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Prime Minister  
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MR POWELL

c Sir Robin Butler

Soviet Central Committee Plenum

The Prime Minister may like to see  
the attached minute from Martin Nicholson  
in the Assessments Staff.

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PERCY CRADOCK

19 February 1988

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MR HALL

19 February 1988

cc Mr Burke  
Mr Short  
Mr Wordsworth

SOVIET CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM: LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Changes in the leadership as a result of the CPSU Central Committee Plenum on 17-18 February are as follows:

- Full Members of Politburo: no change.

- Candidate Members of Politburo:

- Eltsin dropped.

- Yu D Maslyukov (50), who recently took over from Talyzin as Chairman of Gosplan, promoted to Candidate Member. (Talyzin, now Chairman of the Bureau of the Council of Ministers for Social Development, retains his candidate membership.)

- G P Razumovsky (52), currently Head of the Central Committee Department for Organisational Party Work and junior Party Secretary for personnel questions, is promoted to Candidate Member, while remaining a CC Secretary.

- Central Committee Secretaries:

- O D Baklanov (55), hitherto Minister of General Machine Building (ie ballistic missiles), is transferred to become a Central Committee Secretary.

2. Comment. The dropping of Eltsin was a foregone conclusion. Maslyukov's promotion was expected, but Talyzin's retention of his Politburo status in his new job (social

affairs, including employment) is no surprise, given the importance the leadership now ascribe to this area. Baklanov comes out of the blue. While his precise role as a Central Committee Secretary will not become clear until he has been in the job for some months, we can be fairly certain that he will take over Party supervision of the defence industries from Zaikov, who has recently been combining this with his new Moscow job. (Zaikov, however, has apparently retained his post as Party Secretary. It is not clear whether he will retain some residual supervision of industry or whether his dual function is designed to tie Moscow more closely to the Party Secretariat - Eltsin had complained of lack of support from the Secretariat.)

3. It is likewise not yet clear whether Razumovsky will broaden or change his responsibilities on promotion. He may be being groomed to replace Ligachev (to whom he currently reports on personnel questions) in due course, or possibly Chebrikov, Chairman of the KGB. While not a Gorbachev protégé in the narrow sense, Razumovsky, from what we know of him, can be expected to support Gorbachev fairly consistently.

4. Shcherbitsky soldiers on. His award of an Order of Lenin on the opening day of the Plenum means nothing more than that it was his 70th Birthday. Under Brezhnev he would have got a higher award, but the currency is being generally revalued. He remains the only Party leader of a Republic in the leadership. It is slightly surprising that he has not been joined by the Belorussian Party leader, who traditionally has a place as Candidate Member (and the Belorussians are in good odour). This may have something to do with the Central Asians, who also traditionally have one or two places in the leadership, but are currently in the dog house. The leadership may want to avoid looking unduly Slav.

5. Conclusions. Overall, a tidying up Plenum. But the advancement of Razumovsky is a good chess move. He is now well placed to take over a senior leadership job. Maslyukov could be an eventual replacement for Prime Minister Ryzhkov. People in their early fifties are moving up; although Gorbachev remains the youngest Full Member of the Politburo, there are now three members of the leadership younger than he is.

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