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Prime Minister. (4)



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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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4 December, 1984

Dear Charles,

MS.

Gorbachev's Visit

In your letter of 29 November you confirmed that the Prime Minister would hold a meeting with outside experts on 14 December to discuss Gorbachev's visit.

In advance of that meeting I enclose a biographical note on Gorbachev which has been prepared by our Research Department.

I am sending copies of this letter and the note to the Private Secretaries of Ministers who will be attending the Prime Minister's lunch for Gorbachev on 16 December.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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M S GORBACHEV - A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Summary

I. Early years; 1931-1949

Gorbachev was born in 1931 into a peasant family in the agricultural area of Stavropol (North Caucasus), which was occupied by the Germans between August 1942 and January 1943. After working as an assistant to a combine harvester operator (probably part-time while he did his secondary education), Gorbachev entered Moscow University (paragraphs 1 to 4).

II. Moscow University, 1950-1955

Gorbachev studied law, but Moscow University was of decisive importance in his political career. He joined the Party in 1952 and was probably secretary of the University's Komsomol (the Party's youth wing) organisation (paragraphs 5 to 6).

III. Komsomol Work in Stavropol, 1956-1962

Immediately after university Gorbachev started his career as a Komsomol and Party official in his home region (paragraph 7).

IV. Party Work in Stavropol, 1962-1970

Gorbachev's first years as a Party official coincided with Khrushchev's last. He benefited from Khrushchev's numerous reorganisations of the Party apparatus, but also took a hand in returning the local Party organisation to its traditional form under Brezhnev (paragraph 8). He got an agricultural degree by correspondence (paragraph 9). He rose steadily in the Stavropol Party organisation, probably helped by the promotion to the centre of his former boss, Kulakov, and by the decline under Brezhnev of his immediate superior in the Stavropol regional party organisation (paragraphs 10 to 12).

V. First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom, 1970-1978

On election as First Secretary of the Stavropol Kraikom in 1970, Gorbachev became one of the regional Party Secretaries who are the backbone of the Party's control over the country as a whole (paragraph 13). Locally he supported schemes to improve incentives for farm workers and greater mechanisation of the harvesting process. Nationally, he became a Deputy to the Supreme Soviet and a

member of the Party's Central Committee. As such he began to lead Party delegations abroad (paragraphs 14 to 15).

VI. To Moscow as Central Committee Secretary, 1978

Gorbachev's crucial promotion to Party Secretary for Agriculture in 1978 probably came about through a mixture of luck (the sudden death of Kulakov), connections with the leadership (Suslov's interest in the region, and its resorts, frequented by the leadership) and ability (noted by Brezhnev). (Paragraphs 16 to 18.)

VII. Rise in the leadership under Brezhnev and Andropov, 1978-1984

At 47, Gorbachev was not exceptionally young to be made a Party Secretary, but his rise to full membership of the Politburo by 1980 was exceptionally rapid and was probably due in particular to Brezhnev's approval (paragraphs 19 to 20). Gorbachev's personal contribution to agricultural policies is hard to discern: this is probably to his advantage (paragraph 21). He rose steadily up the ranks of the Party Secretaries until he stood third after Andropov and Chernenko. With both sick in 1983, much of the burden of running Party affairs must have fallen on Gorbachev (paragraphs 22 to 23). In May 1983 he visited the West for the first time as a representative of the Soviet State (paragraph 24).

VIII. Under Chernenko as General Secretary, 1984

Gorbachev is unlikely to have challenged Chernenko for the leadership when Andropov died in February 1984. He retains the confidence of the rest of the leadership, as shown by the exceptional breadth of his current responsibilities as a Party Secretary: he supervises ideology and foreign policy, agriculture and general economic questions, and Party organisation. He is the natural choice as General Secretary when Chernenko dies, if his age (53) is not held against him (paragraphs 25 to 27).

IX. Personality, Family

Gorbachev is intelligent and urbane; nor is his wife a Soviet stereotype (paragraph 28).

X Conclusions

Gorbachev has had a successful Party career, a prerequisite for the highest political office, and one that is less narrow than it appears at first sight (paragraph 29). As the first Politburo member not old enough to have fought in the War or to have held political office under Stalin, and the first in recent history to have had a university education, Gorbachev belongs to a new generation. The generational gap should not be exaggerated:

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Gorbachev has made his entire career in the Party apparatus, whose discipline and suspicion of individualism have not been relaxed. But he reached political maturity under Brezhnev, when the Party came to recognise the complexity of the issues it was dealing with, sought specialist advice and strove for solutions that satisfied all interests. Gorbachev has thrived in this atmosphere (paragraph 30). Gorbachev himself probably holds progressive views on economic management, but would have no interest in a radical dilution of Party control. If he were to become the Soviet leader he would be subject to the same constraints as his predecessors, though his youth would of itself affect the style of leadership. On external affairs he has so far reflected the Party line (paragraph 31).

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M S GORBACHEV - A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I Early years; 1931-1949

1. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev was born into a peasant family on 2 March 1931 in the village of Privolnoe in the Krasnogvardeisky district of Stavropol region. This is an important grain growing and sheep rearing area of the Russian Republic (RSFSR) in the North Caucasus. Gorbachev's birth place is in the north west of the region, bordering the neighbouring Rostov region.

2. Gorbachev was born after the forcible collectivisation of the peasants had largely been achieved, but just before one of its immediate consequences, the great famine of 1932-1934, which affected the north Caucasus as well as the Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

3. Gorbachev presumably went to school in his home village, but there is no record of what happened to him when the region was occupied by the Germans between August 1942 and January 1943.

4. Gorbachev's official biography maintains that he started work in 1946 (at the age of 15) as an assistant to a combine harvester operator in a Motor-tractor Station (these were state run enterprises which from 1930-1958 served as agricultural machinery pools for collective farms and also as centres of political control). But a local biography which was seen by a Western scholar indicates that he did this work only during the summer while he was going to secondary school. This seems more likely, both because work with the combine harvester would be largely confined to the summer months, and because it is difficult to see how without secondary education Gorbachev could have gained even the minimum qualifications to enter Moscow University.

II Moscow University, 1950-1955

5. Gorbachev entered the Law Faculty of Moscow University in 1950 (aged 19) and studied till 1955, the standard length of that course at the time. His elevation from the provinces to the most prestigious seat of learning in the Soviet Union was clearly of decisive importance for his later career, but there is no information about how it was achieved. Gorbachev may have benefited from the reconstitution and expansion of the Soviet higher education system after the war. Stalin's campaign against the Jews from 1949 to his death may also be relevant. A high proportion of Soviet lawyers were Jewish and there may have been a requirement to replace Jewish law students with Russians.

6. Gorbachev was evidently exempted from military service through being at university, though he will probably have done a reserve officer's course concurrently. Moscow University was the starting point of Gorbachev's political career. In 1952, at the age of 21, he joined the Communist Party. According to one Western scholar, Gorbachev was secretary of the Moscow University Komsomol (the Party's youth wing) from 1954 to 1955 (it is normal for leading Komsomol officials to be Party members).

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III Komsomol Work in Stavropol, 1956-1962

7. It was evidently Gorbachev's Komsomol and Party credentials, rather than his degree in law, which determined his next steps, and indeed his whole subsequent career. From 1956 to 1962 he was a Komsomol official in his home region of Stavropol. He was First Secretary of the Stavropol Town Committee (Gorkom) from 1956 to 1958. He then moved upwards into the Regional Committee (Kraikom) of the Komsomol, where between 1958 and 1962 he was successively: Deputy Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, Second and then First Secretary of the Kraikom Komsomol organisation. In 1961, as a Komsomol representative, he was a voting delegate to the 22nd Party Congress, a historic occasion, when it was decided to remove Stalin's body from the Mausoleum, following a further demunciation of the former dictator by Khrushchev.

IV. Party Work in Stavropol, 1962-1970

8. The start of Gorbachev's career as a Party official coincided with the last 2½ years of Khrushchev's regime, with its constant administrative reorganisations, which seem to have worked in Gorbachev's favour. In the spring of 1962 Khrushchev reorganised the administration of agriculture with the creation of "Territorial-Production Administrations", bodies which covered several districts and administered collective and state farms. This reorganisation gave Gorbachev his first Party post as Party Organiser of the Stavropol Territorial-Production Kolkhoz/Sovkhoz Administration. The end of that same year saw another reorganisation: the splitting of the Party into separate industrial and agricultural structures. This meant that there were now 2 Stavropol regional party organisations, one for industry and one for agriculture. As a result of the reorganisation, in December 1962, Gorbachev was advanced to the politically sensitive post of Head of the Department of Party Organs of the Stavropol Regional Party Committee (Kraikom). (This was presumably the agricultural Kraikom, which in Stavropol was the more important.) In this post, under the supervision of the second secretary of Stavropol Kraikom, Gorbachev will have been in charge of all the relevant party organisational matters and appointments throughout the region. Gorbachev's nomination for such a sensitive post could only have been made with the full approval, if not at the instigation of the then first secretary of the Kraikom, F D Kulakov (see paragraph 10 below). He remained in this job until September 1966 and thus will have been in charge of implementing in the Stavropol region the post-Khrushchev leadership's decision in November 1964 to restore a unitary party structure.

9. During these years Gorbachev was doing a correspondence course at the Stavropol Agricultural Institute, from which he graduated in 1967. The Party has always encouraged its officials to further their education. The purpose of Gorbachev's further qualification - in academic terms worth much less than his degree from Moscow University - will have been to enhance his authority as a Party official in a largely agricultural region.

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10. Between 1966 and 1978 Gorbachev rose steadily as a local party official, mirroring his rise a decade earlier as a Komsomol official. From 1966 to 1968 he was First Secretary of Stavropol Town Party Committee (Gorkom), from August 1968 to April 1970 he was Second Secretary of the Stavropol Regional Party Committee (Kraikom) and from 1970 to 1978 First Secretary of the Stavropol Kraikom. While it is impossible to say whether his connections played a greater part in this rise than his talent, it is undoubtedly relevant that his former superior, Kulakov (see paragraph 8 above), was transferred to Moscow and promoted in late 1964 after the fall of Khrushchev first to Head of the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee and then to Central Committee Secretary for Agriculture, from which position he could undoubtedly influence appointments in his former region.

11. It is also relevant that Kulakov's replacement as First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom was L N Efremov, a politician on a downward trend. He had been a Candidate Member of the Politburo under Khrushchev, but was shunted aside to Stavropol by the new leadership and lost his Politburo status in 1966. Thus Gorbachev as Second Secretary from 1968 was serving under someone who was politically doomed and whom he may already have been earmarked to succeed.

12. The timing of Gorbachev's promotion to First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom in April 1970, after less than 2 years as Second Secretary and at the early age of 39, may have been dictated by the approach of the elections to the Supreme Soviet in June 1970 and the 24th Party Congress in April 1971 and the leadership's wish to deprive Efremov of his status as a Deputy to the Supreme Soviet and full member of the Central Committee, to which he had the unspoken right as Party leader of an important region. At all events, it was Gorbachev who acquired this status (see paragraph 15 below).

V First Secretary of Stavropol Kraikom, 1970-1978

13. Gorbachev thus became a significant political figure at local and national level. He was now one of the regional Party secretaries who are the backbone of the Party's control over the country as a whole. His own region of Stavropol ranks high in importance because of its agricultural potential. As a Krai it also ranks in status above most other regions (oblasts) because it includes within its borders one of the regions set aside for national minorities within the Russian Republic - the Karachaevo-Cherkesskaya Autonomous Oblast.

14. As the Party boss of a major agricultural area Gorbachev was in a position to put his weight behind various agricultural schemes which had proved successful in his own region. In 1976 he advocated the "link" system of farming (whereby small teams are allocated specific areas of farmland to cultivate round the year and paid by results), which has now won Politburo approval (see paragraph 21 below). He also supported the "Ipatovo method" of harvesting by highly mechanised harvesting columns complete with their own

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transport, spare parts, canteens etc, which toured the farms completing the full harvesting and reploughing process in a single operation. Gorbachev acknowledged in a Pravda article in 1978 that this Ipatovo method (named after the district where it was evolved, which is also Gorbachev's Supreme Soviet constituency) cut across the link system and was not everywhere greeted with enthusiasm. It nonetheless met the Party's requirement for more intensive and mechanised cultivation and was recommended by a Central Committee decree and by a personal message from Brezhnev for wider application. As with so many similar initiatives, whatever its intrinsic local merits, its wider and frequently thoughtless application has led to the Ipatovo method being somewhat discredited.

15. Gorbachev's debut as a national figure came with his election in June 1970 as a Deputy to the Council of the Union of the USSR Supreme Soviet. In 1970 he was also elected a member of its Environmental Protection Commission and in 1974 of its Youth Affairs Commission. More importantly, he was elected to full membership of the Central Committee of the CPSU at the 24th Party Congress in April 1971. This did not in itself confer any significant central decision making role on Gorbachev (there were 240 other full Central Committee members), but gave him status in the Party. It also gave him the opportunity to travel abroad as a leading Party representative. His first recorded trip abroad had been as a member of a Party delegation to Czechoslovakia in November 1969 to discuss youth work (a difficult assignment in the atmosphere following the Soviet invasion). As a member of the Central Committee he began to lead Party delegations: to Brussels in 1972, the FRG in 1975 and France in 1976.

VI To Moscow as Central Committee Secretary, 1978

16. In July 1978 Kulakov, by then a Full Member of the Politburo, died suddenly, aged 60. Gorbachev was one of the speakers at his funeral. At the next routine Party Plenum on 28 November 1978 Gorbachev (then 47) was elected a Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU. (Though, as is customary, his responsibilities were not disclosed, it was clear that he was to supervise agriculture in place of Kulakov.)

17. There was a large element of luck for Gorbachev in this crucial promotion. Had Kulakov lived, Gorbachev might well have stayed on in Stavropol until at least Brezhnev's death, since movement of Party officials was becoming more and more sluggish. The choice of Gorbachev was probably dictated partly by his connections with the top leadership and partly by his ability. Gorbachev's connections will have been enhanced by having his former chief, Kulakov, in the centre, but the latter could obviously not have contributed directly to his promotion to Secretary. Gorbachev also had an unusual advantage in that his region includes the famous spas of Kislovodsk and Pyatigorsk to which members of the leadership (Andropov regularly) repaired. Gorbachev will undoubtedly have seen to their comforts and visited them there. Gorbachev may also have had the backing of Suslov, who had been first secretary of the Stavropol

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Kraikom during the war and whose continuing interest in Stavropol was signalled by his representing the Politburo at the 100th anniversary celebrations of the town of Stavropol in May 1978. Finally, Gorbachev seems to have enjoyed Brezhnev's confidence, and this confidence was probably based to a large extent on Brezhnev's assessment of Gorbachev's ability, since it was not in Brezhnev's interest to choose anyone less than competent for the difficult post of agricultural Secretary. There were other regional Party Secretaries closer to Brezhnev who could have been chosen. Brezhnev showed particular warmth when presenting Gorbachev with an award in December 1978 for "working in one of the main granaries in the country, Stavropol". Brezhnev hoped that "in his new, responsible post of Central Committee Secretary, Mikhail Sergeevich will display his characteristic qualities of initiative and selflessness".

18. Gorbachev inherited Kulakov's personal aide, A P Lushchikov (born 1917) a former Deputy Head of the Agriculture Department of the Central Committee, who remains with him to this day.

VII Rise in the leadership under Brezhnev and Andropov, 1978-1984

19. At 47, Gorbachev was not exceptionally young to be elected a Central Committee Secretary. Katushev had been made a Secretary in 1968 at the age of 41, Dolgikh in 1972 aged 48 and Ryabov in 1976 aged 44. But Katushev lost his place on the Secretariat after 9 years and Ryabov after 3, while Dolgikh spent 10 years as a junior Secretary before being promoted to candidate membership of the Politburo in 1982, where he remains. Gorbachev, by contrast, rose exceptionally quickly in the Party hierarchy. He was made a Candidate Member of the Politburo in November 1979, one year after becoming a Secretary, and a full member a year later in October 1980. He thus became one of the select group of Party Secretaries who are also members of the Party's top decision making body, the Politburo, and thus at the apex of the power structure of the Soviet Union.

20. Gorbachev's initial rise was not accompanied by any broadening of his responsibilities and must be attributed to his general acceptability to the rest of the Politburo and in particular to Brezhnev's desire to fill the gap in the Politburo left by Kulakov's death with a competent lieutenant overseeing the ever difficult agricultural sphere. This much can be deduced from Brezhnev's commendation of Gorbachev when presenting him in March 1981 with the Order of Lenin which he had (routinely) been awarded on his 50th birthday:

"This is an energetic and go-ahead man, who knows the economy. But the sector of the Party's management entrusted to him by the Politburo does indeed demand great energy, initiative and the search for effective solutions. I am talking about agriculture, the agro-industrial complex as a whole."

21. The nature and effect of Gorbachev's contribution to Soviet agricultural policy (and to other political matters) is hard to

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discern. Under Brezhnev and since, all initiatives have been ascribed to the General Secretary and little room has been left for the public display of the political talents of other leaders. Gorbachev will undoubtedly have played a large part in formulating the major agricultural policy document of Brezhnev's latter years, the Food Programme, adopted in May 1982, but he is unlikely to have been equally involved in all aspects of this wide-ranging programme. In publicising the programme, he said little about the reorganisation of agriculture at the local level into agro-industrial associations (RAPO's), the organisation of which may have been left to Chernenko, then Brezhnev's Party Secretary in charge of Party and government administration. Gorbachev does seem to be an advocate of the "link", or "collective contract" system, as it is now called, which has always met with some reservation in Party circles because of the spectre of peasant private enterprise which it raises. It may be significant that the system was not endorsed at the May 1982 Plenum, but only by the Politburo after Brezhnev's death, and that it was Gorbachev who explained its advantages authoritatively and cogently at a provincial conference in March 1983. The fact that Gorbachev cannot be firmly identified with any particular agricultural (or other policy) is probably to his advantage, however. He will still be among the best known of the Party Secretaries in the country at large through his fairly frequent travels round the country's agricultural areas.

22. As Gorbachev has risen in the Party, so he has accumulated status in the Supreme Soviet. Having served as a member of 2 Commissions (Environmental Protection and Youth), he was made Chairman of the Legislative Proposals Commission in 1979 (the only formal use that has been made of his legal training) and of the Foreign Affairs Commission in 1984 (see paragraph 26 below for the political significance of this move). In 1980, in common with the other Politburo members, he was also elected a Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR for another, but less successful agricultural region, the Altai Krai in Southern Siberia.

23. Thanks to the death and retirement of his seniors, Gorbachev has risen steadily up the ranks of the Party Secretaries. From the beginning of 1982, with the successive departure of Suslov and Brezhnev through death, and Kirilenko through retirement, Gorbachev's position improved, although in May 1982 Andropov was brought in from the KGB and placed ahead of the other senior Secretaries (probably because of his having served in the Secretariat earlier). When Andropov took over as General Secretary in November 1982 Gorbachev was third in line after Chernenko. The latter was absent for much of the Summer of 1983, and though a new secretary (Romanov) was brought in in June, Gorbachev's status and the breadth of his responsibilities increased correspondingly. There were indications that he had taken on broader economic responsibilities and had some role in supervising Party organisation. Thus, whether or not stories that he enjoyed the particular confidence of the ailing Andropov are true, much of the burden of running the Party's affairs must have fallen on Gorbachev in the summer of 1983.

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24. As a Senior Party Secretary, Gorbachev represented the CPSU at the Mongolian and Vietnamese Party Congresses in 1981 and 1982, at the Portuguese Communist Party Congress in 1983 and at the Italian Communist leader Berlinguer's funeral in 1984 (after which Gorbachev was received by President Pertini). More importantly, in May 1983 he visited Canada at the head of a Supreme Soviet delegation, his first visit to the West as a representative of the Soviet State, rather than Party. He had talks with Prime Minister Trudeau and toured Canadian agricultural enterprises, impressing his hosts with his detailed knowledge of the subject. He also appeared before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence of the Canadian House of Commons, at which he replied to questions, some hostile, while a verbatim record was taken. For a Soviet politician this is an unusual ordeal, and for Gorbachev to have agreed to submit to it reflects not only his own self-confidence but his knowledge of having the confidence of his Politburo colleagues.

VIII Under Chernenko as General Secretary, 1984

25. Andropov died in February in 1984, and Chernenko, the next in line of the Party Secretaries, succeeded him as General Secretary. This was a safe and, in terms of precedence and protocol, an uncontroversial choice. Nonetheless, it looked very much like the "old guard" choosing one of their own generation, an impression strengthened by the fact that Chernenko was proposed for the office by Prime Minister Tikhonov and not, as had been the case in the previous succession, by the next most senior Party Secretary, who on this occasion would have been Gorbachev. There were rumours of a disputed succession and indications of some dismay in Party circles that another elderly General Secretary had been chosen in preference to Gorbachev. The Plenum proceedings published in booklet form a few days later contained Gorbachev's previously unpublished speech closing the Plenum, in which he had duly supported the choice of Chernenko; this was presumably done to dispel such rumours within the Party.

26. It is in fact unlikely that Gorbachev would have squandered his accumulated political capital by mounting a premature challenge to Chernenko, and his subsequent rise indicates that he retains the confidence of the rest of the leadership. When Chernenko was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in April 1984 and thus relinquished his chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Council of the Union of the Supreme Soviet, Gorbachev was elected in his place. This post, which of itself accords Gorbachev status, not power, indicates that he has taken over the responsibility in the Party Secretariat for the broad area of ideology and foreign policy, particularly towards with the "Socialist" countries, exercised by Chernenko, Andropov and Suslov before him. (The fact that in the 2 previous successions this position has been the stepping stone to the General Secretaryship does not of itself provide any guarantee for the next succession.) In addition, Gorbachev has maintained his supervision of agriculture; of general economic questions (he is said to be Chairman of the Politburo Commission tasked with working out a plan for the improvement of the whole economic mechanism); and of Party

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organisation. This is an exceptionally broad range of responsibilities, which is partly dictated by there being only 2 senior Party Secretaries, Gorbachev and Romanov, apart from the General Secretary himself.

27. In the Party Secretariat Gorbachev ranks immediately below Chernenko and is therefore the natural choice as successor when Chernenko dies, if his age (at 53 he is still the youngest member of the Politburo) is not held against him. In the hierarchy of the Politburo as a whole he still ranks below the "old guard" of Prime Minister Tikhonov, Foreign Minister Gromyko and Defence Minister Ustinov. But none of these is a likely successor to Chernenko.

IX Personality, Family

28. Gorbachev is stocky and bald, with a prominent birthmark on his head, which is airbrushed out of his official photographs. He is not known to speak any foreign language. He has impressed his Western interlocutors with his intelligence and his urbanity. As with all the Soviet leadership, little has been revealed about Gorbachev's private life. His wife, however, was well to the fore at the Women's Day reception in March 1984, where she emerged as well dressed to the point of elegance, bejewelled and altogether unlike the Soviet stereotype. She is just under a year younger than her husband. They are thought to have a daughter and granddaughter.

X. Conclusions

29. In the Soviet Union a successful Party career is the prerequisite for the highest political office. Gorbachev has so far travelled this road extremely successfully. He has spent all his working life as a Komsomol and Party official. He rose steadily through the ranks as a local official to become an important regional First Party Secretary. He was transferred to Moscow as a Central Committee Secretary and he achieved early elevation to the Politburo. The relative narrowness of his experience is probably not a handicap. Since the upheavals of the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, and the war, Party officials have been moved around less energetically, and in future there will be few aspiring leaders who have had the varied experience of earlier generations. Nor is Gorbachev's close association with agriculture necessarily to his disadvantage, despite its continuing problems. In Party terms it is more important that Gorbachev has had broad experience as a Party manager at various levels. He has, however, no direct experience of military affairs, and his role as overlord of sector which absorbs a significant slice of capital investment would not seem to make him a natural ally of the military.

30. Much has been made of Gorbachev as a leader of the new generation. He became the first Politburo member who was not old enough to fight in the war and had not held political office under Stalin, and the first in recent history to have had a university degree rather than a technical education. This generational gap should not be exaggerated. If too young to fight in the war,

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Gorbachev was certainly directly affected by it. If he did not hold political office under Stalin, his first political steps were taken in the last and most obscurantist years of Stalin. Most significantly, Gorbachev has made his entire career in the Party apparatus, whose tradition of strict discipline and suspicion of "individualism" has not been relaxed with the years. This said, Gorbachev does represent a new type among Soviet politicians. He reached political maturity in the Brezhnev years when, in contrast to the Stalin and Khrushchev years, the Party leadership recognised the complexity of the domestic and foreign issues it was dealing with, sought and listened to specialist advice and attempted to come up with solutions that as nearly as possible satisfied all the interests involved. Gorbachev has thrived in this atmosphere, where his intellectual capacity seems to have stood him in good stead. Moreover, after Brezhnev's death, the requirement for a Soviet leader to surround himself with his own coterie seems to have declined somewhat, again to the benefit of Gorbachev, who seems to have won broad respect in the Party for his ability. It may be a combination of these factors that has allowed Gorbachev to dispense with the hectoring manner characteristic of Soviet Party officials, particularly in the regions (and typified by his rival, Romanov).

31. It remains hard to discern whether Gorbachev has any far reaching political ideas which he would like to put into practice if he became Party leader. There is little doubt that in Western terms his views on the economy and agriculture tend towards the "progressive", ie more stress on economic stimuli and less on exhortation and campaigning. But this does not make him a radical. He would have no interest in a dilution of Party control over all spheres of Soviet life, and it seems almost inconceivable that he could be brought to concede, for example, that the forcible collectivisation of the peasants, which most Western observers consider still to be at the root of Soviet agricultural problems, was a mistake. If he were to become the Soviet leader he would be subject to the same constraints as his predecessors, at least for a number of years. But his youth and energy would be bound to affect his style of leadership and might do something to revivify the Party apparatus at all levels. As regards the Soviet Union's external policy, there is little evidence of his doing other than reflect the general Party line. Despite his newly acquired status as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Council of the Union he has not hitherto been any more accessible to Western interlocutors in Moscow or particularly forthcoming when approached.

Soviet Section
Research Department
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