

Centre for Policy Studies

8 Wilfred Street · London SW1E 6PL · Telephone 01-828 1176 Cables: Centrepol London

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November 22, 1982

Prime Minister

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I asked three prominent students of the Soviet Union to give their instantaneous reactions to Andropov's succession. Here are the views of

- (a) Professor Leonard Schapiro;
- (b) Dr. Michael Kaser, who is a student of Soviet economics at Oxford; and
- (c) Dr. Iain Elliot, editor of Soviet Analyst.

Of these three, Michael Kaser's note is interesting since it is the view of someone who has always seemed to me to be a dove as far as the Soviet Union is concerned: you might find the notes on Albania ~~of Afghanistan~~ at the end of his paper particularly interesting.

at X

Hugh Thomas

LORD THOMAS

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Policy under Andropov

We have no experience to draw on which enables us to forecast the kind of foreign policy which Andropov is likely to pursue. But we can, at all events, make an approximate estimate by looking at policy which can be associated with him in two other areas: relations with countries of the Soviet bloc; and dealing with dissent of all kinds at home.

As Ambassador to Hungary during the period which included the year of the rising, 1956, he played a leading, and savage, rôle in the putting down of the revolt, and in exacting reprisals after it. He must at least have been involved in the treachery which led to the murders of Maleter and Imre Nagy. It was presumably in recognition of these services that he was put in charge thereafter of the department of the Central Committee which deals with relations with bloc countries.

Although the lines of policy would have been laid down by the General Secretary, Andropov may be presumed to have had an influence on it. Here his own style may possibly be discernible: tolerance of deviations from orthodoxy, in the interests of expediency, provided certain essentials are safeguarded. These essentials are: acceptance^{acknowledgment} of Soviet overlordship, and nominal supremacy of the communist party. In Hungary, this has meant acceptance of some kind of rudimentary market economy and relaxation in intellectual constraints. In Romania, where the internal system is dogmatic and rigid, some eccentricity in foreign relations and within the Warsaw Pact has been tolerated. In Poland, long before the emergence of Solidarity, considerable latitude was accepted in Church-State relations, in samizdat activity and in agriculture, so long as party and Soviet supremacy nominally prevailed.

If, as seems most probable, Andropov, by now Chairman of the KGB, was consulted after August 1980, the degree of Soviet tolerance of erosion of the communist party and of the emergence of a real, not fake, proletarian movement surprised most observers. The solution adopted in December 1981 was highly ingenious - it left in doubt the degree of Soviet participation and lent a semblance of plausibility to the theories current at the time that martial law was a solution devised by a patriotic Polish general as a method of keeping out the Soviet army. It is difficult to believe that all this relatively subtle policy was not related to a strong Soviet desire to preserve intact the main benefits of 'détente', which are of the greatest importance to the Soviet economy - such as technology, credits and grain.

The invasion of Afghanistan, which seems to have been undertaken only after the failure of a planned KGB take-over, may well fall into the same category of loys inspired by Andropov, originally intended to cause minimum reaction abroad.

In dealing with dissent at home, Andropov, as Chairman of the KGB since 1967, has shown the same combination of subtlety and savagery - resorting to the latter when the former no longer served its purpose. It was under Andropov that enforced exile abroad for Jews and internal critics of the regime was devised. The KGB also adopted a policy towards dissidents of starting off with persuasion and argument - it is remarkable that a few successful recantations were induced, so far as is known without the use of torture. Subtle treatment has been particularly apparent in the case of critics of the régime who enjoy world renown - Solzhenitsyn and Sahkarov. Again, due regard for Western reaction can be supposed to have played a part in the methods by which it was attempted to silence these critics' voices inside Russia. At the same time, the overall policy

has been more severe since the advent of Andropov, especially with dissidents who are not well known outside the USSR.

It therefore seems a fair inference that in his foreign relations Andropov will show a good deal more ingenuity and subtlety than his predecessor. It is very improbable that the main aims and lines of foreign policy will change - they have been very consistent under different leaders, and have only varied with the relative strength of East and West, and with the degree of resistance^{ay} which the West at any time seemed ready to offer. But we can expect ingenuity in the methods of approach; and a great regard for what are considered to be essentials, combined with tolerance of inessentials. It would also seem reasonable to expect that Andropov's KGB experience will influence his policy. This could mean an increase in covert means of attack - such as subversion and disinformation. One can also, in all probability, anticipate an increase in the propaganda side of policy, in an endeavour to exploit still further a European^{anti-nuclear} climate of opinion favourable to Soviet policy. The main burden of this work falls on the International Department of the Communist Central Committee, which Andropov will now, as General Secretary, control. The KGB has also been detected playing a rôle in some peace movements - in Denmark, for example - and one can expect this function of Andropov's former service to be maintained, or expanded. Above all, if the reasoning above is at all near the truth, the West can expect Andropov to show regard for Western reaction, especially in the economic field, to his policy. This may provide the West with opportunities for leverage.

Leonard Schapiro
Leonard Schapiro

The economic perceptions of the new Soviet leader

1. What can be learnt from Andropov's experience?

Andropov's direct experience of economic management is minimal. A Komsomol official between graduating from an inland waterways technicum in 1936 and 1944, he had brief experience as second Party secretary in the town of Petrozavodsk and then Karelia: holders of such posts usually cover industry, but this is not always so, and the Finno-Karelian SSR in 1947-51 had precious little industry. His career has a different uniting element - the suppression of dissidence. Sent to Karelia in 1940 (then for the Komsomol), when it had (after the 'Winter War') just taken territory from Finland, his central party work 1951-53 was on relations with subservient parties in eastern Europe, a duty which remained with him as Chargé and Ambassador in Budapest (1953-57) and as head of the relevant department in the Central Committee (1957-67); finally, his precisely 15 years as Chairman of the KGB Committee of State Security (until in May 1982 he became a Secretary of the Central Committee) was crowned with notable success against political dissent. None of his history would suggest that he would favour such centrifugal policies as economic liberalization at home and economic independence for Comecon. But exactly half of his post-Komsomol career (19 out of 38 years) has been spent in government posts, the other half in the party apparatus. Moreover, he is on record recently as stressing the 'educative' role of the party, eschewing claims for a 'directive' role (that keynote speech on Lenin's Birthday 22 April was significant in that he was chosen to give it before he was elected CC Secretary). Chernenko, who from May (? April) had to share the chairmanship of the Party Secretariat in Brezhnev's many indispositions, has taken an opposite stance to Andropov - urging party control and managerial and agricultural reform (eclipsing Gorbachev on the latter topic at the May CC Plenum, which approved the major 'Food Programme').

The party and government statement issued upon Brezhnev's death reiterated the late leader's last public words, that 'any potential aggressor should know that we will deal him a crushing retaliatory blow', and could not

have appeared without Andropov's assent. He cultivated (more than did Chernenko) the Soviet military leadership, must have had close liaison with the armed forces while chairman of the KGB, and (according to Radio Liberty Research, Munich) has the rank of an Army General. This indicates that Andropov is unlikely to transfer public resources from military to civilian appropriations, but he must (like any new leader, but benefiting from his reportedly close connections with Ustinov, Minister of Defence, whose career was previously in defence industry), try to get some of the cost-efficiency techniques and high-quality personnel out of defence into ordinary industry. The channels for osmosis are the Defence Council and the Military-Industrial Commission: Brezhnev's chairmanship of the former was noted in his official obituary and almost certainly Andropov will also preside over it.

Because Andropov is as much a state bureaucrat as a party apparatchik, he must give high priority to modernizing economic administration. Brezhnev realized how long he had left the economic mechanism to rust: reforms he was content to allow Kosygin (then his near-equal partner) to promote in 1965 were largely withdrawn after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; the 1979 'mini-reform' strengthened central control and monitoring. Last November Brezhnev declared to the CC that a Plenum devoted to economic organization would have to be held. He never held it, but it is on the agenda for Andropov.

Andropov's responsibilities for East European parties (of which, after Suslov's death in January, he took as much as Chernenko would concede) have made him acutely aware of their economic difficulties. Not counting his diplomatic service, he is known to have made two visits to the GDR, three to Czechoslovakia, four to Hungary and Romania, and five to Bulgaria. Unpublicized journeys may have been more numerous (he was in Hungary this July and doubtless is better briefed on Hungary than any other member of the Politburo). The admiration in the Soviet Press for the Hungarian economic mechanism (as revised in 1980) in the short period Andropov was CC Secretary might reflect his interest. Bulgaria, too, has had since 1981 a mechanism owing more to

pricing than to 'command'. Something of each could be applicable to Poland if Polish workers could politically be reconciled to their government: it could well have been Andropov who issued the order to release Walesa and who better an authority on 'managing' dissent without provoking riots than Andropov?

2. What are the key economic problems with which Andropov must deal?

(a) Comecon

Comecon is a drain on Soviet resources and will be dealt with before Andropov turns to the domestic economy; a contributory reason is that the party leaders in the economically weak Comecon states (Cuba, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Poland, and Vietnam) are easier to deal with than his party colleagues at home. Ceausescu heads a weak state (the economy and administration are deteriorating into a sheer chaos which precludes normal activity - witness the frequent ministerial changes and the food queues) and is not flexible to Soviet counsel. Andropov must have thought of a KGB-inspired ouster of Ceausescu while the latter is in Moscow at Brezhnev's funeral.

Whereas the USSR promised a 20% increase in Soviet energy exports in 1981-85 (compared with 1976-80) at Comecon's 1981 Session (Sofia, July), it has in 1982 cut oil deliveries. Comecon's 1982 Session (Budapest, June) was dominated by the need economically to help Poland, Cuba and Vietnam (Mongolia was mentioned - Andropov has been there four times - but 'aid' to Mongolia is profitable capital investment in raw materials). The need to provide unrequited exports to the weaker members of Comecon falls mostly on the USSR (\$7 bn in 1981 but only \$0.5 bn in the first half of 1982) and is undermining the Sofia resolutions on Comecon integration (the 'Agreed Plan for Multilateral Integration Measures for 1981 to 1985'). The Comecon Secretariat writes about it with numerous concrete details (see its journal, January and June 1982 issues), but Hungary continues to point out that a 'closed' integration would be less efficient (partly because of loss of Western technology) than a more

'open' system (Bulgaria probably agrees but is tied more intimately to the USSR).

(b) The home economy

As indicated by his experience, Andropov may be prepared eventually to launch into an industrial reform. Two ways are in the air which do not stimulate 'managerial liberalism': (i) a combination of regional local authorities with subdivisions of the nationwide associations of state industry (the 'NEP solution'); and (ii) the 'military customer' solution of allowing a civilian client to inspect (in the producing plant) and to reject products just as Ministry of Defence inspectors can.

He will have to do something about agriculture and it is not too far-fetched to recall that on Stalin's death the only Politburo member who (allegedly) proposed decollectivization was Beria, Andropov's more brutal predecessor. More realistically, Chernenko seems to have crowded out Gorbachev (ostensibly the CC Secretary in charge of agriculture) at the May CC Plenum (which enunciated the 'Food Programme' and regional 'agro-industrial complexes'). Chernenko's loss of the General Secretaryship could make Gorbachev an ally of Andropov in effecting more fundamental change in Soviet farming. Here the Hungarian agrarian success is certainly instructive to Andropov.

Andropov, as he proceeds slowly along new paths for the non-farm sectors, may well consider some features of recent East European institutional change - the kombinat reform in the GDR (one constituent of an 'NEP solution', but only a part), the 'Ler reforms' of better financial linkage between enterprises in Czechoslovakia and the banks as intermediaries for a surrogate capital market as in Hungary.

After four bad harvests and decelerating industrial growth (a rise of only 2.7% in the first 9 months of 1982 against a full-year plan of 4.7%), something has to be done. A former head of the KGB does not want discontent fanned by food queues (and by public envy of officials and others who have access to 'closed shops') to create anti-government unrest (political dissidents are bad enough on their own). Nor does he want a flourishing 'second economy' which begets not only crime but incomes and ways of life over which the

government has no control.

It is the high cost-effectiveness of military industry, mentioned above, which limits the military burden - Andropov is no more likely than Brezhnev to judge it in terms of the Pentagon's GNP. The shift of resources that Andropov might prefer is towards personal consumption.

(c) East-West relations

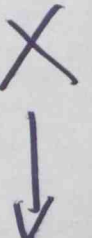
The world recession, the relatively low prices for Soviet export specialities such as gold and oil, and difficult access to Western markets for both sale and purchase (the US embargo has been lifted but CoCom control is to be tightened and strengthened) do not make optimistic reading if Andropov is contemplating more East-West trade. But Eastern Europe's indebtedness to the West (now over \$90 bn gross) makes Soviet-Western trade the only flow capable of significant expansion. Purchase of Western technology remains a fundamental need in the USSR: a closed Comecon integration will be less efficient (as Hungary asserts) because it will not be fortified by Western technology and sales of gas through the now unembargoed pipeline will earn some of the hard currency to pay for it.

(d) Non-Comecon socialist countries

An opening up with China is essentially dependent on political relations, but there is little to be gained thereby for the Soviet economy (except a reduction of the cost of keeping Mongolia in the Soviet orbit). Andropov is the only Politburo member to have visited China.

There is nothing yet in Andropov's record to judge how he will react to Third World countries. With the cost of keeping Comecon afloat, he is unlikely to woo them with aid as Khrushchev did, but he inherits commitments in Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, all in his 'camp', and to India (Mrs Gandhi's September visit).

One country where Andropov, as recent head of the KGB, may well take offensive action is Albania. Andropov may have an especial interest in Albania for that country was at its closest to the USSR when he was first working under Otto Kuusinen in the CC apparatus on the Cominform parties



(1951-53) - Kuusinen probably brought him into the department, having seen Andropov's good work in Karelo-Finland. It was while Andropov was head of that department - then for fraternal parties (1957-67) - that Albania broke from the Soviet alliance and joined China (1960-61). Andropov must feel a keen anxiety to 'regain' Albania. The present could not be more opportune: the evidence is that Enver Hoxha is paranoiac in his insecurity. Having rid himself of the two others who previously had been the ruling triumvirate (Rita Marko in 1980 and Mehmet Sheku last year) who had aided him to defeat the Theodhosi group, he now accuses Shehu of having been a 'British spy'. The recent invasion could have been a test of the defences by pro-Moscow communists as much as by the 'royalist bandit' to whom Hoxha attributed it. Economic advantage is to be found in Albania's oil - it would supplement supplies to Comecon, cut by 10% this year despite the promise of increase; its nickel (for which the West German Salzgitter is to put up a DM 60 mn extraction plant) and chrome are highly valuable even in depressed markets; its agriculture could supply early vegetables and citrus fruits to Comecon (as Khrushchev, possibly accompanied by Andropov, declared on his only visit to Tirana).

(e) Epilogue

If the immediately foregoing suggests 'adventurousness' it is because Andropov would look on Albania much as Brezhnev looked on Afghanistan. For other areas Andropov's KGB experience in 'divide and rule' would be more to the fore, both in keeping East Europe in check and in fostering division within NATO. President Reagan has tried to heal the division by lifting the pipeline embargo but it will be a prime task of Andropov to keep the split at least a little open.

Michael Kaser

1) Mrs Thatcher has already shown an excellent grasp of the realities of the change of leadership in her latest speeches. It is the USSR, not the West, which is in breach of international agreements, and it is Andropov who must first give solid evidence of a shift in Soviet policy.

2) With a few exceptions (e.g. Panorama, 15 November 1982) media commentary on the personality of the new leader has been weak and dangerously misleading. There is no evidence that Andropov is a liberal even in Soviet terms. He was a candidate member of the Politburo from June 1967 to April 1973 when he became a full member, and is therefore firmly involved in the expansionist and repressive policies of the Brezhnev regime. He would not have survived at the top to become General Secretary had he shown any misgivings about Brezhnev's foreign or domestic policies. The "liberal intellectual" image is pure KGB disinformation. His role in the suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and functions as head of the KGB (1967-82) speak for themselves.

New General Secretaries quickly set about strengthening their individual power bases by replacing top officials with their own men; Andropov's choices are liable to be men from the same mould as the new KGB chief, Vitaly Fedorchuk, who had presided over particularly brutal KGB repressions in the Ukraine.

3) A new leader does not mean a change of programme, since the same party with the same strategic aims remains in power. It makes sense for Andropov to make gestures because Western governments are looking for changes and might well be persuaded that different tactics mean different policies. This is not the case. Hints of a possible withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, of a relaxation of martial law in Poland, of a wish for summit meetings with Western leaders, are to be expected and should be welcomed. But no concessions should be made until concrete evidence of Soviet good faith is available. Suggestions that the West

must be the first to make gestures (such as delaying Pershing and Cruise missiles etc.) in order to encourage Andropov to pursue detente are dangerous nonsense. Andropov will pursue detente anyway, since it proved of benefit to the USSR under Brezhnev.

Andropov made official visits to China for both Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Like his predecessor, he wishes to reduce tensions without any major retreat on border issues, Afghanistan and Vietnam. An increase in the present very low level of Sino-Soviet trade seems likely, but China has more to gain in maintaining good relations with the West, and disagreements over Taiwan or Hong Kong can be minimized to keep Peking more friendly to us and hostile to Moscow.

4) Some attempts at economic reform are to be expected but since only a radical shift from state control in agriculture and greater encouragement of initiative in industry will rectify the present severe problems, Andropov's efforts may go no further than the "Kosygin reforms" of 1965. The ideological constraints remain. Like Brezhnev, the new leader must keep the military contented; judging by his policy statements in the last few days and his stance at earlier stages in his career, Andropov is not the man to cut the "defence" budget.

5) As head of the KGB Andropov organized such a thorough suppression of public dissent that he can now afford a few gestures. We may even see Sakharov back in Moscow, the release of a few of the best-known political prisoners (Shcharansky ? Orlov ?) and less use of psychiatric prison hospitals for prominent dissidents. But this will be merely new window dressing for the same old firm. The hardships of Soviet life will mean a growth of discontent and passive opposition ("They pretend to pay us, we pretend to work.")

6) The West has made its position on international issues perfectly clear. If Andropov wishes to follow Soviet custom and blame domestic shortcomings and foreign adventures on his predecessor and expresses willingness to cooperate

on meaningful disarmament talks etc., he should be encouraged, but strictly on the basis of multilateral, balanced reductions. It makes little sense for the West to help Andropov overcome Soviet economic difficulties by supplying technology and credit while so much of the budget goes to the military.

The small active opposition has been driven underground, but continues to operate. Our real friends in the Soviet bloc are the democrats who oppose the excesses of the communist regimes, not Andropov and his colleagues who are working for world communism under Moscow rule. We should encourage the democrats by emphasising such principles as the free flow of people and information, national sovereignty and inviolability of frontiers, which are stipulated in so many international agreements signed by the USSR.