heirs "strove to bring the security services under collective control and prevent any one person from ever again using them as a private weapon."17 Some members of the leadership undoubtedly hoped for such an outcome and did what they could to bring it about. It seems quite likely, for example, that their efforts were instrumental in persuading Khrushchev to deliver his "secret speech" at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. Nevertheless, the evidence leaves little doubt that both Malenkov and Khrushchev were much more interested in competing for factional primacy within the secret police than in joining forces to subject the latter to non-partisan "party control."

Although it is impossible to provide a precise blow-by-blow account of this competition, Malenkov apparently won the first-round with the appointment of Kruglov as Minister of the Interior -- a post that entailed command of the secret, as well as the regular, police, thanks to the organizational changes that Beria had introduced immediately after Stalin’s death. Kruglov was clearly not Khrushchev’s candidate for the job, and his summary dismissal within a year after Malenkov’s resignation as premier leaves little doubt that Malenkov was his principal supporter.18 Khrushchev quickly overcame this initial

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18 See, Talbott (1970), p. 338, for Khrushchev’s insistence that he did not even know Kruglov at the time of Beria’s arrest. Kruglov was dismissed in early 1956, even though by then his portfolio was no longer of any particular power-political significance.
Khrushchev had infiltrated into the upper reaches of the secret police prior to Stalin's death.20

Given this lineup, Khrushchev obviously had little reason to fear that Malenkov would be able to employ the secret police against him in their struggle for power. By the same token, however, Malenkov had every reason to be nervous when the GUBG was transformed into a separate Committee of State Security (KGB), with Serov as chairman and Lunev as his first deputy, in March 1954.21 Malenkov's nervousness probably came close to panic, if it is true, as was claimed by an exceptionally well-connected Soviet source, that, unlike other governmental committees, the KGB took its orders directly from the Khrushchev-dominated Central Committee rather than the Malenkov-dominated Council of Ministers.22

Since this claim cannot be independently verified, it has been ignored by Western scholars. Nevertheless, there is collateral information that suggests that it may contain an important element of

20Khrushchev's confidence in Lunev is indicated not only by the fact that he was appointed first deputy chairman of the KGB in 1954--a post he held until 1959--but also by the fact that he was appointed to serve as a judge at Beria's trial, the only "Chekist" thus honored. Ustinov served as first secretary of the Moscow gorkom from 1956-57, after which he succeeded Yurii Andropov as Soviet Ambassador to Hungary. Mironov joined the secret police in 1951, after serving in the party apparatus of Dnepropetrovsk, the point of origin of so many of Khrushchev's supporters, until they abandoned him to support their more immediate patron, Brezhnev. Between 1956 and 1959, Mironov served as KGB chief in Leningrad, where he presumably played a key role in reopening "the Leningrad Affair" on Khrushchev's behalf. From 1959-1964, he served as chief of the Administrative Organs Department of the Central Committee Secretariat.

21Conquest (1961), p. 222, relying on the biography of V.I. Ustinov in the Large Soviet Encyclopedia, suggests that the KGB may actually have begun to operate months before its formation was publicly announced.

of Lenin in November 1955 and the Order of the Red Banner in December 1954.\textsuperscript{24} Furthermore, in his report to the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev roundly condemned those who displayed "incorrect and harmful mistrust of the workers of the state security organs" and thereby failed to recognize that "the overwhelming majority of Chekists are honest officials, devoted to our common cause, and deserving of our trust."\textsuperscript{25} Such gestures of deference to the secret police could have been inspired by a simple desire to prevent demoralization in the ranks of an organization that was being forced to repudiate -- and, in the case of many former officers, "atone" for -- a great deal of its past behavior.\textsuperscript{26} Since they were made in the midst of intense infighting within the leadership, however, one can speculate that they were also rewards from a grateful Khrushchev for factional services rendered.

The KGB and the "Anti-Party Group"

If Khrushchev owed the KGB a debt of gratitude for helping him to become primus inter pares within the collective leadership in the mid-1950's, he owed it an even greater obligation for helping him to retain and ultimately enhance his position in June 1957, when a sizable majority of the party Presidium, led by Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich, tried to dislodge him. Before turning to the resolution of the June 1957 crisis, however, something should be said about its genesis, especially since Khrushchev's partisan use of the KGB seems to


\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Pravda}, February 16, 1956.

crimes had been presented to the Central Committee as early as January 1955. According to a confidential circular letter from the CPSU to fraternal parties, this was when Malenkov was officially charged with (and allegedly confessed to) "co-responsibility" for the "Leningrad Affair."  

In fact, it may well have been fear--or knowledge--that Khrushchev was about to go public with some of the results of Serov's archival research that prompted the members of the "anti-party group" to confront Khrushchev when they did--and sooner than they would have wished.  

There is certainly no doubt that the speech that Khrushchev was scheduled to make in Leningrad on the day after his opponents summoned him to battle would have provided an appropriate occasion for a public denunciation of Malenkov for complicity in Stalin's recurrent massacres of Leningrad's elite. The fact that Khrushchev delivered exactly such a denunciation when he finally managed to get to Leningrad almost three weeks later obviously does not prove that he would have done something similar if the June crisis had not taken place in the interim.  

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12At a minimum, veteran conspirators such as Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Bulganin must have been disturbed by the number of foreseeable contingencies for which they were not yet fully prepared. According to a later account by Kiril Mazurov, "materials" to indict the members of the anti-party group for complicity in Stalin's crimes were presented to the Central Committee toward the end of the June crises, when Khrushchev's victory was a foregone conclusion. The fact that these "materials" were available and ready to hand was taken for granted. (Pravda, October 20, 1961.)  

13See, Pravda, July 7, 1957, for the Leningrad speech in which Khrushchev said that "all the members of the anti-party group were profoundly guilty of the crude mistakes and shortcomings which took place in the past, and Malenkov, who was one of the chief organizers of the so-called Leningrad Affair, was simply afraid to come to you here in Leningrad." N.M. Shvernik, chairman of the Party Control Committee, went even further in a speech that he delivered in Leningrad at the same
demanded that the Central Committee rather than the opposition-dominated party Presidium be allowed to decide Khrushchev's fate and who threatened that any decision that the Presidium took unilaterally would be overridden. Similarly, Alexander Nekrich and Mark Heller credit Serov, along with Zhukov, with helping to arrange the special flights which enabled Khrushchev's supporters in the provincial party apparatus to gather in Moscow before the Presidium could present them with a fait accompli. This is confirmed, in turn by Ilia Dzhirkvelov, who was head of the first department of the Georgian KGB at the time, and who claims to have seen an order from Serov to the republic KGBs, instructing them "to deliver all the members of the Central Committee of the CPSU to Moscow...to support Khrushchev." Finally, Oleg Penkovskiy, who enjoyed Serov's personal confidence, asserts that, "it was help from the KGB that enabled the members of the Central Committee to rush to Moscow in 1957" and concludes that, "if it were not for the KGB and Serov," Khrushchev could never have survived to become supreme leader.

These "insider" accounts cannot be independently corroborated by outside observers. On the basis of what we know about the authors, however, it seems almost certain that their information came from different sources, with little, if any, possibility of a tainted common origin. It does not necessarily follow, of course, that this information is correct. In the absence of contradictory evidence, however, there is no valid reason to discount it. On the contrary,
military officer to attain a seat on the Presidium if this were not the case. At the same time, however, Khrushchev clearly had a deep fear of "bonapartist" proclivities within the military high command. And, the very fact that he had been forced to solicit the military's help during the June crisis undoubtedly increased his anxiety. To make matters worse, Zhukov enjoyed immense respect among his brother officers and was, if anything, even more popular with rank-and-file citizens. Presumably, it was precisely these traits that made him so valuable to Khrushchev as a political ally. But, they were highly problematical assets from the point of view of a recently embattled leader who was justifiably uncertain about the scope of his authority not only over his colleagues in the Kremlin, but over the country at large. In consequence, there is little question that Khrushchev called on Serov and his "honest Chekists" to remain vigilant against "factionalism" in general and against "military factionalism" in particular.

The high command received what may have been an esoteric public warning that it would be held accountable to the secret police for efforts to capitalize on its role in the June crisis while the crisis was still winding down. This warning (if such it was) was conveyed in a Red Star notice of a reception hosted by Marshal Zhukov for the Yugoslav Minister of Defense, who was visiting Moscow at the time. What was

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2 Zhukov had been a candidate member of the Presidium since June 1953. This promotion was also a first for a professional military officer and was presumably bestowed as a reward for the military's assistance in the arrest of Beria.

3 Khrushchev's mistrust of the military and suspicion of its political ambitions is evident throughout his memoirs. See, especially Talbott (1974), pp. 11-28, and pp. 540-542.

4 "Krasnaia Zvezda, June 26, 1957."
Konev, as Penkovskiy reports Khrushchev to have alleged to the party aktiv of the Moscow Military District in a speech explaining Zhukov's abrupt dismissal from the leadership only four months after his promotion. Penkovskiy himself is skeptical about this charge. But it seems unlikely that Khrushchev would have lied to a group that was in a good position to verify what he said, let alone that he would have invented a story that was almost certain to enhance the fallen Zhukov's reputation in military circles. Accordingly, one is tempted to conclude that Khrushchev was probably telling the truth and that Zhukov's insistence on a change of command in the KGB was the basis for the reports that had surfaced in the weeks preceding his ouster about the increasing subordination of the secret police to military control.

As a member of the Presidium, Zhukov would presumably have been well within his rights to propose high-level personnel changes and even changes in the existing system of institutional checks and balances. By targeting Serov and the KGB, however, he would certainly have failed to display what Khrushchev considered "a correct understanding of his role as Minister of Defense" -- the only role to which Khrushchev seems to have believed he was really entitled. By proposing Konev as Serov's successor, moreover, Zhukov would have played directly into Khrushchev's hands. Khrushchev could cite this proposal as an example of precisely the sort of "bonapartist" propensity that Serov had been reporting and thereby strengthen not only the case for dismissing Zhukov, but also the

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48Penkovskiy (1965), p. 239.
49See, Lowenthal (1957), p. 2; also, Alsop (1957).
by Khrushchev, who allegedly felt that Serov had outlived his usefulness and that Shelepin would make an equally pliant but less disreputable agent.\textsuperscript{53} In fact, however, this seems highly implausible. Although Khrushchev may have felt fairly secure in December, 1958, he almost certainly anticipated further struggles in which Serov’s loyalty and experience would come in handy. Left to his own devices, moreover, Khrushchev would almost certainly have wanted to replace Serov with Lunev, Ustinov, or Mironov, if he had concluded that the KGB should henceforth be headed by a party \textit{apparatchik} rather than a professional secret policeman. Unlike these obvious candidates for the KGB chairmanship, Shelepin was not a long-time client of Khrushchev’s, nor even, so far as one can tell, a particularly active latter-day backer.\textsuperscript{54} Nevertheless, it was Shelepin who was appointed, while Lunev and Ustinov were soon dispatched to outlying posts, and Mironov was transferred to the party secretariat as chief of the Administrative Organs Department, which was supposed to supervise the work of the KGB but had been relatively inactive in recent years.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{54}It is noteworthy that Shelepin’s name does not appear among the seventeen Central Committee members who are listed in the 1959 edition of \textit{History of the CPSU} as having "acted [particularly quickly and] decisively against the anti-party group." See, Pethybridge (1962), p. 103.

\textsuperscript{55}Lunev was appointed head of the KGB in Kazakhstan, while Ustinov was removed as Moscow Party secretary and named ambassador to Hungary. Mironov replaced General Zheltov, former head of the MPA, as chief of the Administrative Organs Department, which had been headed by an acting chief, Gromov, from 1953 until Zheltov’s appointment in the summer of 1957. Mironov was the first chief under whom this Department began to exercise really significant control over the operations of the secret police. This was itself a sign of Khrushchev’s early mistrust of Shelepin. (See, for example, Penkovskiy (1965), p. 284.)
ultimately failed, Shelepin was vociferous in demanding that the "factionalists" be called to "strictest accountability" both for their "direct responsibility for the physical destruction" of innocent party cadres in the past and for their latter-day role as "conspirators [who] were prepared to take the most extreme steps to achieve their filthy purposes." While joining the hue and cry against the "political corpses" of "the anti-party group," moreover, Shelepin also revived the ominous Stalinist epithet "inner enemy" in calling for the severest punishment, including punishment meted out at "show trials," of "bureaucrats...who are to blame for the fact that extremely important Party and government decisions...are not carried out." Such crude sabre-rattling was hard to reconcile with Shelepin's concurrent claim that the secret police was no longer the "frightening specter that Beria...sought to make it not very long ago." But it added what was presumably a welcome note of intimidation to Khrushchev's continuing efforts to discipline and mobilize the frequently recalcitrant and sometimes insubordinate *apparatchiki* of the party-state machine.

Crimes in which "plotting with the aim of seizing power" was added to the previously existing list of "especially dangerous state crimes," punishable by fifteen years imprisonment or death.

58 Saikowski and Gruliow (1962), pp.180-181 -- speech to the 22nd Party Congress in October 1961. See, also, Gruliow (1960), p.177, for Shelepin's injunction to the delegates of the 21st Party Congress (February, 1959), "not [to] forget" that the odious and unseemly behavior of the anti-party group "represented a great danger" and involved "a real conspiracy against the party." 59 Saikowski and Gruliow (1962), p. 182 -- speech to 22nd Party Congress.

61 Saikowski and Gruliow (1962), p.182 - Shelepin's speech to the 22nd Party Congress. See, ibid, pp.56-57 and 70-72, for Khrushchev's condemnation of "leaders whose work is spiritless and lacking in initiative."
As a Central Committee secretary and first deputy premier, Shelepin was clearly entitled to a seat on the party Presidium. This was a well-established precedent, and there is every reason to suppose that Shelepin demanded his due -- of Khrushchev in the first instance. As 1963 went on, however, it gradually became clear that Khrushchev would not or could not deliver. Either he preferred to keep Shelepin "as his personal subordinate, outside the discussions of the [country's] highest policy-making body," or he was incapable of overcoming the resistance of other leaders who feared that "Iron Shurik's" further promotion would enable Khrushchev to consolidate dictatorial power.65 In either case, Shelepin had good reason to reassess his equities in the months preceding Khrushchev's overthrow in October, 1964. And, the evidence leaves no doubt that he did so.

Everyone who has studied the matter agrees that Shelepin and his KGB acolytes took part in the overthrow of Khrushchev. Shelepin's promotion to the Presidium and Semichastny's promotion to the Central Committee in November 1964 make this much virtually indisputable. There is considerable disagreement, however, about the nature and extent of their participation. On the one hand there are accounts which make it appear that Shelepin and Semichastny played relatively passive, largely instrumental roles. They are described, for example, as having been "approached" by Brezhnev and others in order to make sure that KGB was "neutralized" and that Khrushchev would be unable to contact his

65 Lowenthal (1965), p. 4. For Shelepin's nickname of "Iron Shurik," see, Solzhenitsyn (1976), p. 98. Attentive readers will recognize, of course, that these are not necessarily mutually exclusive -- or exhaustive -- alternatives.
support functions that are emphasized in many accounts would constitute an exhaustive list. Otherwise, it seems highly unlikely that Shelepin would have ended up on the Presidium, let alone as a full member rather than a candidate. In Shelepin's eyes, no doubt, such a promotion was long overdue. By the same token, however, it was clearly not automatic, and it is difficult to identify anyone in the top leadership who would have favored it if Shelepin had not been able to negotiate from a position of considerable strength. Such strength, in turn, could only have come from his demonstrated willingness and ability to utilize his command and control of the KGB for self-serving, power-political purposes.

The Fall of Shelepin

That Shelepin was not a welcome presence on the Presidium was evident from the way he was treated by his colleagues from the very outset of his incumbency. To start with, his name was listed after Pyotr Shelest's in a pointed breach of alphabetical order in the announcement of their simultaneous election to the Presidium in November, 1964. Any illusion that this might have been the result of an editorial oversight was quickly dispelled when Shelepin was given a conspicuously low-level sendoff on an official visit to Egypt only a few days later -- a practice that was continued and refined over the course of numerous foreign trips that were almost certainly designed, among other things, to keep him out of Moscow. To add insult to injury,
The first clear indication that the symbolic attacks on Shelepin were destined to have "organizational consequences" came in December 1965, when Shelepin lost his first deputy premiership and his chairmanship of the Committee of Party-State Control in conjunction with the liquidation of the latter as one of Khrushchev's supposedly "hare-brained" follies. Then, in a far more painful loss, inflicted sometime between April and December 1966, he was stripped of his secretarial responsibility for supervision of the secret police and assigned to monitor light industry. This switch, in turn, obviously presaged the early dismissal of Semichastny, who was duly ousted as KGB chairman in May 1967, in a move that eliminated any realistic possibility that Shelepin might be able to stage a political comeback. It was almost anticlimactic, therefore, when Shelepin was dropped from the Secretariat in June and made the chairman of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions, a position he retained (along with his seat on the Presidium) until 1975, at which time he was finally cast into political limbo.

The apparently single-minded determination of Shelepin's colleagues in the leadership to disarm him leaves little doubt that they considered his continued control of the KGB highly inimical to their collective interests. There is no evidence, however, that Shelepin attempted to use the KGB to counterattack or even to mount an active self-defense. On the contrary, the fact that he was allowed to retain his seat on the

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77 See, however, Politicheskii Obyvnik (1972), p. 657, for the claim of some "well-informed Soviet sources" that Suslov, Mazurov, and Shelepin mounted an attack on Brezhnev as late as 1969--a claim that other, presumably equally, "well-informed sources flatly dismissed."
reapportion Shalepin's and Semichastny's former responsibilities suggest
a different conclusion. These decisions bear little, if any,
resemblance to those one would expect to emerge from collegial
deliberations on the best way to accelerate the transformation of the
KGB into a truly non-partisan security service. Instead they look very
much like decisions that might have emerged from high-stake negotiations
among adversaries who finally agreed to compromise their differences in
a temporary settlement reflecting the existence of an extremely delicate
balance of underlying power. If this resemblance is "not accidental,"
the settlement presumably evolved from the following sorts of
transactions:

- Brezhnev's colleagues made it clear that they would not readily
  consent to the replacement of Semichastny by "a latter-day
  Serov" in the person of Semyon Tsvigun, a long-time Chekist and
  close crony of Brezhnev's, who was almost certainly his first
  choice to head the KGB.

- Brezhnev was reluctantly persuaded to go along with the
  appointment of Yurii Andropov as KGB chief, even though
  Andropov was closely affiliated with Suslov, with whom Brezhnev
  had a strained and at least intermittently adversarial
  relationship. 79

- While accepting Andropov, Brezhnev insisted on the appointment
  of his crony Tsvigun as first deputy chairman of the KGB, and
  of his client once-removed, Viktor Chebrikov, as Andropov's
  deputy for cadres. 80

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80 Tsvigun replaced A. I. Perepelitsyn, who died shortly after
  Semichastny's dismissal. Chebrikov was a younger member of Brezhnev's
The Downfalls of Akhundov and Shelest

Whatever the intentions of its architects, the settlement of 1967 definitely did not put an end to the KGB's involvement in the Soviet elite politics -- even in the short-run. This was dramatically demonstrated by developments in Azerbaidzhan, where the late 1960's witnessed a return to the Stalinist status quo ante in which the secret police had exercised power in the name of the party. The man who presided over this process was Geidar Aliev, who was promoted from first deputy chairman to chairman of the republic's KGB in June 1967.

Within a matter of months, it became obvious that Aliev had been authorized to conduct an "anti-corruption" campaign that was targetted not only at rank-and-file embezzlers and bribe-takers but at senior officials, including party leaders. Armed with the additional powers that had been vested in the KGB by a new (December 1965) statute on "economic crimes," Aliev not only forced the removal of hundreds of cadres who owed fealty to Velia Akhundov, the incumbent first secretary of the Azerbaidzhanian party, but also succeeded in replacing many of them with "Ge-bisty," who continued to take orders directly from him.83 In consequence, Akhundov became more and more isolated and was powerless to resist when Aliev was ready to attack him directly. By this time, moreover, Aliev had managed to persuade his superiors in Moscow that the best way to ensure that party discipline was properly enforced was to appoint him as Akhundov's successor. Accordingly, in July 1969, Aliev

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83 See Zemtsov (1976), for a colorful, but persuasive, account of Akhundov's downfall and Aliev's takeover. "Ge-bisty" is a widely used term for secret policemen among rank-and-file Soviet citizens, who almost never use the more honorific term "Chekisty."
The political consequences that were implicit in this "renewal of cadres" in the Ukrainian KGB did not take long to surface. Within a matter of weeks of Fedorchuk's appointment, the Ukrainian press was inundated with complaints about the lenient treatment of "economic criminals" and "bourgeois nationalists," who should long since have been called to account but who, at least until recently, had continued to function with near impunity. Needless to say, these complaints provided Fedorchuk with what was obviously a welcome excuse to conduct a thorough investigation in which it turned out that a considerable number of party cadres had displayed "insufficient vigilance" and that some had committed serious crimes. This evidence, in turn, was duly transmitted to Fedorchuk's superiors in Moscow, where it was used as the basis for the removal of a growing number of Ukrainian apparatchiki and, ultimately (in May 1972), for the removal of Shelest himself.86

Although these "police actions" in Azerbaidzhan and the Ukraine occurred after Andropov's appointment as chief of the KGB, they were almost certainly not launched on his initiative. Indeed, he may not even have played a major part in their design and execution. Thus, it seems likely that Aliev took most of his operational orders directly from his former boss and long-time patron, Semyon Tsvigun, who had served as chief of the Azerbaidzhanian KGB immediately prior to his appointment as Andropov's first deputy.87 Similarly, Fedorchuk may have

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his proteges, what ultimately cost them their jobs was their ties with Nikolay Podgorny, whom Brezhnev had already outmaneuvered in the Politburo but who could not be completely discounted as a rival as long as his power base in the Ukraine was more or less intact. In both cases, in other words, what one discovers at bottom is the employment of the KGB to strengthen Brezhnev's already strong position, while undercutting the power of his colleagues in the ostensibly "collective leadership."

The Rise of Andropov

The intimidating "demonstration effects" of his willingness and ability to employ the KGB as a partisan weapon in consolidating his power undoubtedly made a significant contribution to Brezhnev's unchallenged domination of Soviet leadership politics in the mid-1970's. In order to make the threat of KGB muscle-flexing on his behalf even more credible, moreover, Brezhnev launched an all-out effort to enlist Andropov as a factional ally. To this end, he abrogated a policy that had been in effect for nearly twenty years: in April 1973, he promoted Andropov to full membership in the Politburo.

In taking this step, which was almost certainly not taken under duress, Brezhnev obviously knew that he was running a certain risk. He did not need to be reminded that Andropov's political pedigree left something to be desired from a "Brezhnevite" perspective. If push came to shove, moreover, Brezhnev knew that a seat on the Politburo would make Andropov harder to command and control. But he also remembered that Khrushchev had paid a heavy price for not promoting Shelepkin and, more generally, for not giving the KGB the political recognition to
additional deputy chairman of the KGB. Although relatively little background information about these new deputies is available, it seems almost certain that they were nominated for their jobs by Andropov and that their responsibilities encompassed domestic as well as foreign operations. The fact that Brezhnev did not exercise his right to veto their promotions bears witness to Andropov's success in disarming suspicion that what was involved was an effort to dilute the authority of his "Brezhnevite" deputies and enhance his ability to deploy the resources of the KGB for his own purposes, even against the wishes of the aging General Secretary. Nevertheless, this was probably what Andropov intended and is certainly what he achieved.

One use to which Andropov obviously put his growing freedom of maneuver within the KGB was to probe the extensive links between members of the Soviet underworld and members of Brezhnev's immediate and extended families. "Leaks" to this effect began to proliferate in late 1981, and much of the incriminating evidence that was uncovered has since been published. During the late 1970's, however, Andropov had no interest in going public with any of the information he collected about the questionable associations and illicit activities of Brezhnev's relatives and friends. If he shared this information with anyone outside his own inner circle, it was almost certainly only with Brezhnev -- "in order to protect him against potentially embarrassing surprises."

A confrontation with Brezhnev was the last thing Andropov needed or

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91That Andropov did not entirely disarm such suspicion is suggested by the fact that in December 1978 Tsvigun and Troop Commander Matrosov were promoted to the rank of general of the army -- a promotion that made him superior to Andropov's other deputies and equal to Andropov himself in military rank.
cui bono, not only for Andropov, but for Brezhnev, who was increasingly worried about being "prematurely" retired and who had developed a distinct aversion to the presence in the leadership of ambitious younger men.\footnote{The replacement of Kulakov by Gorbachev almost certainly occurred over Brezhnev's objections. See, Zh. Medvedev (1986), pp. 89-90.}

With Mazurov, Kulakov, Kirilenko, and Masherov hors de combat, the contest to succeed Brezhnev quickly settled down to a two-man race between Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, who was clearly Brezhnev's favorite and, for this and other reasons, initially appeared to be the front-runner. In "mainstream" accounts of Andropov's come-from-behind victory in this race, his chairmanship of the KGB is almost always discounted as a contributing factor.\footnote{See, for example, Bialer (1986), p. 86; Colton (1986) p. 98.} In fact, it is usually described as a serious handicap that Andropov had to overcome. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of evidence in support of different conclusions.

It seems almost certain, for example, that some members of the Soviet establishment backed Andropov precisely because of his KGB background and affiliation. Likewise, it seems clear that some of Andropov's opponents were persuaded to change their minds or, at least, to hold their tongues, by familiar KGB techniques and methods.

Most of the cadres who supported Andropov because of his KGB background and affiliation were led to do so by their conviction that the way to avert what they (and others) perceived as a clear and present danger of economic decline and social unrest was to enforce "discipline" and restore "order." This conviction led them to view the KGB as the country's best, and perhaps last, hope of avoiding "a Polish outcome."
however, must also take account of his use of the KGB to demobilize and disarm his opponents. Here the secret of his success was to demonstrate that the KGB could destroy reputations and ruin careers that both Brezhnev and Chernenko wanted protected. The previously mentioned "leaks" of incriminating information about Brezhnev's relatives and friends were crucial in this regard, since they left no doubt whatever that Andropov could commit 

lese majeste with absolute impunity. It was clear, moreover, that much more information could be collected and disseminated in the future thanks to the progress Andropov had made in "taking over" the KGB -- a process that Chernenko, whom no one expected to be a strong leader, would almost certainly not be able to arrest or reverse, especially without the help of Tsvigun who died, allegedly by suicide, in January, 1981. 100

The KGB and the Brezhnev - Andropov Succession

By the Spring of 1982, Andropov's campaign for the succession had gained such momentum that Brezhnev himself could no longer be confident of riding it out, let alone of overriding it on behalf of Chernenko. In consequence, he apparently tried to buy time by striking a deal with Andropov at Chernenko's expense. It is impossible to say whether his efforts culminated in the conclusion of an explicit agreement. It seems fairly certain, however, that they resulted in a mutual understanding that Andropov would be given a lien on the General Secretaryship in return for a promise to defer collection for the remainder of Brezhnev's life -- or, at least, for a decent interlude. Among other things, this

What made these arrangements tolerable to Brezhnev was not only the price he might have had to pay for trying to prevent them but also the confidence he felt in Vitaly Fedorchuk, Andropov's successor as chairman of the KGB. Although Brezhnev might have preferred to see his crony Tsinev get the job, Fedorchuk was almost certainly appointed at his insistence, with Andropov's reluctant acquiescence. The fact that Fedorchuk was reassigned within weeks of Andropov's inauguration as General Secretary leaves little doubt that he was Brezhnev's candidate and that he kept faith with his patron until the end.

Had Brezhnev been in better health and lived longer, he might well have tried to capitalize on Fedorchuk's appointment and utilize the KGB as a sword against Andropov, as well as a shield. However, any attempt to do so before Fedorchuk had had time to counteract the effects of Andropov's sixteen-year-long effort to cultivate the support of his KGB subordinates would have been completely futile. If Brezhnev seriously tried to reverse his fortunes in the weeks before his death, therefore, it was almost certainly by other means. In particular, he may have

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103 Following the death of Tsvigun, Tsinev, who it will be recalled, was Fedorchuk's long-time patron, had been promoted to first deputy chairman of KGB, along with Chebrikov, somewhat later. See, however, Zh. Medvedev (1984), p. 12, and Knight (1984), p. 41, who believe that Fedorchuk was Andropov's nominee. According to other accounts, Andropov nominated Dobrynin as his successor.

104 Fedorchuk was promoted to the rank of general of the army and appointed Minister of Internal Affairs in December 1982. Although some analysts have cited this appointment as proof that Andropov had so much confidence in Fedorchuk that he selected him as point-man in his campaign against corruption, it seems much more likely that Fedorchuk owed his survival in high office to the confidence of the "Brezhnevites" in the leadership that he would limit the political fallout of a clean-up that they were no longer able completely to prevent.
loyalist." Frequent assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, therefore, it seems highly unlikely that Fedorchuk's successor, Viktor Chebrikov, had betrayed his "Brezhnevites" heritage and switched his allegiance to Andropov during his long years of service as one of the latter's principal deputies. In comparison with other "Brezhnevites" in the upper reaches of the KGB, Chebrikov may have performed his watchdog role in a way that led Andropov to believe that he could eventually be won over. Given the balance of power in the Politburo, however, Chebrikov could not have become chairman of the KGB unless he had managed to preserve close ties with the Brezhnev camp in the process. What remained to be seen, of course, was whether and how his promotion would affect the further evolution of the balance.

There are a number of reasons for suspecting that Andropov may have looked on Chebrikov's chairmanship of the KGB as an interim or probationary appointment. The fact that a year passed before Chebrikov was promoted to the rank of general of the army and elected a candidate member of the Politburo is particularly suggestive in this regard.

There are undoubtedly plausible alternative explanations for this delay in Chebrikov's receipt of what were by now generally considered to be more or less standard emoluments of his office. But the most persuasive explanation is continued doubts about his loyalty on the part of

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107 See, for example, Bialer (1986), pp. 86-87.
108 See, Knight (1988a), p. 93, who seems to have reached the same conclusion.
109 See, Knight (1988a), p. 93. Knight also notes the fact that Chebrikov only received the Order of Lenin rather than the more prestigious Order of the October Revolution on his 60th birthday in April 1983.
Although the timing of Chebrikov's promotions may not clinch the case for the formation (or reconfirmation) of a Chernenko-Chebrikov alliance, it does provide something that "mainstream" analysts vehemently insist is lacking: it provides at least "a whit of evidence that warring groups within the party courted...the police" in the early 1980's. Furthermore, additional evidence to the same general effect is provided by the great lengths to which Chernenko went, both before and after his selection as Andropov's successor, to publicize his own status as a former Chekist, albeit if only by virtue of his youthful service in the border guards.

Despite such overtures, many "Ge-bisty" undoubtedly took a dim view of Chernenko's candidacy and may have lobbied on behalf of the "Andropovite" Gorbachev in the unusually protracted consultations and deliberations preceding Chernenko's eventual selection. However, when one adds Chebrikov's name to a list of KGB heavyweights that undoubtedly included first deputy chairman Tsinev and former chairman Fedorchuk, and probably also included Geidar Aliyev, the former head of the Azerbaidzhanian KGB, who had become a full member of the Politburo under Andropov but whose promotion had reportedly been put in the works by Brezhnev, it is hard to see why "it is absurd to think" that Chernenko took office with a significant amount of KGB support. Indeed, it

112 Chernenko first adopted this tactic in May 1981, when he put in what may have been a first-ever appearance by a top leader at a ceremony for the KGB border guards. See Pravda, May 27, 1987.
considerable doubt on Hough's thesis that the "outside" support that really mattered came from the party apparatus to the exclusion of the KGB.\textsuperscript{117} If anything, Ligachev lent additional credibility to Roy Medvedev's earlier report that it was not until Chebrikov made it clear that the KGB was firmly on Gorbachev's side and was prepared to play political hardball on his behalf that Gorbachev's opponents withdrew their support for the rival candidacy of the longtime Moscow party secretary, Viktor Grishin.\textsuperscript{118} Since Ligachev did not dot his "i's" and cross his "t's," it is probably safe to predict that there will still be "mainstream" analysts who insist that there is not "anything to suggest that...the KGB played kingmaker" to Gorbachev's benefit.\textsuperscript{119}

Nevertheless, it will be harder to argue that "events...refute [such] claims" or to dismiss Chebrikov as a "mere" intelligence and security expert, with little, if any, power-political clout.\textsuperscript{120}

During Gorbachev's first year or so as General Secretary, it looked as if his alliance with Chebrikov might prove relatively long-lasting. For his part, Gorbachev seemed comfortable enough with the relationship to assign Chebrikov a number of high-profile assignments on behalf of the regime and to allow the KGB as such to bask in a great deal of favorable publicity.\textsuperscript{121} Chebrikov, in turn, seemed quite willing not

\textsuperscript{117}Hough (1987), pp. 157 and 164.
\textsuperscript{118}For Zhores Medvedev's version of his brother's report, which was directly delivered to many Westerners in Moscow, see Zh. Medvedev (1986), p. 172.
\textsuperscript{119}Colton (1986), p. 98.
\textsuperscript{121}See, Knight (1987). Chebrikov was selected to speak for the regime at the October Revolution anniversary celebration in 1985 and to address the 26th Party Congress (March 1986), which thereby became the first party congress since 1961 to hear from a chairman of the KGB. In addition, Chebrikov was selected to lead a number of well-publicized Soviet missions to Eastern Europe, Cuba, and Vietnam.
for the timely implementation of the reform and innovation that are called for." And, he was quick to remind everyone that, in addition to their state security functions, "Chekists" had always "actively participated in the resolution of a multitude of serious economic and social problems." 

The Breakdown of the Chebrikov - Gorbachev Alliance

It is unclear precisely when Chebrikov first began to have second-thoughts about his support for Gorbachev. It seems virtually certain, however, that his disillusionment has deepened as he has discovered the lengths to which Gorbachev is prepared to go in encouraging "social pluralism," political "transparency," and "democratization." In particular, Chebrikov must wonder what could have prompted him to weigh in so strongly on behalf of someone who, since early 1987, has:

- personally "rehabilitated" Andrei Sakharov and "prematurely" released hundreds of other victims of the KGB's crackdown on the "dissident movement";
- forced Chebrikov himself to apologize publically for the KGB's harassment and arrest of a muckraking journalist;
- permitted the publication of dozens of articles criticizing KGB misconduct and calling for the strengthening of juridical and public controls over its activities;

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126 Pravda, November 7, 1987. This appears to have been the first occasion on which an authoritative spokesman for the Gorbachev regime espoused the need for "reform" rather than "improvement" of the existing system.

push "individuals" from the new "independent associations" that had appeared on the scene "into anti-social positions and onto a path of hostile activity" and to push "individual representatives of the artistic intelligentsia into positions of carping, demagogy, nihilism, the blackening of certain stages of our society's historical development, and the abandonment of the main purpose of socialist culture..."\(^{131}\) Expanding democracy and transparency were "natural and necessary," he conceded, but it was essential "not to forget the organic combination of socialist democracy and discipline, autonomy and responsibility, citizens' rights and duties...restructuring [and] the leadership of the Communist party, within the framework of socialism and the interests of socialism."\(^{132}\)

Lest the real message of this diatribe against Western "special services" be misunderstood, Chebrikov repeated it in less aesopian terms in another major speech a few months later--a speech in which "outside agitators" figured much less prominently. In this speech he deplored the fact that the "state of affairs in the sphere of strengthening order and discipline everywhere" was still unsatisfactory.\(^{133}\) In particular, he criticized "attempts...to take advantage of the growth in the people's social and political activism to the detriment of the state and society."\(^{134}\) Using a formula that was traditionally reserved for intra-party polemics, he warned against "any underestimation" of the activities of "certain individuals" who,

\(^{131}\) Pravda, September 11, 1987.
\(^{133}\) Pravda, April 14, 1988.
\(^{134}\) Pravda, April 14, 1988.
leadership, including other former Gorbachev supporters such as Ligachev and Gromyko, to do everything possible to try to hold Gorbachev in check. As part of this struggle, moreover, Chebrikov seems to have relied on his subordinates in the KGB for a considerable amount of assistance and support. Most importantly, the KGB appears to have played a significant behind-the-scenes role both in the efforts of the "conservatives" to protect Voldimar Shcherbitskii, from Gorbachev's campaign to drop him from the Politburo, and in their efforts to discredit Gorbachev's supporter, Boris Yeltsin, and force him out of the leadership.

There is little question that the Ukrainian KGB played an active part in defending Shcherbitskii against Gorbachev's frontal assault on his local power base in late 1986 and early 1987. This much seems clear from the extraordinary letter from Chebrikov that appeared in Pravda on January 8, 1987. In this letter, Chebrikov implicitly but unmistakably censured S.N. Mukha, the chairman of the Ukrainian KGB, for his failure to punish local KGB officers for "coordinating" efforts to frame journalists seeking to expose corruption within the Ukrainian ruling elite. Although the only case which Chebrikov cited was the so-called "Berkhin Affair" in Voroshilovgrad, his letter strongly implied that he was addressing a republic-wide phenomenon. It was somewhat anticlimactic, therefore, when it was subsequently announced that similar "affairs" had occurred in Dnepropetrovsk and Lvov and that Mukha had been dismissed and assigned "to the reserve."

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133 See, for example, Solchanyk (1987).
140 See, Pravda, January 4, 1987, for a detailed account of these efforts.
141 See, Solchanyk (1987) and Pravda Ukrainy, May 26, 1987. Mukha's successor was N.M. Golushko, who was reported to have spent the past several years working at KGB headquarters in Moscow.
Although Gorbachev seemed to have Chebrikov on the ropes in late 1986 and early 1987, he was unable to deliver a knockout blow. Indeed, he did not even manage to teach Chebrikov much of a lesson. Unlike Shcherbitskii, who also weathered Gorbachev’s attack, but whose subsequent speeches have echoed the Gorbachev line, Chebrikov, as we have seen, has not been afraid to publicize his critical views. Furthermore, he has almost certainly been willing to put his money where his mouth is by continuing to tap the resources of the KGB for what he and his fellow “conservatives” in the leadership consider worthy causes.

One cause to which Chebrikov and his conservative allies undoubtedly attached a high priority was the punishment of Boris Yeltsin, who had been appointed first secretary of the Moscow gorkom and made a candidate member of the Politburo at Ligachev’s instigation, but who had subsequently become an outspoken champion of radical economic and political reform and a conservative bete noire. Hence, there is no reason whatever to think that Yeltsin was being paranoid when he insinuated to the February 1987 plenum of the Moscow gorkom and the October 1987 plenum of the Central Committee that he (and other Gorbachev supporters) had been targeted for hostile action by the KGB. On the contrary, his thinly veiled charges that the KGB was seeking to sabotage his reform efforts and undermine his position by failing to keep him informed about “negative trends and occurrences” in Moscow, while simultaneously providing his opponents with derogatory information

144 Ligachev confirmed earlier reports that he had sponsored Yeltsin’s cooptation into the top leadership in his speech to the 19th Party Conference. See, Pravda, July 2, 1988.
himself. By the time things came to a head in the fall of 1987, it is true, there was reason to suspect that a shift had occurred in the balance of power within the leadership. Gorbachev had only recently reappeared in public after a prolonged and unexplained absence that had given Chebrikov and his allies time to regroup their forces and lay the groundwork for the counteroffensive. Nevertheless, the Gorbachev forces did not appear to have lost so much ground that Chebrikov would be able to walk away from Yeltsin's charges with complete impunity. In the event, however, it was Yeltsin who was expelled from the leadership, to the accompaniment, among other humiliations, of a vitriolic denunciation by Chebrikov of his arrogance in presuming to meddle in police matters that were none of his business. Lest anyone doubt what had happened, moreover, this unprecedented assertion of the autonomy of the KGB was promptly followed by a ceremonial appearance of the leadership in which Chebrikov stood third or fourth in the official pecking order instead of his usual fifth or sixth, and by Gorbachev's highly publicized attendance at a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Cheka.

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148 Gorbachev was out of public view from August 7 to September 29.

149 Los Angeles Times, November 1, 1987. The immediate target of Chebrikov's denunciation was Yeltsin's acknowledgement to a group of foreign interlocutors that the Soviet Union had more political prisoners than any other country in the world.

150 See Pravda, May 1, 1987, November 7, 1987, and TASS-English Service, December 18, 1987. Gorbachev's attendance at the Cheka anniversary celebration was the more noteworthy because he had been conspicuously absent from the celebration of the 110th anniversary of the Cheka's founding-father, Feliks Dzerzhinsky, two months before.
decentralization and demokratizatsiya. Given the deep animosities between the Azeri and Armenian communities, it was almost inevitable that inter-communal tensions would escalate as rank-and-file citizens acquired greater control over their own destinies. In consequence, a properly vigilant KGB would have taken steps to forestall or contain what might otherwise become an explosive confrontation. According to authoritative spokesman for the Armenian community, however, this is definitely not what happened. Instead, the KGB reportedly made a concerted effort to spread disorder and panic and to incite racial violence, thereby transforming an intractable but potentially manageable problem into an urgent crisis. Once again, there is no way for outsiders to verify this report. But it comes from a trustworthy source in a good position to know.

Given the opposition and resistance that Gorbachev has encountered from the Chebrikov-led KGB, it is not surprising that a number of his supporters have taken advantage of the increasing relaxation of censorship (and self-censorship) to question the continuing need for a powerful secret police. To say the very least, however, Gorbachev himself has been considerably more cautious. In his June 28, 1988 report to the Nineteenth Party Conference, for example, he pointedly identified the KGB as one of the few agencies that was functioning "in accord with the spirit of the time" rather than "fighting tooth and nail

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153 See, Liberation, March 12-13, 1988, reporting a Moscow press conference of Sergei Grigoryants, who had just returned from Yerevan with a "white paper" prepared by the 1,000-member-strong Yerevan Organizing Committee.

154 See, for example, Ogonyok, No. 12 (1987), pp. 4-5 and 18-20; Nuikin (1988).
on his opponents in the leadership and employ it more effectively than
he has been able to employ it heretofore to shake the party and the
public out of their lethargy, to bring the "peripheries" of the system
back under central control, to speed the removal and punishment of
"corrupt" officials, and to ensure that "democratization" and
"transparency" do not give rise to "excess" and "license." Whether
Gorbachev is actually thinking and planning along these lines remains to
be seen. Unless he is, however, it seems highly unlikely that he will
be able to fulfill his ambition of leading the Soviet Union into the
twenty-first century in what he considers to be "a manner worthy of a
great power." In a few years, in fact, he would probably not be leading
at all, having been replaced by a challenger who owed at least some of
his success to services rendered by the KGB.

Conclusion

Some knowledgeable observers think that KGB may become the dominant
political actor on the Soviet scene in the not-too-distant future. Ken
Jowitt, for example, envisions a significant "political upgrading of the
KGB" and the emergence of a regime in which "Ge-bisty" play "a very
prominent political role."158 Similarly, Michel Tatu anticipates a
Polish-style crisis in which the KGB and/or the armed forces will
displace the incumbent leadership and keep the reins of power in their
own hands.159 Given the depth of the malaise afflicting the Soviet
system, and the politically destabilizing effects of Gorbachev's efforts
to overcome it, this is certainly not a possibility that should be

159Tatu (1985), pp. 27-34, esp. pp. 31-33.
interpretations. Furthermore, there are many important questions to which it cannot provide even a tentative answer. Nevertheless, it leaves very little doubt that reports of the political neutralization of the secret police and of its strict subordination to non-partisan "party control" are not only greatly exaggerated but seriously misleading. What it suggests, in fact, is that the KGB has been an arena and instrument of factional conflict from the day it was founded and that KGB cadres have played extremely important and sometimes decisive power-political roles under all of Stalin's successors.

According to some academically fashionable theories of political plot-development, the time has long-since passed for Soviet secret policemen to perform as anything other than sword-bearers and shield-holders for the ruling elite as a whole. As the actual plot has unfolded, however, it has become clear that these roles have continued to be part of a much broader repertoire. Although modern "Ge-bisty" no longer play all of the parts for which their Chekist and other predecessors became infamous, they have definitely not become mere supernumeraries. If anything, in fact, they may recently have moved considerably closer to center stage. In any case, they have clearly continued to appear as grave-diggers, power-brokers, king-makers, and throne-seekers in a long-running political spectacle that has remained a tragedy for millions of Soviet citizens, even as it has acquired overtones of farce.


____, "Khrushchev on Pension," Novyi Zhurnal, No. 133, 1978


