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# Domestic Responsibilities of Soviet Party Central Committee Secretaries

A Research Paper

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**Domestic Responsibilities  
of Soviet Party  
Central Committee Secretaries**

**Overview**

A high degree of stability has characterized the 10-man CPSU Secretariat since the 25th Party Congress five years ago. An examination of the party's chief executive body during the period between congresses reveals no major shifts of functional responsibility that could presage major leadership changes. Evidence that the division of labor remains essentially unchanged reinforces the impression that continuity will be the hallmark of the 26th Congress which opens in Moscow on 23 February.

### Domestic Responsibilities of Soviet Party Central Committee Secretaries

At the 25th Congress in 1976, two men—K. U. Chernenko and M. V. Zimyanin—were added to the Secretariat. Since then, two others—K. V. Rusakov and M. S. Gorbachev—replaced the demoted K. F. Katushev and the deceased F. D. Kulakov. Another man, Ya. P. Ryabov, took D. F. Ustinov's place on the Secretariat after the latter became Minister of Defense in 1976, but Ryabov was transferred to a government post three years later, and his Secretariat position apparently remains vacant.

The changes that have occurred thus far in pre-congress deliberations have not resulted in any major shifts of responsibility that could presage important leadership changes at the 26th Congress this week.<sup>1</sup> Chernenko, while apparently enjoying a broad mandate to provide general direction to party organizations on personnel questions and management methods, does not seem to have successfully challenged A. P. Kirilenko's executive authority in any specific area.

There have been no clear signs that any secretary—unless it be Brezhnev himself—has primary responsibility for overseeing the work of the important Central Committee departments of Administrative Organs (military, police, and courts) and Defense Industry, which Ryabov had supervised. The Politburo may appoint a new secretary to supervise these departments, but it is more likely that Brezhnev will increasingly delegate this responsibility to incumbent secretaries, perhaps dividing the functions between Chernenko and Kirilenko. Gorbachev, the newest secretary, who has moved rapidly to establish control over agriculture and related fields, stands to gain more authority if Brezhnev follows through with his plan to set up an agro-industrial complex.

**Suslov, Zimyanin, and the Ideological Departments**  
The most important responsibility of M. S. Suslov, the senior party secretary in age as well as length of service, is in the area of foreign policy. Suslov, however, also serves as the guardian of ideological purity at

home and has overall responsibility for three domestic Central Committee departments: Propaganda, Culture, and Science and Educational Institutions. Unlike Kirilenko, who evidently supervises at least one department personally, Suslov has increasingly exercised his authority indirectly—by overseeing the work of Zimyanin, the junior secretary who in turn oversees the work of the three departments.

Suslov's tendency to delegate authority has been most pronounced in the area of science. In 1975-76 Suslov is said to have successfully intervened in deliberations in the USSR Academy of Sciences in favor of the candidacy for a corresponding member of the academy—of the notoriously dogmatic S. P. Trapeznikov, head of the Department of Sciences and Educational Institutions. He also reportedly applied pressure on the academy to elect A. Aleksandrov as its president. Since that time, however, Suslov has been publicly much less active in the affairs of the institution. He was absent from the academy meeting in 1979 that voted against elevating Trapeznikov from corresponding to full membership. Zimyanin, who did participate, also presided over Science Day that year and attended the academy's annual meeting in 1980.

In recent years, as the emphasis in science policy has shifted from basic research to applied technology, Kirilenko and V. I. Dolgikh have participated actively in scientific meetings. Last year, for example, Kirilenko chaired a Central Committee meeting on scientific-technical progress and participated in a Gosplan meeting on the same subject. When Zimyanin was out of town for Science Day last year, Dolgikh took his place. Dolgikh and Kirilenko, however, appear to exercise their influence in this area through the Central Committee's industrial departments and the State Committee for Science and Technology rather than through the Department of Science and Educational Institutions.

<sup>1</sup> See chart I.

#### Gorbachev and the Agricultural Package

While Suslov has become less active in recent years, the youngest secretary, Gorbachev, has evidently expanded his portfolio somewhat beyond agricultural production. He has profited from the preliminary steps Brezhnev has taken to create an agro-industrial complex. Attendance at a conference on the development of such a complex last December suggests that Gorbachev, who chaired the meeting, is supervising four departments: Agriculture, his primary concern; Light and Food Industry; Trade and Domestic Services; and the new Department of Agricultural Machine Building.<sup>7</sup>

Gorbachev took over some of these responsibilities from his predecessor Kulakov—specifically the food and light industry functions. He was the sole representative of the leadership last year at Light Industry Workers' Day, and for the last two years at Food Industry Workers' Day. Since the food industry and other light industry—such as textiles and shoe manufacturing—use agricultural raw materials, the assignment of these sectors to the agriculture secretary is rational from an administrative point of view.

The inclusion of Trade and Domestic Services in Gorbachev's portfolio makes less sense in functional terms, but the origins of this department suggest that it may have also been under the purview of the agriculture secretary even before Gorbachev's ascendancy or Brezhnev's efforts to set up an agro-industrial complex. Before 1966, a single Central Committee department supervised light industry, food industry, and trade. When trade and domestic services were separated out, the agriculture secretary may have retained responsibility for them. No Central Committee secretary has attended functions associated with this neglected sector in recent years, however, and determination of responsibility for the sector is difficult. Unlike the ceremonies for most other "workers' days," for example, no secretary has attended the festivities for Trade Workers' Day since the 25th Congress. Nonetheless, in 1979 Gorbachev along with I. V.

<sup>7</sup>One of the participants at this meeting was I. I. Sakhnyuk, who was transferred last June from the first secretaryship of Kharkov Oblast to head an unspecified Central Committee department. The fact that *Pravda* mentioned his name alone as a participant in a 30 January meeting on agricultural machine building is persuasive evidence that he heads this department, whose creation Brezhnev announced in October.

Kapitonov and Kirilenko attended a congress of consumer cooperatives, which is accountable to the Department of Trade and Domestic Services.

Gorbachev may ultimately assume responsibility for the Chemical Fertilizer Sector of the Chemical Industry Department as well. The recent creation of a new Ministry of Chemical Fertilizer, which had previously been combined in a single ministry with "heavy" chemical industry, raises the possibility that a similar separation will take place within the party's structure.

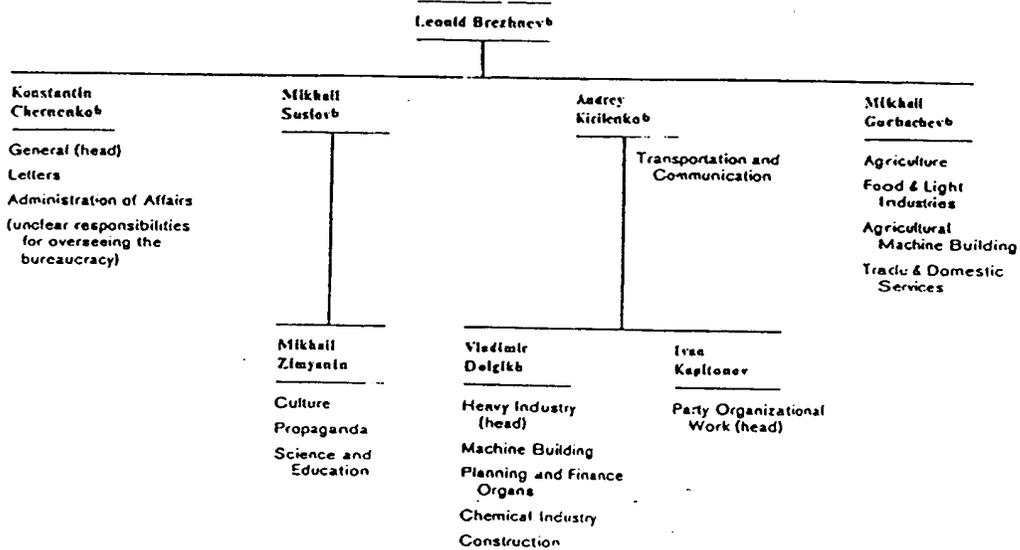
Gorbachev probably reports directly to Brezhnev on agricultural matters. Brezhnev has long been the chief spokesman for agricultural interests within the leadership, and he evidently continues to take a greater active interest in this area than in some others. Occasionally, for example, he personally monitors harvest operations. Brezhnev presumably will continue to work with Gorbachev in overseeing the departments responsible for the emerging agro-industrial complex.

#### Kirilenko, Dolgikh, and Industry

A fairly definite division of labor appears to exist between Kirilenko and Dolgikh for the nonagricultural sectors of industry. Kirilenko evidently directly supervises the Department of Transport and Communications. Dolgikh's primary responsibility is the Heavy Industry Department, which he heads. Both men are active in supervising three other industrial departments: Chemical Industry, Machine Building, and Construction. In addition, they share supervision of the more broadly mandated Department for Planning and Finance Organs. It thus appears that Kirilenko has the overall responsibility for supervising these areas with the assistance of Dolgikh as a junior secretary in an arrangement similar to the Suslov-Zimyanin and Brezhnev-Gorbachev relationships.

Dolgikh, rather than Kirilenko, attends all of the workers' celebrations corresponding to the sectors of the Heavy Industry Department (Coal Industry, Ferrous Metallurgy, Geology, Nonferrous Metallurgy, and Petroleum). Kirilenko, on the other hand, attends functions associated with the Department of Transportation and Communications. He regularly attends Railroad Workers' Day, and last year he also attended River Fleet Workers' Day.

USSR: Central Committee Secretaries With Domestic Responsibilities and Departments They Supervise\*



Note: Secretarial responsibility for the Departments of Administrative Organs and Defense Industry is uncertain.

\*This chart does not include the two secretaries whose responsibilities are exclusively in the area of foreign policy—Konstantin Ruzakov and Boris Ponomarev. Nor does it cover the specific regional or country responsibilities of those secretaries who have been involved in the conduct of international relations.

<sup>b</sup>Also Politburo Member.

<sup>c</sup>The relationship between secretaries and department heads is administratively untidy. A secretary has supervisory responsibility for one or more departments, regardless of whether he is the head of the department. There is no standard pattern. Kepitonov is the head of the only department he supervises. Chernenko and Dolgikh each head one department, while supervising the heads of several other departments. Neither Zimyanin nor Gorbachev heads a department, but each has responsibility for several departments.

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Kirilenko's public activity in this sector is especially pronounced with regard to rail transport. During the last two years he has been the speaker at several Railway Ministry conferences, and on one occasion he participated in a session of the Railway Ministry's collegium. In the area of communications he has been less active. Last year it was Chernenko who spoke at a conference of communications workers; Kirilenko did not attend. This indicates that Chernenko may have assumed some responsibility in this area.

In view of his long public advocacy of increased investment in the machine-building industry, Kirilenko's active involvement in this area is not surprising. He has worked closely for years with the head of the Machine-Building Department. He has been particularly active in the area of transport machinery, but he also gave the speech at a major conference on machine tool building last year. Moreover, he has been prominent in overseeing the electric power industry, which evidently comes under the jurisdiction of the Machine Building Department.<sup>1</sup> Kirilenko consistently attends Electric Power Workers' Day, and he spoke at power industry conferences both this year and last. Dolgikh, however, has also been active in this field. It is he, for example, who has attended Machine-Builders' Day.

Similarly, both men have been involved in supervising the departments of Construction, Chemical Industry, and Planning and Finance Organs. Dolgikh has had a larger role in overseeing construction projects in the petroleum and gas industry, while Kirilenko has been heavily involved in supervising transport construction. Kirilenko attended Builders' Day last year, and gave the major address at a Central Committee conference on Motor Technology in 1978. Dolgikh, who attends both Oil and Gas Workers' Day and Chemical Workers' Day, has been somewhat more active than Kirilenko in supervising the departments of Chemical Industry and Planning and Finance Organs. Last year he represented the leadership at two important meetings apparently connected with the work of the latter department. In April he was the only secretary who took part in a meeting on pricing, and in July he

<sup>1</sup> Although this industry would seem logically to "belong" under the Department of Heavy Industry, the attendance at functions associated with it of the head of the Machine-Building Department indicates otherwise.

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addressed a meeting of party administrators and financial and economic officials.

**Chernenko and the "Housekeeping" Departments**  
Vaulted into the upper ranks of the leadership on the basis of his close personal relationship with Brezhnev, Chernenko participates in a wide range of public activities. Despite his public visibility, however, there is no evidence that he has expanded his secretarial responsibilities beyond his supervision of the General Department, the Letters Department, and the Administration of Affairs. These three departments perform politically sensitive executive tasks for the Central Committee but do not involve Chernenko in the substance of policymaking or implementation in any important area.

Chernenko has headed the General Department since 1965. In this capacity he oversees the handling of communications generated by the Politburo and Secretariat, supervises the drafting and coordination of speeches and other documents, and rules on various procedural aspects of the decisionmaking process.

Until 1979, what is now the Letters Department was a sector in the General Department. The creation of a new Central Committee department was a bureaucratic gain for Chernenko, who has been in the forefront of a campaign for greater official responsiveness to complaints from the population. The change, however, did not directly encroach on the institutional or functional territory of any other secretary or add measurably to Chernenko's own authority.

The Administration of Affairs, the equivalent of a Central Committee department, is charged with broad-ranging support of the Central Committee, apparently including the computerization of Central Committee personnel files and the publication of party documents. The Administration of Affairs probably works closely with the General Department. This fact, as well as the fact that Chernenko has edited numerous collections of party documents, suggests that he supervises the Administration of Affairs.

#### **Organizational Party Work**

Kirilenko evidently continues to have overall responsibility, and Kapitonov direct responsibility, for the

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Department of Organizational Party Work, which Kapitonov heads. This department has the important job of maintaining the Central Committee's control over the entire party organization, primarily through appointments to key positions.

Tenuous indications over the last two years suggest that Chernenko has been moving into the general area of personnel work. He has written extensively on questions of management technique and effective enforcement of party decisions, and several party newspapers and journals have referred to him as an authority on cadres matters. Last year he presided over a Central Committee cadres study session, and press reviews of his latest book implied once again that he was an expert on the selection and training of cadres, as well as on the "Leninist style of work." Nevertheless, Chernenko's public appearances do not indicate that he has assumed any definite responsibility in this area.

#### Administrative Organs and Defense Industry: A Portfolio in Search of a Secretary?

The last two secretaries who supervised the Department of Defense Industry—Ustinov from 1965 to 1976, and Ryabov from 1976 to 1979—also had some responsibility for the Department of Administrative Organs. Since Ryabov's removal, however, no secretary has regularly appeared at functions associated with these departments. No overriding precedent exists for combining oversight of these two areas, and the portfolio may have been divided. In the past, the secretary for civilian heavy industry has occasionally supervised defense industry as well. On the republic level, the organizational secretary generally has responsibility for the KGB and the military.

Ustinov and Brezhnev may exercise considerable direct control over these areas. Ustinov continues to have contact with defense industry officials, although it is unclear whether he is acting in his capacity as Defense Minister or as de facto secretary for defense industry.\* Brezhnev probably supervises administrative organs more closely than most areas.

\* Ustinov was not formally removed from the Secretariat when he became Minister of Defense in 1976, but he is not listed in Soviet publications as a secretary. Instances of a secretary holding a government post simultaneously are extremely rare in post-World War II Soviet history.

Chernenko has attended a number of functions associated with administrative organs. Along with Kapitonov, he attended Militia Day in 1979. Chernenko did not show up for Militia Day last year, however, so no clear pattern has emerged. Chernenko attended Aeroftot Day this year; in the two previous years Gorbachev did the honors. In recent years Chernenko has also attended the several award ceremonies for cosmonauts, but it was Brezhnev who presented the awards. Chernenko has not routinely signed military obituaries, as a secretary for administrative organs presumably would.

Gorbachev might assume responsibility for at least part of the administrative organs package. He twice attended Aeroftot Day, and his background as a lawyer equips him to supervise the judiciary, which is accountable to the Department of Administrative Organs. As Chairman of one of the two Legislative Proposals Commissions of the USSR Supreme Soviet, he recently introduced new legislation on the courts and public prosecutors' office. Gorbachev's failure to attend the recent funeral of R. A. Rudenko, Chief Procurator of the Soviet Union, however, provides countervailing evidence.

#### The Secretariat and the Party Congress

There is no evidence that the authority of any Central Committee secretary has increased sufficiently to portend major changes in the Soviet power configuration at the 26th Congress. Nor is there reason to expect much change in personnel on the Secretariat. There is no set number of secretarial positions to be filled or fixed division of responsibility among them. Brezhnev can reassign responsibilities among secretaries as he sees fit. Considering his record of avoiding personnel changes when possible, it seems likely that Brezhnev will prefer to utilize trusted associates already on the Secretariat to handle the one apparently unassigned area—Defense Industry and Administrative Organs—rather than appoint a new secretary for this purpose. The outlook, therefore, is for a continuation of the considerable functional stability that has characterized the Secretariat over the past several years.



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USSR: Attendance of Party Secretaries at Workers' Ceremonial Days

Worker's Ceremonial Days	Relevant Department	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Railroad	Transportation and Communication			Kirilako	Kirilenko	Kirilenko	Kirilenko
River Fleet	Transportation and Communication						Kirilenko
Builders	Construction						Kirilenko
Electric Power	Machine Building	Kirilenko			Kirilenko	Kirilenko	Kirilenko
Machine Builders	Machine Building				Dolgikh		Dolgikh
Chemical	Chemical Industry						Dolgikh
Oil and Gas	Heavy Industry, Chemical Industry		Dolgikh	Dolgikh	Dolgikh		Dolgikh
Metallurgists	Heavy Industry	Dolgikh			Dolgikh		
Miners	Heavy Industry		Dolgikh	Dolgikh	Dolgikh	Dolgikh	Dolgikh
Geologists	Heavy Industry					Dolgikh	
Science	Science and Education					Zimyanin	Dolgikh
Teachers	Science and Education			Zimyanin	Zimyanin	Zimyanin	Zimyanin
Press	Propaganda		Zimyanin				Zimyanin
Medical	Science and Education						Zimyanin
Agricultural	Agriculture	Kulakov	Kulakov	Kulakov	Dolgikh Kapitonov	Gorbachev	Gorbachev
Food Industry	Light and Food Industry			Kulakov		Gorbachev	Gorbachev
Light Industry	Light and Food Industry				Kulakov		Gorbachev
Fishermen	Light and Food Industry					Gorbachev	
Land Reclamation	Agriculture					Gorbachev	Gorbachev
Aeroflot	Administrative Organs					Gorbachev	Gorbachev (1981, Chernenko)
Militia	Administrative Organs		Ryabov		Ryabov	Chernenko Kapitonov	
Cosmonaut	Administrative Organs	Ustinov Kapitonov	Ustinov Zimyanin	Ryabov			

\* A blank space indicates that no secretary attended the ceremony for the given year. Several of the holidays, such as Science Day and Aeroflot Day, are new.

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