Deputies to the Soviets:  
A New Elite?  

by  

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NOTE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *

This paper is a first assessment of the USSR Congress of Peoples Deputies and its Supreme Soviet as a potential new locus for the transfer of power and authority from the Communist Party. The paper examines the composition of the Congress and Supreme Soviet, their activities in session, and signs of their potential for independent power. The main conclusions at this early stage are:

-Important structural changes have been introduced in the Soviet political system which may have the long-run consequence of moving it in the direction of Western parliamentary democracy.

-But these changes, which were not introduced to diminish the Party's leadership role, had more to do with consolidating political power than with democratization for its own sake, and were aimed at replacing those in the Party and bureaucracy resisting Gorbachev's program with those who would support it.

-Despite a highly visible and organized opposition in the Congress, the reform measures put in place were cautious, and Gorbachev's ability to control and direct enhanced his political power, but did not create a new governing political elite among the deputies.

-At the same time, his achievement of political power in the short run need not preclude evolution toward a more genuine parliamentary system in the long run. The institutional changes may acquire a momentum of their own if not forcibly reversed, and there are signs in the activities of deputies pointing toward a gradual transition of power to the soviets.

The element of choice and some of the dramatic results of the election to the Congress of Peoples Deputies were unprecedented in...

* Prepared by the staff of the National Council.
Soviet history. According to official statistics, some 9,505 people were nominated at the start for 2,250 positions, and in the end there were still 5,074 contenders for seats, a ratio of better than 2:1. Out of 191 republican and regional Party first secretaries nominated, 38 lost, including 32 who ran in districts with alternative candidates. At the same time, leading critics of the old regime were elected in Moscow, Leningrad, Siberia and the Far East, the Ukraine, and especially in the Baltics. Nevertheless, what emerged was not some kind of democratic revolution, but a Congress with a vast majority obedient to the General Secretary's leadership. The electoral rules and their management ensured it. Moreover, elections to the working parliament, the Supreme Soviet, were indirect; those who controlled the majority at the Congress controlled the formation of the legislature and the government.

The Congress, in session from May 25 to June 10, 1989, probably exceeded the expectations it engendered; the spectacle of open political conflict made its gavel-to-gavel television coverage the most widely seen event in Soviet history. It also established important precedents which can further long-term legislative development. The most important was its assertion and exercise of the right to hold the country's leadership publicly accountable, including creation of their own investigative committees. A second precedent was the legitimation of opposition, for instance, by the casting and registration of negative votes; an action which in Stalin's time could cost one's life. Moreover, the opposition
became organized.

Nevertheless, Gorbachev never lost a vote on procedure or substance in which he indicated a preference, and the minority was never able to muster more than 900 votes on issues proposed by its members.

The composition of the Congress goes far to explain Gorbachev's control: 88% of the Deputies are Party members, including 153 republic and regional secretaries; 41% came from upper and middle levels of the Party and bureaucracy; 25% from lower level administrators; 22% were blue collar, farmers or office workers; 75 were military officers, and at least 9 were republic level KGB chiefs. Some of these belonged to the liberal minority, but certainly most did not. The deck was stacked. Moreover, meetings under Party discipline before the Congress convened largely decided its agenda, nominations and procedures.

In both of its functions of legislation and of advice and consent, the 542 member Supreme Soviet showed signs of development in the exercise of independent power. Nominees placed before them, including Kryuchkov to head the KGB, were increasingly subjected to sharp and critical cross-examination, substantial negative votes and abstentions were registered, and a number of candidates were rejected including nine out of roughly 70 of Ryzhkov's choices for places in the Council of Ministers. Deputies not elected to the Supreme Soviet could nevertheless be appointed to any of its 22 committees and commissions with the right to vote. Over 400 were appointed in this way and many radical deputies, defeated for
election to the Supreme Soviet, thus took part in its work.

In the last few weeks of the First Session (June 7 - August 4) and in the Second Session beginning September 25, there were signs of a developing legislative role as well. Two events, the declarations of sovereignty in Lithuania and Estonia in May, and the coal field strikes of July, thrust the legislature into the role of the appropriate institution for airing and responding to issues of national gravity. Importantly, both issues were placed on the legislative agenda not from above, but from below. On both, extensive and sometimes contentious debate and compromise ended in legislative action. An impressive volume of other legislation made other changes including some opposed by the government, such as the release of 176,000 university students from the army over the objections of the Minister of Defense, and changes to the budget of the Minister of Finance.

A step in the direction of public accountability by the legislature itself was the introduction of electronic voting, which can be used to keep track of individual voting records. Further movement to increase the potential of soviets for independent exercise of power is being taken in (1) the Law on the Status of Deputies where subordination to the Party has been decreased, and pay, as well as release from jobs, enhanced; and in (2) the laws governing the 1990 elections to local soviets, which will evidently release to popular vote the seats previously reserved for organizations.

Nevertheless, the Congress and Supreme Soviet are, thus far,
still Gorbachev's creatures and the best guess regarding their future evolution is that how far they go depends on how far he is willing to let them go.
Deputies to the Soviets: A New Elite?

Among the most intriguing questions for analysts of contemporary Soviet politics is the degree to which we are witnessing a transfer of power and authority from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) to the legislative councils known as the soviets. Long regarded as a rubber-stamp for decisions made elsewhere, the soviets emerged as the centerpiece of CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's proposals before the June, 1988, 19th Party Conference to restructure the political system. His proposals relating to legislative institutions at the national level were implemented in the succeeding year; those aimed at enhancing the role of the local soviets are to go into effect in 1990.

Some knowledgeable Western observers anticipate a fundamental realignment of political power. Thus, Archie Brown concluded in an article published in the summer of 1989 that "The transition to a political system qualitatively different from the one that has prevailed for so long is well underway."1 A number of Western journalists also share the view that the legislature may be supplanting the Party as the locus of political power in the Soviet Union.2 Others are more skeptical. Martin Sieff, for example, writing in The National Review dismissed the Congress of People's Deputies as "a new duma" doomed to fail because real power remains with KGB. In his view, "plans to geld the new Supreme Soviet are far advanced."3 No less an
authority than Gorbachev himself rejects the idea that the Party should yield its leadership role as the "political vanguard of society." While dismissing "the former practice of Party diktat over the soviets at all levels" as outdated, he also made it clear to a July 1989 Central Committee Conference of nervous republican and regional party secretaries that:

"Attempts to set the Party at loggerheads with the Soviets are completely unacceptable; they are not in keeping with the tasks of restructuring and the interests of the working people. Proposals for the statization of the Party and for the subordination of the Party to the state are theoretically bankrupt and politically erroneous."4

In fact, it is simply too early to state with any certainty what sort of balance of power will emerge among the three major institutions of the Soviet political system: the Party, the soviets, and the executive branch elected by them. Their interrelationship will be defined over time by experience. What can be said now is that important structural changes have been introduced which may have the long-term consequence of moving the Soviet system in the direction of Western parliamentary democracy. At the same time, it seems equally clear from the statements of Party leaders, including Gorbachev, that these changes were not introduced to diminish the Party’s leadership role. As the preceding quote indicates, the role of the state is to implement restructuring, not resist it, and restructuring is the Party’s policy. This seeming paradox begs a question: If the Party’s current policies are to
prevail now as in the past, why enhance the role of the legis-
latures?

To answer this question, it may be useful to distinguish
between short-term goals and long-term effects. It is the con-
tention of this paper that the changes introduced at the 19th
Party Conference of June 1988 had more to do with consolidating
political power than with democratization for its own sake.5
Specifically, they were aimed at replacing those in the Party
apparatus and the state bureaucracy whom Gorbachev perceived as
the major source of resistance to his program for economic
reform - articulated in 1987 - with those who would support it.
Furthermore, and in support of this contention, an examination
of these changes as they have been put into practice thus far
suggests that for all the verbal pyrotechnics of a highly visi-
ble and mobilized opposition at the Congress of People's Depu-
ties, the reforms were more cautious than they seemed. Gor-
bachev's manifest ability to control and direct the implementa-
tion of the reforms may have enhanced his political power vis a
vis party conservatives and government bureaucrats; it did not
create a new political elite among the deputies, at least if we
define a political elite as those who govern.6

At the same time, the achievement of political power in
the short run need not preclude evolution in the direction of a
more genuinely parliamentary system in the long run. The
institutional changes which have been introduced may acquire a
momentum of their own, at least if they are not forcibly
reversed. There are some unexpected and encouraging signs in
the activities of the deputies since they were elected in
March, 1989 for those who foresee a gradual transition of power to the soviets. But, parliament-building is not quickly accomplished, and certainly not within the space of a legislative session. What can usefully be done at this point is to assess what has happened so far. To do this the present paper will examine three phases of the political reforms as they have unfolded to date: the elections to the Congress of Peoples Deputies (held March 26, 1989); the meeting of Congress, May 25 - June 10, 1989; and the sessions of the Supreme Soviet. Each of these phases will be evaluated in relation to emergence of the deputies as a new elite.

The Elections of 1989

In democratic theory, elections are the primary mechanism available to citizens to replace those who govern them. To do so presupposes an element of choice, the absence of which can serve to perpetuate powerholding by the existing elite. Until 1987, Soviet elections served this purpose. In his speech to the Jan. 27, 1987 Central Committee plenum, Gorbachev indicated his intention to break with past practice and to introduce an element of competition in the selection of Party leaders, economic managers, and, above all, deputies to the soviets. A month later, he announced an experiment by which more candidates than seats would be required in selected districts for the local elections of June 1987.

The willingness of Soviet voters, even in this cautious experiment, to remove members of the party and state apparatus from positions of power appear to have convinced Gorbachev of
their usefulness. Citing the success of this experiment in
"increasing the deputies' sense of responsibility" he proposed
that this approach be universally adopted.9 His proposals
received legislative expression in the Law on Elections of USSR
Deputies and in the constitutional amendments adopted by the
"old" Supreme Soviet on Dec. 1, 1988.10

The election of 2250 deputies to a newly created Congress
of People's Deputies which took place from Dec. 26, 1988 to
March 26, 1989 provided the first look at these new laws in
practice. Undeniably, they presented Soviet voters with a
degree of choice unprecedented in Soviet history. According to
official statistics, some 9505 people were nominated in the
preliminary round - or primaries -, that took place from Dec.
26 to Jan. 24, 1989 (a ratio of nearly 4:1). Following "pre-
election meetings" held from Jan. 24 to Feb. 23, the number of
nominees actually registered as candidates was significantly
reduced, but still competitive: 2195 candidates ran for the
750 seats in the territorial election districts based on
roughly equal population size; 1967 contended for the 750 dis-
tricts allocated on a national-territorial basis; 912 were
registered for the 750 places distributed among 39 public orga-
nizations. In the aggregate then, a tripartite electorate
chose 2250 deputies from among 5074 contenders, a ratio of bet-
ter than 2:1.11

To ensure electoral choice, however, it is not enough
that there be more candidates than seats. Real alternatives to
those in power must be presented, and they must have the equal
opportunity to persuade voters. By this qualitative standard,
the elections of 1989 may also be considered remarkable, judging by the results in many districts. Broadly speaking, one can speak of the election of anti-establishment reform candidates both in and out of the Party, and the defeat of those identified by voters as part of the apparat, the ruling elite. Prototypical in this regard was the election of Boris Eltsin to the at-large seat from Moscow. Dismissed as Moscow city Party secretary and Politburo member only a year earlier, Eltsin had been the target of an inquiry into his Party membership initiated by conservative opponents in the Central Committee where Eltsin continues to hold a seat. He defeated the Party’s establishment candidate, Yevgenii Brakov, the director of the auto factory which manufactures limousines for the party elite, receiving almost 90% of the 6,857,000 votes cast. Even more embarrassing was the defeat of Leningrad obkom Secretary, and candidate member of the Politburo, Yurii Solovyev, who ran unopposed, but nevertheless received less than the required 50% of the ballots cast when voters crossed off his name. Out of 191 republican and regional level first secretaries nominated, 38 lost, including 32 who ran in districts with alternative candidates. At the same time, leading critics of the old regime were elected in Moscow, Leningrad, Siberia and the Far East, the Ukraine, and especially in the Baltic republics where independence-minded popular front candidates did well. In Lithuania, the most successful of these, Sajudis, won 38 of 42 available seats.

Because of the element of choice and the dramatic results of the elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies (hereaf-
ter CPD) it is tempting to conclude that something like a democratic revolution had taken place; that a new elite dedicated to reform had replaced an old guard dedicated to preserving the status quo. In fact, nothing of the kind occurred. It became clear during the first two days of the Congress (May 25-26) in the course of several procedural votes and the election of deputies to the Council of the Union, that at most a third of the deputies would support the views of those deputies committed to more rapid reform. The frustration of the reformers in the wake of elections to the Supreme Soviet was captured by the historian, Yuri Afanaseyev, who charged that an "aggressively obedient majority" had thwarted the people's will and chosen a "Brezhnevite-Stalinist" parliament. In retrospect, he was wrong: what the CPD had elected was Gorbachev's Supreme Soviet.

It is my view that the outcome of the elections to the CPD was largely assured by the way in which these elections were organized. In the first place, the allocation of the choice of 1/3 of the deputies to the public organizations meant that a large bloc of deputies would be chosen by a small minority - 16,200 people or 84% of those eligible chose 750 deputies. Although in most of the 39 public organizations more deputies were nominated than slots available, except for the Academy of Sciences (whose membership rejected all but 8 of the 23 on the slate presented to them), these elections largely seem to have anointed candidates acceptable to the leadership. As for nominations in the districts, these were clearly weighted in favor of those made at the workplace where
there were no requirements placed on the size of the organizations which could nominate candidates, nor on the number which could nominate the same candidate. Nomination by residential voters, on the other hand, could take place only where at least 500 voters were gathered at a time and place made available by the local authorities. Only 282 of the 9505 nominees initially chosen were selected in this way.

A second feature of the election mechanics which assured the selection of candidates who would not be too critical of the system was the pre-election meeting. Delegates to these meetings were allocated to those organizations which nominated the candidates, meaning candidates nominated by several organizations had an advantage. The choice of most delegates was in the workplace where open voting was permitted and therefore open to influence by supervisory personnel. The meetings were organized and run by the district election committee which in turn was chosen by work collectives and public organizations recognized by the local authorities. Finally, the nominees had to present platforms which, according to art 45 of the Law on Elections, "could not contradict the USSR Constitution or the laws of the Soviet Union." This presumably includes a candidates willingness to accept article 6 of the Constitution which specifies the Party's "leading role". While Soviet specialists have acknowledged that some cases of abuse and manipulation took place in these elections, they argue that such meetings are necessary to ensure that the final candidate list is of a manageable size. A public opinion poll published by Literaturnaia Gazeta indicates a widespread lack of support for these
meetings. 92% of the respondents felt they should be abolished.20

In two other respects the way the elections were structured helped insure the selection of a Congress which Gorbachev could control. First, the electoral law specified that an "unlimited number" of candidates could be nominated despite the objections of those who had hoped for a requirement that there be at least two candidates in each district. The adopted wording left open the possibility of single candidate elections, which, in fact, occurred in 399/1500 district elections. Perhaps half of these "safe" seats went to members of the apparat. Secondly, the top leadership - the decision-making elite - was shielded from direct popular accountability by the provision that elections to the working parliament, the Supreme Soviet, and to the post of chairman of that body (not to mention the government) would be indirect.21 It is worth noting that for all the drama of the debates that took place during the session of the Congress that met from May 25 to June 10, it functioned essentially as a college of electors: those who controlled the majority at the Congress, controlled the formation of the legislature and the government. As will be shown in the assessment of the Congress that follows, the freest elections in Soviet history indeed produced a safe majority, but it was not a "Brezhnevite-Stalinist" majority, it was a Gorbachev majority. Not only did he have the votes he needed to control the Congress, but he put those in Party apparatus not yet converted to faith in perestroika on notice that they too could be exposed to the wrath of the electorate in the upcoming round of
local elections. In the words of V.I. Melnikov, first Party secretary of the Komi Autonomous Republic:

"New elections are coming. At the conference of city and district party secretaries being held today, the secretaries are saying they will not take part in these elections because there is a 100% guarantee that they won't be elected." 22

The Congress of Peoples Deputies

One of the major innovations that resulted from the reforms proposed at the 19th Party Conference in June 1988 was the formation of new political institution known as the Congress of People's Deputies. According to the Constitutional amendments of Dec. 1, 1988, it would be elected directly by the people and would meet annually. While its major regular function would be to elect members, and a Chairman, of the Supreme Soviet, and to confirm the appointment by that body of the government, it was also given the exclusive right to overrule decisions of the Supreme Soviet and to amend the Constitution. 23 Given the CPD's potential power and the election to it of some of the most outspoken proponents of reform, the opening of the Congress on May 25, 1989 aroused a great deal of interest in large part because no one knew for certain how it would turn out. This in itself was a novelty in the context of previous parliamentary sessions.

In retrospect, the Congress probably exceeded the expectations it engendered; the spectacle of open political conflict made its gavel-to-gavel television coverage the most widely seen event in Soviet history. It also established some impor-
tant precedents which can further long-term legislative de- 
velopment. But, in the main, the work of the Congress was less 
spontaneous that it seemed; when it finally adjourned on June 
9, it was clear that Gorbachev’s control was never seriously 
challenged. In assessing the potential emergence of the depu-
ties as a new political elite, it is important to have a look 
at both what was accomplished and what was controlled.

Perhaps the most important gain for the deputies in the 
course the Congress was their assertion of the right to hold 
the country’s leadership publicly accountable. No sooner had 
the Congress been called to order than a deputy from Latvia 
claimed the floor to ask for (and receive) a moment of silence 
in the memory of those killed in the anti-government demonstra-
tion in Tblisi, Georgia on April 9, 1989. He then demanded the 
names of those responsible. It set the tone for what was to 
follow. None of those eventually elected to office, including 
Gorbachev, escaped cross-examination - often hostile - from 
deputies who showed little reservation in asking those in offi-
cial position essentially "what they knew and when they know 
it." Gorbachev himself set the standard for the rest by offer-
ing a point by point response before he was elected Chairman on 
the first day, including a refutation of the charge that he was 
becoming like Napoleon in his concentration of power.25 Ana-
toly Luk’ianov, Gorbachev’s nominee for vice chairman, was 
sharply questioned by deputies Gdlyan and Ivanov about possible 
interference in their investigation into corruption among high 
ranking Party officials as well as about his support for a law 
making it a crime to criticize government officials.26 The
General in charge of military forces in Georgia at the time of the April 9 killings was severely criticized and responded in his own defense.27

As a result of the deputies' inquiries on these and other issues, a number of ad hoc committees were set up to investigate the facts and report back to the Congress (presumably) with recommendations for further action. Among these were a committee to investigate the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, the April 9 slayings in Tbilisi, and the political corruption case involving Gdlyan and Ivanov. Commissions were also established to assess the 1939 Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact (headed by A.N. Yakovlev), and to rewrite the Constitution. It is important to emphasize that what happened was not merely the exercise by the deputies of their right to raise sensitive issues publicly - although this undoubtedly was what gave the Congress proceedings their sense of high drama - but that those holding power were expected to respond publicly to these issues and that the deputies could create independent means to verify or challenge those responses.

A second precedent established in the course of the Congress which bodes well for the development of the deputies into a real political elite, was the legitimization of opposition. The most concrete expression of this was the registration of negative votes on almost every issue put to a vote. This may seem an obvious, even trivial, point until it is remembered that Soviet parliamentary practice since the Supreme Soviet came into existence was that all decisions be unanimous; a lack of same would imply dissent from the Party's right to determine
the public good, an act which in Stalin's day could cost you your life.

The acceptance of the idea that one can vote against a particular policy or a particular person, without necessarily dissenting from the system as whole, is the first step in the direction of creating a loyal opposition. The second step is to organize such an opposition and this, too, was an important development at the Congress. As we saw earlier, after a series of procedural votes, it became clear that the more radical reformers constituted a large and vocal, but decided, minority. Their frustrations with the dominance of the relatively more conservative majority in elections to the Supreme Soviet lead one of their spokesmen, Gavril Popov, to propose, on the third day of the Congress, the formation of "an interregional independent deputies group." Although some of the more conservative deputies immediately attacked him for creating "a faction", just such a group was formed at a meeting on July 29-30.

The Interregional Group of Deputies was initially comprised of 269 deputies with an additional 116 registered to join. About 15% of the group's members are reported to be in the Supreme Soviet. The leadership consisted of 5 members generally counted among the "radicals": Popov, Yeltsin, Sakharov, Yuri Afanaseyev, and Viktor Palme from Estonia. According to Moskovskie novosti of Aug. 6, 1989 (p. 10) the group agreed on a platform of more radical reform although within the framework of perestroika, to open a bank account for funds raised, and to publish a newspaper to be called "Narodny depu-
tat." Significantly, although the leadership comes from Moscow, a majority were from outside Moscow (80%), including 61 miners. In fact, the group can be said to constitute an embryonic political party, though Eltsin chose to use the word "caucus" in an address to the Philadelphia World Affairs Council on Sept. 13, 1989. Whatever term is used, it must be considered a form of organized parliamentary opposition.

Despite these two undeniably significant developments of the deputies identity as potential power elite, there is little question that Gorbachev controlled the Congress. The major reason for this control has already been discussed: because of the way in which the elections to the CPD were conducted, he had the votes. Throughout the Congress, Gorbachev never lost a vote on procedure or substance in which he indicated a preference; the minority was never able to muster more than 900 votes on issues proposed by its members.

To understand where Gorbachev's votes came from one needs to look at the composition of the deputies to the Congress (see table 1*). Despite the dramatic upsets in the elections of 1989, the majority elected to the CPD could be considered party regulars in the sense that they would take their cues from the party leadership in this case, Gorbachev. First of all 88% of the CPD are party members. Furthermore, it should be noted that although one member of the Politburo was ousted (Solovyev), three others won their districts (Shcherbitsky, Vlasov, and Vorotnikov); although 38 or so republican and regional party secretaries were defeated, 153 were elected; although the percentage of military personnel dropped compared

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with the 1984 Supreme Soviet, 75 officers were elected; although 5 clergymen were elected, so were at least 9 republican level KGB chiefs. In the aggregate, as shown in Table I, 40.5% of the CPD came from upper and middle levels of the party and state bureaucracy; 25.3 from lower-level administrators (heads of workshops, departments, work teams, laboratories, collective and state farms; and 22.1 from blue-collar workers, collective farmers and non-professional office personnel. It's true that some of the 87.9% of the deputies in these groups (about 2000 deputies) could be members of, or sympathetic toward, the views of the more liberal minority, but certainly most were not. The deck was stacked.

Gorbachev's ability to control votes enabled him to control procedure on a number of important questions: should programs be presented before electing the chairman and vice Chairman of the Supreme Soviets; should the names of alternate candidates be placed in nomination; did Gorbachev have the right to preside before he was elected; should standing committees elect their own chairman rather than having them appointed by Congress as whole? On all these issues, the positions of the more "liberal" deputies were defeated. Gorbachev's ability to manipulate the proceedings in this fashion was demonstrated early when Sergei Stankevich, one of the "Moscow group", proposed a procedure whereby a request by any 100 deputies would require a roll call vote. Gorbachev responded as follows:

"Permit me to express my attitude and give some advice in this connection. I think that, in general, Stankevich's proposal deserves attention. But, in my view, it is impossible to
agree that roll call voting can take place at the request of 100 deputies. This is something the Congress should decide. The Congress, not 100 deputies should determine the form of voting. I suggest that the proposal be worded as follows: A roll call vote can be conducted by a decision of the Congress. In my opinion, that is a very important addition... [A vote follows: Stankevich's resolution is defeated with 431 in favor; as amended by Gorbachev, it wins by a show of hands.]"33

Much of Gorbachev's ability to control the Congress also stemmed from decisions made before the first session even began. Some of it was derived from the power given to him as Chairman by the Constitutional amendments of Dec. 1, 1988. Thus, when a number of deputies persisted in asking that alternative candidacies for the position of Vice-Chairman be presented, Gorbachev cited his constitutional prerogative to nominate one candidate and bluntly informed the deputies that "Therefore, I am submitting the proposal [for one candidate] and that's how it will be with the other candidates."34 An attempt by the minority to amend the Constitution on this point was defeated with 851 for and 1130 against with 47 abstaining, probably the closest the "opposition" came to defeating a Gorbachev position.35 Luk'ianov was then elected with 179 against, and 137 abstentions.

There is yet another reason why the conduct of the Congress was less haphazard than it sometimes seemed. A series of meetings on the three days prior to the opening of the Congress produced a number of decisions which largely determined what the agenda of the Congress would be, who would be nominated for what positions, and what procedures would be followed. The
first of these meetings was a Central Committee Plenum on May 22 which recommended that Gorbachev be elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and "adopted appropriate resolutions" related to the conduct of the Congress. On May 23, a meeting of the "Party group" among the deputies was held though no details were given. Normally, the "party group" refers to all deputies in a soviet who are party members. In the past, they have been subject to party discipline in accordance with the Rules of the CPSU. Although Gorbachev did not overtly assert party discipline in the course of the Congress, 88% of the CPD deputies are party members. Gorbachev made clear his displeasure with those whom he considered as failing to support the party’s line at the Congress. In his remarks to the Central Committee’s conference for raikom and obkom secretaries on July 19, 1989, he implied that party discipline may be invoked in the future when he said, "Naturally, Communist deputies cannot consider themselves exempted from Party discipline or from fulfilling the decisions of the Party." 

Finally, on the day before the Congress met, a 9 hour conference of 446 representatives chosen by groups of deputies from "various" Union republics met and agreed on: an agenda and working procedures; rules regarding the nomination and election of the Supreme Soviet; the candidacies of all top officials to be nominated or confirmed at the Congress; and who to nominate to a "Presidium of the Congress" whose 17 members (including Gorbachev, Vorotnikov, Luk’ianov, and Central Election Commission Chair, Vladimir Orlov, plus one representative from each Republic) would preside over the sessions.
bachev's manifest ability to have his way on all these issues, and to have them settled before the Congress opened, allowed him to orchestrate the remainder of the Congress, and to intervene or yield on issues at times and places of his own choosing.40 It was a masterful performance.

Overall, the public was impressed by the Congress. In an opinion poll taken before and after the CPD reported by Moskovskie novosti on July 16, the "success" rating of the CPD rose from 31% to 70%, while those withholding judgement declined from 54% to 11%. The portion of whose expectations were that the CPD would fail rose from 15% to 19%. Most interesting, however, was that when the population was divided into those who felt strongly that "real power" should be vested in the CPD rather than in the Supreme Soviet or in the government, the estimation of the CPD's work fell markedly.41 Nor were all the deputies impressed with what they had accomplished. In his role of Gorbachev's Cassandra, Sakharov mounted the rostrum at the end of the Congress to warn that the parliamentary body they had chosen "will be simply a screen for the real power of the Chairman of the Supreme and the Party-State apparatus." After giving him one more minute to speak, Gorbachev told the politically dissident scientist to "finish up", and, when Sakharov continued, he simply turned off the microphone, the ultimate act of control.42
The Supreme Soviet

In attempting to assess the degree to which the activities of the deputies elected to the 542 member Supreme Soviet marked a turning point in the development of their role as a political elite, two aspects of their work stand out: an advise and consent function, which occupied their attention initially, and their legislative function. Each of these aspects will be examined in what follows.

The new Supreme Soviet began its work even before the Congress adjourned on June 9, 1989. The reason the meetings overlapped was that article 108 of the amended Constitution requires the Congress to confirm several officials whose nominations are made by the Supreme Soviet. To fulfill this function the two coequal chambers of the Supreme Soviet had to first hold organizational sessions. The 271 deputies to the Council of the Union met on Saturday, June 3; those elected to the Council of the Nationalities met on the afternoon of June 6, a day later than scheduled due to a disastrous gas explosion in the Urals mountains.

From the outset, it was clear that at these meetings of the two chambers key personnel and organizational decisions had been made in advance; what was left to the deputies was to offer constructive suggestions and then to ratify what was proposed. Gorbachev himself presided at both sessions. The agendas were limited to two items: the election of chairmen of the councils and the creation of standing committees. In both cases, the proposals were made by representatives of a "Council of Elders" whose composition was never identified. How they
were chosen, and how they conducted their work was never made public; their recommendations, however, were adopted with only semantic modifications. Yevgenii Primakov became chair of the Council of the Union, and Rafik Nishanov the chair of the Council of Nationalities.43

The first meeting of the Supreme Soviet in joint session on June 7 proved somewhat more controversial. According to the amended Constitution the Supreme Soviet must approve, subject to Congressional confirmation, the Supreme Soviet Chairman’s (Gorbachev’s) nominations for the posts of Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Chairman of the People’s Central Committee, Chairman of the Supreme Court, Procurator General, and State Arbiter. Gorbachev’s proposal of Nikolai Ryzhkov to head the government went smoothly enough; after some questioning he was approved with 9 votes against.44 The nomination by Gorbachev of Gennadi Kolbin to chair the People’s Control Committee provoked more debate. He was severely criticized for the way he dealt with corruption as First party Secretary of Kazakhstan. Alternative candidates were repeatedly urged by the deputies, but Gorbachev again intervened on the grounds of constitutional prerogative and reaffirmed his support for Kolbin, albeit with tempered enthusiasm. Kolbin was then approved with 34 against and 53 abstentions out of 509 votes.45 The remainder of Gorbachev’s nominees (Somolentsev for Supreme Court chair, Sukharev for Procurator General, and Matveyev for State Arbiter) were all approved by a lopsided margin.

The meeting of the Congress on June 8 to finish the business of appointments provide a measure of how much more com-
pliant the deputies to Supreme Soviet seemed to be. Although
Ryzhkov's confirmation to chair the Council of Ministers by the
CPD presented few problems (59 voted against; 87 abstained),
Gorbachev ran into more serious difficulty on the issue of
electing a Constitutional Review Committee (also a function of
the CPD) in accordance with art. 125 of the amended Constitu-
tion. Such a committee was strongly opposed by deputies from
the Baltic republics who feared that it would be used to void
republican legislation not deemed consistent with the USSR Con-
stitution. About 50 of them threatened to - and ultimately did
- boycott this election. Although Gorbachev demonstrated his
ability to have his way on the issue (a proposal to form the
Committee immediately was adopted with 433 no votes) he then
acceded to a proposal from Fedor Burlatsky to postpone the
matter until after he could meet with the boycotting deputies.
The establishment of a Constitutional Review Committee was
still pending at the time of this writing.

Another indicator of the greater contentiousness of the
Congress compared with the Supreme Soviet was the number of
votes cast against the confirmation of Sukharev as Procurator
General, and Kolbin as chair of People's Control. The latter
had been Procurator General when an inquiry into Ivanov and
Gdlyan's probe into possible corruption in the Politburo was
initiated at the request of Ligachev. While only 27 no votes
out of 542 had been cast against Sukharev in the Supreme
Soviet, 330 voted against and 273 abstained after sharp cross-
examination in the far more assertive Congress. Kolbin's per-
formance as Kazakh party First Secretary was given a far more
intense grilling than he had received in the Supreme Soviet and
received proportionately more dissenting votes. Gorbachev
must have looked forward to the adjournment of Congress the
next day on June 9.

But, as if spurred by the assertiveness of the Congress,
the deputies to the Supreme Soviet began to show the first
signs that their role in the process of advice and consent was
not to be taken for granted either. Both chambers held their
final organizational sessions on Saturday, June 10. Their pri-
mary business was to elect additional officers (Primakov and
Nishanov had already been elected) and to elect chairmen of the
4 standing committees unique to each chamber. Candidates for
vice-chair in each chamber were defeated after questionin
demonstrated that they lacked the qualifications to hold the
posts for which they had been presented. In addition, in the
Council of Nationalities, the precedent was set - at the insis-
tence of the deputies - that alternative candidates for stand-
ing committee chairs could be proposed from the floor.

The limits on this greater assertiveness became clearer
in the afternoon's joint session at which chairman of the 14
joint committees were proposed. Some Supreme Soviet members
sought to broaden the discussion into a more general debate of
how the nominees were chosen and how the list of those to be
appointed to the various committees was determined. Deputies
pointed out that some of those appointed to the committees
dealing with defense and with the economy in particular, were
employed in the very sectors of the economy they were supposed
to oversee. Primakov, who was presiding, indicated that the
proposed committee chairs would form the committees "by reaching an appropriate consensus with many groups of deputies". To this, one unidentified deputy hotly replied that the composition of the joint and standing committees was chosen "in a truly apparatus-like way."

The more the deputies pressed for answers, the more evident it became that final decisions regarding committee membership had been arrived at elsewhere. Asked directly, "who did the selecting?", Primakov answered: "Technical personnel", and then added, rather defensively, "You shouldn't suspect that the composition of the committees was handed down to us from higher organizations of some sort." 48

After a recess of one week to prepare their work, the first sessions of the standing committees began on June 19, 1989. Their primary task in the initial stage was to hold hearings on Ryzhkov's nominees to cabinet posts in the Council of Ministers and to make recommendations to the Supreme Soviet about whether to approve them. The process of confirmation turned out to be far from routine, and marked a real departure from past practice when the Supreme Soviet would unanimously, and without debate, approve whoever the head of government proposed. This time, the Supreme Soviet and its committee rejected no less than nine out of roughly seventy of Ryzhkov's choices for places in the Council of Ministers including two for appointments in the Presidium of that body: Vladimir Kalashnikov, (food and procurements), and Vladimir Kamentsev, (foreign economic relations). 49
Even where approval was eventually forthcoming, candidates often came under sharp and critical cross-examination. Probably no hearing better indicated how much had changed than the grilling of the nominee to head the KGB, Vladimir Kryuchkov. Deputies laughed derisively when he denied that ordinary citizens' phones had been tapped. The significance of the process established by Kryuchkov's examination - and by the other hearings by extension - for the development of the deputies' authority was neatly summed up by historian and deputy Roy Medvedev, himself a former target of KGB domestic surveillance: "the important thing is that, for the first time, the head of the KGB is standing before us on the podium and answering our questions."50

The emergence of the standing committees as a real instrument of deputy power appears to have caught Ryzhkov, at least, by surprise.51 Among the reasons for this emergence were several decisions made at the Congress, apparently as a gesture to the more liberal minority. Specifically, it was decided that deputies to the CPD not elected to the Supreme Soviet could be appointed to any of the 22 committees and commissions, and with the right to vote. Over 400 of the 928 members were appointed this way. Moreover, even a deputy who was not a member could participate in its activity, though without a vote. As a result many of the more radical deputies defeated for election to the Supreme Soviet nevertheless took an active role in the work of the committees.52 The fact that for the first time a number of the deputies were given a paid sabbatical from the jobs to be deputies may have also contributed to
their ability to exercise independent oversight. 53

The independence shown by the deputies in the process of advice and consent regarding the formation of the new government provides the clearest signal so far of their potential to develop into a new political elite. It is not, however, the only one. In the last few weeks of the first session ending Aug. 4, and in the second session beginning Sept. 25, there were signs that the deputies intend to develop their legislative role as well. The unfolding of two issues - the declaration of sovereignty in Lithuania and Estonia in May and the coal-field strikes in Siberia and the Donbass in July - probably served to accelerate this process by thrusting the legislature into the spotlight as the appropriate institution for airing and responding to issues such as these. It is noteworthy that both issues emerged as the result of local initiatives; they were placed on the legislative agenda not from above, but from below. Although Gorbachev tried to stay ahead of both issues, and even to coopt them for his own political purposes, it is not clear that he entirely succeeded. 54

One of the first legislative acts taken by the Supreme Soviet was related to the question of Baltic autonomy. On July 16, Izvestiia reported that the Supreme Soviet had begun debate on a draft law "On Economic Self-Determination in Lithuania and Estonia," and that the provisions of the law had been approved by the Supreme Soviets of those republics. 55 The draft law called for the establishment of an experimental economic zone in the Baltic region whereby local authorities rather than the central ministries would control their own resources, budgets,
prices, taxes, and foreign trade. After lengthy debate, including a confrontation between two members of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers – Abalkin and Maslyukov – a resolution approving the proposal was adopted with 35 no votes and 23 abstentions. The adoption of the law itself was postponed until October. 56

A more unexpected demand for legislative attention resulted from the miners' strikes which began in the Kuzbass region of Siberia on July 10 and spread to the Ukrainian Donbass creating what Gorbachev called in a speech to the Supreme Soviet on July 24 "the most severe and difficult crisis in four years of perestroika". 57 Significantly, the striking miners took their grievances to the deputies from their regions and to the parliamentary group headed by Yeltsin and Popov to bring to the attention of the Supreme Soviet which began to debate the issue on July 24. 58

Gorbachev responded positively to the strikes initially, seeking to use them to attack the local party-state apparat for not showing more initiative. "The workers are taking matters into their own hands and this inspires me greatly" he said. 59 Not surprisingly, he readily agreed to the workers' demands that the timetable for local elections in their areas be moved up. He did not, however, agree to their proposals for an independent union. Furthermore, one of his first items for legislative action when the deputies began their fall session was a 15 month moratorium on all strikes. Significantly, Gorbachev's draft law was modified as part of a compromise resolution worked out in the Supreme Soviet in an all night session on
Oct. 2, 1989. A permanent strike law replacing this resolution and legalizing strike actions under certain conditions was approved on Oct. 9, 1989 by a vote of 373-12-10. It was the first law adopted in the second session of Supreme Soviet and demonstrated the importance of events in redefining the legislative agenda as well as providing an unexpected opportunity for the deputies to further assert their authority.

These two issues were not the only indicators of the deputies' growing legislative role. Among other actions taken in the first session were: a resolution discharging 176,000 university students from the army despite objections from Minister of Defense Yazov; a resolution to hold a second session of the Congress in the fall of 1989; a law on immediate increases in pensions; a revision of the Feb. 23, 1989 ukaz on taxing cooperatives; revisions of the April 8, 1989 ukaz on criminal responsibility for state crimes; amendments reversing an earlier ukaz on transferring jurisdiction over enterprises from the local and republican level to the center; a law on how best to disseminate information on the work of the legislature itself; and amendments to the 1987 Law on State Enterprises. Normal parliamentary procedure appears to have been followed in these cases: debate in committee – or hearings before more than one committee meeting jointly – would result in something like a "mark up" of the legislation, which would then be sent to the Supreme Soviet as a whole for a vote.

The legislative side of the deputies work has continued in the second session which opened on Sept. 25, 1989. The
first law adopted at this session — the law on strikes of Oct. 9 — has already been discussed, but the first item of business placed before the deputies was the budget submitted by Minister of Finance, Valentin Pavlov. How the discussion on this question proceeds and what changes, if any, are introduced by the deputies, will be important in defining their real power. The most immediate reaction of the deputies was to condemn "price gouging" by cooperatives, a viewpoint Gorbachev himself appeared to endorse. Other issues which will occupy the attention of the legislators and which may also prove significant indicators of their real power include draft laws on public organizations (including the status of unofficial groups and alternative parties), on income tax, on property, on press freedom, on leasing land, on the judicial system and on the status of judges. One innovation in the deputies work — and a step in the direction of greater public accountability — was the introduction of an electronic voting system which can be used to keep track of each legislator's record.

There are three other laws currently being discussed in committee which will have direct bearing on the future evolution of the soviets: revisions to the USSR Law on the Status of Deputies; a draft law on the economic role of the local soviets; and legislation related to upcoming elections to the local soviets. Although it is too soon to say what modifications may be introduced in committee sessions, some features of the legislation as proposed are worth noting.

In most respects, the Law on the Status of Deputies now under consideration is unchanged from the one adopted in
Two changes, however, are encouraging. First, the section of the preamble obligating deputies to implement policies of the CPSU has been removed along with the requirement that deputies "devote all their strength and knowledge to the cause of building communism." The other change reflects the decisions taken at the Congress whereby at least some deputies will be released from their jobs and reimbursed for expenses (draft articles #5 and #27). Both the CPSU's domination of deputies in the past, and the deputies as part-time legislators have greatly hindered the deputies' ability to assert their legislative authority. The draft law on the economic rights of the local soviets may also enhance the deputy's authority. In areas effecting local economic life, there is to be a substantial transfer of decision-making from the center to the localities. While local governments will be required to show a budgetary surplus (samofinansirovanie), their discretion in raising and spending money is to be greatly increased.

The elections to local government are more problematical. Originally scheduled for February, 1990, which is when the term of those currently holding office would run out, the decision about when to hold elections has now been left up to each republic in accordance with Gorbachev's promise to the miner's in July. If one compares the election procedures outlined for local elections in the RSFSR with those followed in the Spring elections to the CPD, some useful modifications have been introduced. Most importantly, there is no quota reserved to the public organizations in the local elections. In addition, there are limits on how many organizations can nominate
the same candidate. A minimum size has been established for nominations in the workplaces, while the size of meetings at residences for the purpose of nominations has been reduced and made equal to the number required in the workplace.

At the same time, however, it is clear from the RSFSR draft law, and the Constitutional provisions which govern it (arts. 95-102) that some of the same elements of control which were evidenced in the Spring, 1989 elections remain. The number of candidates is "unlimited," leaving open the possibility of single candidate elections at the oblast level where a single member district voting system will be in effect. This may provide some measure of protection for obkom first secretaries and those in larger cities since at least one "safe" seat can surely be found out of the 300 or more proposed for such soviets. In addition, the draft law preserves the practice of pre-election meetings to reduce the numbers of nominees and to ensure that their platforms are congruent with Soviet law. All in all, the evidence seems to be consistent with the view that the intended function of the upcoming local elections is the same as that of the Congressional election: to clear out those in the party-state apparatus opposed to Gorbachev's policies. If the Spring, 1989, elections are any indicator, he may succeed beyond his expectations.
Conclusions

What can be said in answer to the questions raised at the outset of this paper? Are we witnessing the emergence of a fundamentally new political system in the USSR in which the deputies will replace the party and state apparatus as the ruling political elite? No one can predict with certainty the outcome of a story still in progress; at best, we can weigh the evidence available to date and try to indicate likely directions.

In all of the phases of legislative reforms examined in this paper, there are positive signs for the long-term development of the deputies as a political elite. There was a genuinely competitive element in the elections to the CPD. The high level of citizen interest and participation in the elections suggest the emergence of a participant "civic" culture in the USSR that is far more advanced than many Western Sovietologists expected. The Congress of People's Deputies established important precedents in the area of public accountability, and in advancing the legitimacy of opposition. These tendencies were also apparent (and even accelerated) in the work of Supreme Soviet, especially in its rejection of governmental nominees and in its amendment of government policy. Clearly much has been done to reverse the position of subordination in which the legislative institutions in the Soviet Union have historically been placed relative to those of the executive and the party.

At the same time, the events of the past year or so have also indicated how far the deputies have yet to go before we
can conclude that power has indeed passed to the soviets. As
the preceding analysis has shown, the elections to the CPD
produced a clear majority pretty much willing to do whatever
Gorbachev wanted, and that this outcome was all but ensured by
the electoral procedures adopted on Dec. 1, 1988. Gorbachev's
majority in the Supreme Soviet is, not surprisingly, even
larger. His ability to rotate 20% of the deputies out of the
Supreme Soviet each year gives still more control over the com-
position of the parliament should he choose to use it. Only a
minority (about 20%) of the deputies are full-time; all lack
the staff, facilities, and budget to become truly effective as
legislators. In the last analysis, it is still Gorbachev's
game; the new legislative institutions serve his political pur-
poses. At this point, the best guess regarding the future evo-
lution of the soviets is that how far they go depends on how
far he is willing to let them go.78


4M.S. Gorbachev, speech to the Conference of the CPSU Central Committee, Izvestiia, July 19, 1989, p. 2.

5An earlier statement of this view may be found in my article, "Power to the Soviets," Problems of Communism (Jan.-Feb., 1989), p. 35ff.

6Developed from Roger Scruton, A Dictionary of Political Thought (NY: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 143. I understand the term "to govern" to refer to those who have primary responsibility for making decisions in society.


8For a description of these elections see, Jeffrey W. Hahn, "An Experiment in Competition: the 1987 Elections to the Local Soviets," Slavic Review, (Fall, 1988).


11These figures are from the report to the Congress of the Credentials Commission, Izvestiia, May 26, 1989, p. 2.

12Moskovskaja pravda, Mar. 28, 1989.

13The author wishes to thank Professor Thomas Remington of Emory University for this data.

14Izvestiia, April 15, 1989.

15The three procedural votes involved the question of whether to nominate A.M. Obolensky as a candidate for chairman
of the Supreme Soviet to run against Gorbachev (defeated: 1415 against, 795 for); Zaslavskaya's motion to suspend the decree limiting demonstrations and rallies (1261 against); and whether those elected to the Supreme Soviet should "as a rule" continue their jobs as opposed to being full-time legislators (approved with 1419 in favor). CPD, Verbatim Report, Izvestiia, May 26, 1989, May 27, 1989. (See CDSP: Vol. 41, #21, p. 18; Vol. 41, #22, p. 3, 8.


17This should not be taken to imply that all those elected in this fashion were supporters of the old guard. Among the 100 elected from a slate of 100 proposed by the CPSU are found a number of those generally considered sympathetic to reform including Leonid Abalkin, Chingiz Aitmatov, Yergenii Primakov, Alexander Yakovlev and Gorbachev himself. A number of "liberals" were also selected by the Union of Cinematography Workers.

18Law on Election, art. 37.

19G.V. Barabashev and V.I. Vasil'ev, "Stanovlenie peformy," Sovety Narodnikh Deputatov #5 (1989), pp. 12-13. It is not clear to this observer why such an elaborate procedure could not be replaced by a simple runoff election (where necessary) leaving the two top vote getters in the initial round to compete in the final election, unless, of course, the purpose of these district pre-election meetings is to screen out those deemed undesirable by those in power.


21Voter discontent with the indirect election procedure was also expressed in ibid. 85% favored a directly elected Supreme Soviet while 94% also thought that its chairman should be elected directly. Similar views were expressed in a letter to the editor from M. Chulaki, "Mozhno Luchshe!" Literaturnaia Gazeta, Aug. 23, 1989.


24Izvestiia, May 26, 1989, p. 1. (Both Gorbachev and Luk'ianov were grilled about what they knew regarding the Tblisi events and when. (See CDSP, Vol. 41, #23, p. 13.)


30Ann Cooper, New York Times, Oct. 19, 1989. The article describes how the bank account was closed by the authorities and that attempts to publish a newspaper were thwarted indicating the degree of official opposition to the group. Despite this, Cooper reports, the opposition movement has persevered and retains its coherence.

31Figures are from Sotsialisticheskaia industriia, Aug. 1, 1989, p. 2. See also NYT, July 30, 1989, p.3.


41Thus, for example, Gorbachev did accommodate the more "liberal" deputies' demand to repeal art. 11.1 of the decree of April 8, 1989 making it a criminal offense to "discredit state agencies or public organizations." But he waited to do so until the last day of the Congress, and then it was done on his initiative. Izvestiia, June 11, 1989 (CDSP: Vol. 41, #34, p. 22).


45Reports of these of two are translated. See CDSP, Vol. 41, #30, pp. 19-24.

46Because he was also chairman of the previous Council of Ministers, Ryzhkov (along with the other ministers) had to submit his resignation before he could be appointed to head the new government. The size of the new Council of Ministers was reduced from 82 to 57, with further reductions to come. This restructuring gave Gorbachev an important opportunity to consolidate his hold on the state bureaucracy. Of the 100 or so ministers in office in 1984, only 10 remained after the restructuring. Izvestiia, June 9, 1989, p. 2 and Izvestiia, June 11, 1989, p. 2. For a translation of Ryzhkov’s proposals on government reorganization, see CDSP: Vol. 41, #33, p. 18.


49Izvestiia, June 11, 1989, pp. 9-11.

50Izvestiia, June 12, 1989, pp. 2-3.

51Kamentsev’s rejection appeared to cause some concern in the Western business community. He was considered a “key figure" in Gorbachev’s effort to revitalize foreign investment in the USSR and the vote seemed to be a rebuff to Gorbachev. His defeat at the July 4 session of the Supreme was the first before that body as a whole. The other nominees, all of whom failed to get approved in committee included: Zakharov (culture), Bogomyakov (oil and gas), Polad-zade (water industry), Rozenova (pricing), Gribov (state bank), Gramov (sports), Busygin (lumber) and Konarev (railways). On Kamentsev’s rejection, see Business Week, July 17, 1989, p. 80, and NYT, July 5, 1989.


53See his interview in Nedelia in July (#29). Thanks to Werner Hahn for drawing my attention to this.

54Luk’ianov’s proposals on this score are found in Izvestiia, May 28, 1989. (CDSP: Vol. 41, #22, p. 8.)

55Andrei Romanov estimates that about 20% of the deputies were released from their jobs to work full-time in the Supreme Soviet. "Vstupaem v parlament" Moskovskie novosti, #24 (June 11, 1989), p. 8.


62An article summarizing legislation passed at the joint session of the Supreme Soviet on August 1, 1989 can be found under the title "Prinimaiutsia zakony" Izvestiia, Aug. 2, 1989, pp. 1-2.

63The question of taxes on cooperative was preceded by much debate. Izvestiia, July 19, 1989, p. 4; Izvestiia, July 31, 1989, p. 1.

64Izvestiia, Aug. 1, 1989, p. 2.


66For a description of what various committees were doing, see "Proverliaetsia do poslednei zaniatoi" Izvestiia, July 21, 1989, p. 1.

67Bill Keller, NYT, Sept. 24, 1989, p. 1. The budget was adopted without major revision on Oct. 31, 1989. On one point of disagreement however, the deputies refused to endorse Ryzhkov's request for a "sin tax" on cigarettes, alcohol, and luxury items, apparently because they would have been unpopular.


70For a summary of the legislative agenda see Bill Keller NYT, Sept. 24, 1989, p. 1; on judicial reform see the interview with the Chairman of the Supreme Court, Ye. A. Smolentsev, "What Kind of Court Do We Need?" Pravda, July 16, 1989 (CDSP: Vol. 41, #28, p. 23.)


72Copies of the draft legislation in these three areas were made available to the author. What follows is based on them. For a more detailed discussion see, Jeffrey W. Hahn, "The Soviet State System" in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, Zvi

73Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1972, #39, st. 347.


75"Zakonoproekta o mestnom samoupravlenii i mestnom khoz-ziaistve" esp. art. 3, and art. 15.

76This point is emphasized by Barabashev and Vasil’ev, who otherwise defended the use of public organizations on the grounds that it ensured greater representativeness. See G. Barabashev, V. Vasil’ev, "Stanovlenie Reformy", Sovety narod-nykh deputatov #5 (1989), p. 12.

77According to art. 16 of the RSFSR draft law, elections to soviets at the level of Krai, oblasts, autonomous oblasts, okrugs, and cities with district subdivisions are to be by single member district. Those at lower levels will be by multi-member district (mnogomandatny). For a description of this procedure as used in the local elections of June 1987, see my article, "Experiment in Competition", op. cit.

78On Oct. 23, 1989, however, the deputies showed their willingness to vote to overrule Gorbachev on a matter of political power important to him, namely, the constitutional reservation of 750 seats for deputies from public organizations. They voted 254-85-36 to amend the Constitution removing this allocation of seats despite lobbying by Gorbachev and Luk’ianov. See NYT, Oct. 24, 1989.
Table 1

SOCIAL COMPOSITION
and the USSR Supreme Soviet (1989)

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*) Party leaders of the republican, regional and territorial level, responsible employees of the CPSU Central Committee, leaders of the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and Union Republics, government ministers, top military leaders, directors of research, educational institutions, etc.

**) Chiefs of workshops, departments, work teams, laboratories, collective and state farms, etc.