

# Soviet Domestic Politics and Collapse of the Outer Empire, 1989

FREDO ARIAS-KING

In this article, I explore the role of domestic politics in precluding the intervention of the Soviet army in Eastern Europe in fall 1989. A close look at the USSR's domestic political situation as early as summer 1989 suggests that there was little, if any, intention on the part of the legislators, government, or even the Communist Party to prop up the fast-disintegrating Communist regimes in the East bloc with force. Rather, there is substantial evidence that a revolution in Eastern Europe would be welcomed in Moscow. To my knowledge, this angle has not been examined in the scholarly literature. Many of the leading authorities on the collapse of Eastern Europe fail to connect internal policymaking—particularly relating to the creation of legislative power in the USSR and its consequences—to the historic collapse of the Soviet Union's "outer empire." I do not argue that Soviet democratization caused the collapse of the East European regimes in 1989, but that it was the main factor that precluded an armed intervention to save those regimes.

Only one of six major books on the revolutions of 1989, for example, even mentions the USSR Congress of People's Deputies, and then only in passing.<sup>1</sup> They focus instead on the USSR as a unitary player, with a reformer (Gorbachev) at the helm, surrounded by like-minded advisers advocating new political thinking, who decided to "allow" the East Europeans to go their own way. They concentrate heavily on cadre policies at the key departments of the Central Committee and the *apparatus*, and maybe in the Foreign Ministry.

But the USSR was hardly a unitary actor in fall 1989. It was in the midst of a radical redefinition of its political system, its federal relations, and its very core system of values. These largely domestic events did not bode well for a preservation of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Eastern Europe, even if Gorbachev had wished it. The key departments in the Central Committee and Secretariat, both of which were largely emasculated by fall 1989, also had a role to play, but a minimal one given the domestic political context at the time.

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Fredo Arias-King is the founder of *Demokratizatsiya*. He would like to thank Karen Aguilera for research assistance and Sean Pollock for useful comments.

Consider the following facts:

- The USSR Congress of People's Deputies overwhelmingly endorsed a Gorbachev-drafted resolution praising (after the fact) the overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu in late December 1989
- USSR republican leaders also largely (and some loudly) welcomed the fall of the Communist leaders in Eastern Europe
- Gorbachev's popularity peaked following the fall of the East European regimes
- Key officials in the Soviet legislature (which had wrestled control of the "power ministries" away from the Politburo) had already made it clear that the USSR would not intervene if the communist leaders in Eastern Europe were in trouble

The following is an analysis of the main actors in the domestic political struggle and where they stood on the East European question by fall 1989.

### The Legislatures

The Congress of People's Deputies (whose first session convened on 25 May 1989) and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR had every institutional incentive to permit and even bless the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe for three reasons. First, the people's deputies, most of whom (87.6 percent) were CPSU members, had a collective interest in discrediting the *status-quo ante* and developing legislative power in the USSR. By that time, a surprising number of them had risked their careers by openly breaking with party *apparatus* during televised debates and voting in the First Congress. They were exercising with impunity their collective title of "the supreme organ of power in the USSR." In July 1989, Politburo member and USSR Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov commented,

Things are reaching the point where the Party is being relegated to a backseat in public life—this was shown by the elections. . . . We overestimated statistics, citing the fact that 85 percent [*sic*] of the elected deputies are Communists. But this quantitative majority means little. . . . They have literally forced their way into the rostrum with their own platforms, programs, proposals and accusations, often including insinuations against the Party. And the Politburo found itself on the sidelines, in an isolated position, as if it had fallen under siege. . . . A real and mighty power has appeared in the form of the Congress of People's Deputies and the USSR Supreme Soviet.<sup>2</sup>

The Congress and the Supreme Soviet had little stake in the Brezhnevite order, which was being thoroughly discredited by Gorbachev and by the main media. Except for Poland in mid-1989, none of the Eastern European countries had held the type of free elections that gave rise to an assertive legislature such as the Congress of Peoples Deputies. The leaders of those countries were widely perceived in the Congress of Soviets as operating in a "Stalinist-Brezhnevite" time warp, which the Congress was busy discrediting. Galina Starovoitova, a key democrat at that Congress, commented that the fall of the allied communist regimes was "very inspiring" to the reformers in the parliament, but the more conservative deputies were "just shocked, some were very frightened." She added that inter-

vention was unlikely to be approved by the legislature because “there was a different atmosphere than in the party organs,” and because the “Afghanistan and Tbilisi [interventions] were present—everybody understood it was impossible.”<sup>3</sup>

East German leader Erich Honecker had derided the elections in the USSR (a fact widely reported in the Soviet press). This did not endear him to the deputies. One of the most respected deputies, Kyrgyz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov, lamented the Soviet Union’s export of its model of socialism.<sup>4</sup> *Izvestiya*, which had become the official organ of the USSR Supreme Soviet and Congress, in October 1989 equated the Prague leaders with Stalinism when it described the 1968 invasion as “an event which prolonged the dominance of neo-Stalinism for almost two decades.”<sup>5</sup> Whereas the East European revolutions did not occur until after the First Congress, one could assess the institutional mood at that Congress toward the issue of inter-bloc relations. Although hardly discussed, the pronouncements that were made echoed those of deputy Aitmatov. During the confirmation hearings for vice chairman of the Congress on 29 May 1989, a deputy asked candidate Anatoly Lukyanov if he “took part in the events in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Novochoerkassk.”<sup>6</sup> (Novochoerkassk was the site of a violent repression of a Soviet workers’ strike during Khrushchev’s tenure, and had already been condemned by that time). Lukyanov answered the deputy’s question defensively.

The second reason is that several deputies showed alarm and resolve after the crackdown on peaceful demonstrators in Tbilisi, Georgia, in April 1989, just before the session of the First Congress. The Congress denounced the crackdown in no uncertain terms, set up a commission to investigate, and called the generals to testify on live television. One Politburo member, Viktor Chebrikov, lost his Politburo seat ten days after the hearings at the Congress. Yegor Ligachev survived, but was severely tarnished. The Tbilisi affair publicly and permanently divided the Politburo, was traumatic for party conservatives, and was a watershed for the reformers and the Congress. Hedrick Smith observed, “The radicals could count the Tbilisi affair as their biggest single victory at the Congress.”<sup>7</sup> In his memoirs, Yegor Ligachev mentions the collapse of the allied governments in Eastern Europe only in passing (criticizing the reformers in the Politburo for making “a defeat look like a victory”),<sup>8</sup> but dedicates an entire chapter to “the Tbilisi Affair.”

Deputies showed concern that if the Politburo’s actions in Tbilisi went unpunished, then perhaps the abolition of the legislature itself would be next. We can speculate that they would have felt the same way had the Soviet army intervened to defend the old Communist leaders in Eastern Europe from a “people’s power” similar to the one that manifested itself in Tbilisi (and to the one that swept the USSR Congress into existence). The Congress would have been in no mood to endorse the use of force in Eastern Europe because it would be giving an imprimatur to military action against reform, and therefore against its *raison d’être*.

The third reason is that the key officials in the Congress had already gone on record as opposing a military intervention in Eastern Europe. Chairman of the Soviet of the Union Yevgeny Primakov said in October 1989 that the USSR would not oppose any member of the Warsaw Pact (WTO) from leaving if they so wished.<sup>9</sup> Another key leader was the chairman of the Supreme Soviet’s Interna-

tional Affairs Committee, Georgy Shakhnazarov, who was also Gorbachev's main adviser on Eastern Europe and later on the Soviet presidency. In addition, some known moderates on international questions were appointed as advisers to the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (Gorbachev). They included former ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrinin, correspondent Vadim Zagladin, and former chief of the General Staff Sergei Akhromeyev.

Another key official in the Congress, although not occupying a formal post, was democratic activist Andrei Sakharov. Sakharov was instrumental in the democratization of the USSR, was the leader of the democratic movement (and of the main faction of radical democrats in the Congress, the Inter-Regional Group of People's Deputies), and be-

came the most popular deputy after the First Congress. He had loudly opposed intervention in Eastern Europe, beginning with his protest of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Sakharov's ally and confidante, Galina Starovoitova, also had protested that invasion in 1968. As early as February 1989,

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before he was even nominated to run for his seat in the Congress, Sakharov was outspoken about the situation in Eastern Europe, loudly condemning an incident in which Czechoslovak authorities had used force against students and dissidents.<sup>10</sup> He repeated his opposition to Soviet patronage of these regimes during his campaign. After his death in December 1989, those who paid homage to him ranged from Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, to Mikhail Gorbachev, to the hardline Politburo member Yegor Ligachev.

Another rising official allied with the democratic intellectuals in the Inter-Regional Group (and chairman of a Supreme Soviet committee) took the floor of the USSR Supreme Soviet to applaud the collapse of the allied socialist governments, suggesting that the Soviet Union find a model in those revolutions. Deputy Boris N. Yeltsin said:

Take the example of Eastern Europe. If 2 months ago Erich Honecker had been asked how much time was needed for the implementation of the process of democratization in the party and in the country, he would have asked, perhaps, for about 5 years. But a wave of popular demonstration swept the country and these problems were resolved in the course of a matter of weeks, including the abolition of Article 6 [guaranteeing the monopoly of power to the Communist party]. True, this was already without Honecker. And so, Mikhail Sergeevich [Gorbachev], were such universal processes to begin in our country we are confident that they would take place within the same civilized European framework as was the case in the GDR and in Czechoslovakia.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the prominence of all-Union radical reformers, an analysis of the ruling Presidium of the Congress shows an overwhelming representation by

non-Russian deputies who challenged Moscow for more republican autonomy.<sup>12</sup> Another reformer was the vice chair of the Presidium, Sergei Stankevich, who was to later serve as Yeltsin's main political adviser. The chairman of the Congress was Gorbachev.

If there were elements within the USSR Congress of People's Deputies that potentially would have favored an armed intervention in Eastern Europe to prop up Communist Party leaders—Honecker, Czechoslovakia's Milos Jakes, and Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu—they were not overly vociferous, nor were they controlling the levers of power in that Congress. The levers of power were in the hands of the Gorbachevite reformers and, in terms of popularity, the radical democrats such as Andrei Sakharov, Gavriil Popov, Anatoly Sobchak, Galina Starovoitova, and Boris Yeltsin. There was an "empire-saving" faction in the Congress, the Soyuz faction, which claimed the loyalty of a fourth of the USSR people's deputies. But they were far more concerned with the Baltic states and the preservation of the USSR than they were with the outer empire. In any case, they had barely coalesced before the Second Congress convened in December 1989.

When the Soviet legislators differed with Gorbachev and his centrist reformers on the issues of "empire," they usually were more *liberal* than he was. An example is the debate on whether to allow each republic to elect its own legislature and its own executive president. Gorbachev came out against the proposal, but the Baltic deputies and the Inter-Regional Group managed to rally enough support from the moderate strata at the USSR Supreme Soviet to overrule Gorbachev and vote for increased autonomy for the inner empire. Kathleen Mihalisko called it "a remarkable victory" of the USSR Supreme Soviet.<sup>13</sup> Another telling example was the Supreme Soviet's near-success over Gorbachev's stern opposition (two votes short) in abolishing Article 6 of the USSR Constitution—several months before the party and Gorbachev, under heavy pressure, decided to do so themselves. The Soviet legislature also rejected nine of Ryzhkov's ministerial appointees, almost rejected Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov and vice presidential nominee Gennady Yanaev (both future coup plotters had been rejected, but Gorbachev bent the rules to cajole a second vote in each case, and the nominations passed with slim margins). The Supreme Soviet also rejected Gorbachev's November 1990 motion to reinstate censorship. Only 59 percent of the Congress approved Gorbachev as the first Soviet president, and only after drafting amendments to limit the power of that office.

In other words, at critical junctures the radicals in the legislature could often muster enough support to override the government, the party, and even Gorbachev. We could speculate that a Soviet military intervention in Eastern Europe could have faced the same prospect in the legislature as other, far milder, issues dear to the hardliners.

The revolutions in Eastern Europe seemed to have struck a positive cord at the Party Congress and among Gorbachev's moderate Communist allies during their drive to transfer power from the party to the state, a hallmark of perestroika. Soviet reformers and moderates perceived the revolutions in Eastern Europe not as anti-Communist or anti-Soviet, but as pro-democracy or even pro-perestroika (it

helped that the Prague, Bucharest, Budapest, and East Berlin revolutionaries were quoting Gorbachev against their Communist leaders).<sup>14</sup> Many Moscow academics and moderate politicians were drawing a symbiotic relationship between the East European reforms and the irreversibility of perestroika.<sup>15</sup> The two most powerful and vociferous political factions in the Congress were the moderates and the radicals. The first group admired Dubcek, the second Havel. But no discernible element spoke in favor of Husák.

In retrospect, it is fortunate that the revolutions in Eastern Europe occurred when they did. Any time earlier or later would probably not have resulted in the same positive reaction from Moscow. Fall 1989 was the peak of Soviet enthusiasm for democracy, "common human values," Gorbachev's popularity, and denunciation of the Stalinist and Brezhnev regimes. Gorbachev was criticized by several people's deputies for not having assisted in defeating Ceausescu.<sup>16</sup>

The institutions that had the biggest stake in opposing a Soviet invasion of the region, including the legislature, were at the height of their popularity. Stephen White, in his book *After Gorbachev*, uses extensive polling data from the All-Soviet Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) to show that, in effect, the people's deputies were at the height of their popularity in fall 1989. White states that "the broad principles of democratisation enjoyed wide popular support." After the First Congress, polls showed that Soviets thought the Congress was operating in a democratic way (between 79 and 88 percent in various Union capitals); a large share also were largely or entirely in agreement with the views held by their individual deputy; and an overwhelming majority (around 86 percent) supported the election of Gorbachev as chairman of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>17</sup> By early 1992, those figures had dropped dramatically. In Moscow, only 13 percent of those polled had any confidence in the deputies they had elected, and only 4 percent connected their hopes for the future with new political parties or movements.<sup>18</sup>

The average voter had no interest in exporting the Soviet model. Here I use the term "voter" rather than "citizen" because the electoral reforms had empowered Soviets to vote for the first time in generally free and genuine elections for federal, local, and republican legislators and officials. They used this new power to follow Gorbachev's plea, "Take the power of the Party into your own hands. We have failed to reform the Party from the top; the resistance of the Party apparatus turned out to be too strong. Let us now try to do it from the bottom. You, not the *nomenklatura*, are the masters of the Party."<sup>19</sup>

When the voters did show concern for Honecker, Ceausescu, Jakes, Bulgaria's Todor Zhivkov, et al., it was in *support* of their fall. In contrast to the limited (and one-sided) debate about Eastern Europe among the Moscow elites, the average person cared little if anything about their fates. Sakharov was the most popular deputy because he was opposed to Soviet meddling in the affairs of its western neighbors. Support for Gorbachev was highest after the fall of those regimes. Shevardnadze was also highly popular and was often criticized by deputies and the media for not having been more forceful *against* those leaders earlier.

### Republican Leadership

By the time of the Eastern European revolutions, Gorbachev had managed to replace all of the republican leaders he inherited, except first secretary of the Moldavian Communist Party Semen Grossu, who was on his way out by the time the revolutions began.<sup>20</sup> These leaders had to differentiate themselves from their predecessors to get a semblance of a popular mandate in the era of democratization. Their predecessors had been part and parcel of the now-discredited “era of stagnation.” The new party leaders were preparing for their own elections in early 1990, and the electorate was in no mood for conformity with Moscow, much less for interventions abroad. For example, when Petru Luchinsky replaced Semen Grossu, he immediately began a dialogue with the Moldavian Popular Front, which at that point was organizing large protests in the streets of the capital, Kishinev.<sup>21</sup> As Dawn Mann, an analyst at RFE/RL stated at the time, “The leadership of the USSR’s fifteen republics now occupies a more important place in the overall political system than was the case at almost any previous time in Soviet history.”<sup>22</sup>

An analysis of statements made at that time by the new republican leaders shows lack of concern for the events in Eastern Europe. Some voiced outright support for the anticommunist revolutions taking place. They were preoccupied with their fight with Moscow for more autonomy for their republics. They also were political enemies of the Moscow party conservatives, who voiced opposition (loudly at that point) to granting the republican leaders any autonomy whatsoever. Georgia, the three Baltic states, and later Moldavia and Azerbaijan, were going even further than most by seeking outright autonomy, and some of them independence, from the USSR by fall 1989. Moldavia’s capital, Kishinev, was engulfed in riots aimed at toppling Grossu. The Moldavian delegation at the Second Congress lobbied for the Congress to pass a resolution on Romania when anti-Ceausescu hostilities broke out there on 21 December.<sup>23</sup> A day later, when Gorbachev addressed the Congress with the latest Romanian news, *FBIS* quoted the proceeding as follows:

Bucharest radio has just announced that Ceausescu has been arrested [stormy applause breaks out in the hall]. . . . I am putting forward the proposal to send this brief message to the Romanian people: At this crucial moment for the fate of Romania, the Second USSR Congress of People’s Deputies announces its resolute support for the just cause of the Romanian people. [applause] We assure the citizens of Romania of our traditional feelings of friendship and goodneighborliness, and confirm our genuine striving for close cooperation in the interests of socialism and peace. [applause]<sup>24</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Moldavian delegation to the Congress included almost all of the Moldavian republican party leadership.<sup>25</sup>

The East European revolutions (except for the Polish election) came after widespread disturbances in the constituent republics of the USSR itself. Georgia, Moldavia, the Baltic states, the Ferghana Valley in Tajikistan and Nagorno-Karabakh, and several major coal mines in Ukraine and Russia were sites of major demonstrations, strikes, calls for independence by the elected supreme soviets,

and civil strife. Even the usually pliant Kazakhstan was unilaterally demanding an end to nuclear testing in Semipalatinsk.

What about republican legislatures? The supreme soviets of the various republics were grappling with two main issues: economic reform (including emergency measures to stabilize their economies) and a struggle for power with Moscow and with the local Communist parties. For example, the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, which had a session in late October 1989, held often-heated debates on the economy, language laws, constitutional amendments, and Chernobyl, but not a single reported remark suggests concern for the political developments in Eastern Europe.<sup>26</sup> The republican elites (party and otherwise) were also eyeing the upcoming elections of spring 1990, which would be the first time they would have to face their constituencies since their election to Congress. By November 1989, the supreme soviets of the three Baltic states, Azerbaijan, and Georgia had adopted constitutional resolutions declaring that republican laws supersede all-Union laws, in open defiance of Moscow. On the East European question, the Gorbachev adviser who declared the Brezhnev Doctrine “dead” in August 1989, Yevgeny Ambartsumov, was later elected chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Supreme Soviet.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Communist Party**

By fall 1989, the party had been severely weakened by glasnost, Gorbachev, the Congress of People's Deputies, and visible internal squabbles. The February 1987 Central Committee plenum had endorsed democratizing the USSR, and the Nineteenth Party Conference in 1988 had endorsed Gorbachev's proposal to create elected legislatures. As mentioned, the ensuing elections to the Congress of People's Deputies severely crippled the *apparatus*, which lost many of its strongest defenders in the Soviet leadership. In addition, the party secretariat had been emasculated, and in two plenums (April and September 1989), the Central Committee lost 110 members.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, three key advocates of the Brezhnev Doctrine were retired in that April plenum: long-time foreign minister Andrei Gromyko; ideology chief Boris Ponomarev, who was the one to personally shake down Alexander Dubcek when he was flown to Moscow after his arrest in 1968; and chief of the General Staff, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.

In addition to personnel turnover and loss of power and prestige, it appears that the Central Committee and the Politburo were losing their decision-making role. Party conservatives and Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov were denouncing the legislators and Gorbachev. The Politburo had voted in August 1989 (although it was not widely known at the time) not to intervene in the affairs of a Warsaw Pact nation if its regime were to come under threat.<sup>29</sup>

The CPSU and many Communist leaders in the republics were “going national,” obviating the need to impose “socialist conformity” in countries outside the USSR. This occurred most obviously in Lithuania, where Algirdas Brazauskas, first secretary of the Communist Party of Lithuania (LKP), led the secession of the LKP from the CPSU beginning in December 1989. This movement was also taking place in Ukraine, where the leader of Rukh reported that

although the Kyiv Communist authorities were attempting to repress his movement, Rukh enjoyed the membership and support of several rank-and-file Communists.<sup>30</sup> By fall 1989, most Armenian and Azeri Communists had also taken “anti-internationalist” positions and joined their nationalist colleagues in denouncing one another over Nagorno-Karabakh. Nursultan Nazarbaev, president of Kazakhstan, owed his appointment to a nationalist revolt that occurred when Moscow appointed a Russian, Gennady Kolbin, to head the republic in 1987. Although not a nationalist himself, Nazarbaev was known to be more attentive to growing demands of the Kazakhs for more autonomy from Moscow.

In retrospect, the most important Communist to have “gone national” at that time

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was Boris Yeltsin. But Yeltsin’s opponents within Russia were also doing so. Hardliners within the CPSU opposed to Gorbachev’s line were already planning to set up a Communist Party of Russia (KPR) ostensibly to better represent the interests of Russian Communists. The KPR mixed orthodox Marxist propaganda with such aggressive nationalism that it

failed to attract a single member of the intelligentsia into its ranks and drew widespread scorn from the media.

Yeltsin’s opinion on the collapse of the outer empire, as seen earlier, was positive. He went so far as to hint that the same could happen in the USSR itself and had come out in favor of Baltic independence.<sup>31</sup> In early October 1989, thousands of Muscovites rallied on Yeltsin’s behalf.<sup>32</sup> In mid-December 1989, he took the mantle from Andrei Sakharov as the leader of the Inter-Regional Group of deputies, making him de facto leader of the rising “democratic” opposition.

By the time the East European revolutions occurred, party conservatives had largely been routed not only from government leadership positions, but even from the Politburo and Central Committee. In addition to the hardline Politburo members mentioned earlier, others who lost their jobs during the September 1989 Central Committee plenum included Ukrainian leader Vladimir Shcherbitsky, Viktor Nikonov, Leningrad party chief Yuri Solovev, and Nikolai Talyzin, all considered Brezhnevite holdovers.<sup>34</sup> If the remaining Politburo members had stood for election to the USSR Congress of People’s Deputies (instead of receiving guaranteed seats as the “Red Hundred”), they would have been defeated.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to personnel changes, glasnost had taken a toll on Marxist-Leninist ideology,<sup>35</sup> and even Yegor Ligachev, the would-be conservative challenger to Gorbachev, was forced to admit to many shortcomings of the Soviet system.<sup>36</sup> Ligachev found himself praising Sakharov immediately after his death, and the KGB chief, Vladimir Kryuchkov, said his arrest and exile in Gorky had been a “mistake.”<sup>37</sup> Yeltsin was already calling for Ligachev’s ouster from the Politburo.<sup>38</sup>

So if the party could not impose “totalitarian centralism” on itself, how could it demand such conformity from the East European allies? This perhaps answers the question posed by Gorbachev’s chief of staff Valery Boldin, who later helped organize the attempted coup: “Why was it that nobody, at virtually any level of the power structure, raised the alarm over the dismantling of the military, political, and economic alliances of the Socialist states?”<sup>39</sup>

If elements within the Communist Party were indeed planning by fall 1989 to intervene militarily in Eastern Europe, they would have had to first neutralize the party reformers and any other critics within the USSR, and then turn the army on the Supreme Soviet and the republican soviets before rescuing Jakes and Ceausescu.

Although they were dissatisfied over the loss of empire, the conservative rivals were in no position to order an attack on Eastern Europe without Gorbachev’s consent. This may not have been the case had the crackdown on Tbilisi not occurred in April 1989. There, Yegor Ligachev and the top Georgian communist leadership took advantage of the absence of Gorbachev, Yakovlev, and Shevardnadze to order a military crackdown on peaceful Georgian demonstrators. But the fallout from that incident, including humiliating revelations at the Congress of People’s Deputies on live television, stung the top military leadership. Shortly thereafter, they declared that they would no longer take orders from individual Politburo members. They would obey only the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Ligachev made a fateful political error in summer 1989 by attacking the USSR Congress of People’s Deputies, claiming that it was not representative of Soviet society and had to be replaced with a workers’ congress.<sup>40</sup> Ligachev apparently was not aware how far the Congress had gone in capturing power from the party. As he was uttering those words, striking miners and other workers were refusing to meet with the party leadership, requesting instead to be heard by the legislature. It was reported that “The miners’ strike demonstrated that no other institution currently possesses the authority of the Supreme Soviet.”<sup>41</sup> Not only the miners, but the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan (even their Communist leaders) refused to submit their appeals to the CPSU, choosing the USSR Supreme Soviet instead.<sup>42</sup>

Another potential rival to Gorbachev in the leadership, Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, made the same error by denouncing the Congress’s new powers as a “strategic mistake,” complaining that those powers should be returned to the Politburo and Central Committee.<sup>43</sup> It is not surprising that the First Congress was especially harsh in confirming Ryzhkov’s appointments, at one time literally driving the prime minister to tears.<sup>44</sup>

Other potential hardline troublemakers, such as the party leader of Leningrad, Boris Gidasov, and Moscow’s Lev Zaikov, were fighting for their political lives and were close to losing their state jobs. In other words, the conservatives of the CPSU were on the defensive, in Moscow, in the cities, in the USSR Congress, in the republics, and in the CPSU itself. Shortly thereafter, they canceled their monopoly on power (February 1990), and voted to finish off the Politburo once and for all as a decision-making body (July 1990).

### Gorbachev's Political Attitude

Gorbachev's attitude toward his Warsaw Pact colleagues personally and politically can be discerned by analyzing his pronouncements immediately before and after the collapse of communism in those countries. In his memoirs, he praises Polish General Wojciech Jaruzelski and Hungarian leader János Kádár; he dedicates almost three pages to heaping scorn on Nicolae Ceausescu. He praises the Polish leader as "a true patriot, a friend of the Soviet Union, a moral person, a leading politician, a man with many human virtues."<sup>45</sup> He then calls the former Romanian leader a "troublemaker," "cruel," "arrogant," and suffering from "delusions of grandeur as well as psychological instability."<sup>46</sup>

Gorbachev places Honecker, Todor Zhivkov, and Gustav Husák in the Ceausescu camp for failing to implement reforms and for cynically exploiting their relations with the Soviet Union ("the Bulgarian side, like East Germany, was involved in re-exporting to the West some of the oil it got from us"<sup>47</sup>). He recalls, with some bitterness, that they had refused to implement perestroika and had failed to support him after the Central Committee's January 1987 plenum, which many analysts believe was one of Gorbachev's most delicate times politically. Gorbachev calls this plenum "the beginning of a probing analysis of every aspect of the nation's past and the first step on our road towards democracy," adding, "Historians will probably see 1986–87 as the first serious crisis of perestroika, and they will be right."<sup>48</sup> Ceausescu sought to use the growing nationalities crisis in the USSR to his personal advantage. A month before his downfall, during the rioting in Moldavia, he openly embarrassed Gorbachev by calling for an annulment of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed between Stalin and Hitler, presumably to reclaim lost territory.<sup>49</sup>

The general secretary was uncharacteristically crude and direct in denouncing the communist leaders of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Romania after they had fallen. Shortly after the fall of Jakes as party leader (but before Husák resigned as president of Czechoslovakia), Gorbachev wrote an article for *Pravda* in which he mentioned that the goal of perestroika was to build "socialism with a human face," an obvious reference to Alexander Dubcek. He also led the Congress of People's Deputies to endorse post-facto the violent overthrow of Ceausescu. He said the rapid demise of the East Germans was a logical consequence of pressures that had been pent up for years bursting out in a "cleansing storm," and to the "lies and double standards."<sup>50</sup> He praised the Hungarians and the Poles for their gradual reforms. "From the very beginning, the greatest mutual understanding on the problems of perestroika was reached with Kádár and especially Jaruzelski. . . . I saw and felt that Kádár welcomed the changes in the Soviet Union with all his heart. . . . Jaruzelski fervently supported the changes in the Soviet Union." Gorbachev saw a parallel between those reforms and the lack of social upheaval. "On the other hand, those countries whose leadership bitterly opposed the changes" were swept in upheaval.<sup>51</sup>

### Gorbachev's Political Position

It seems clear that the rapid fall of the East European regimes strengthened Gorbachev's political position considerably. First, his enemies within the *apparatus* realized the vulnerability of their own position. This perhaps led them to view the democratic forces in the country as a threat, allowing Gorbachev to act as the centrist balance while gradually moving toward reform, which was becoming his political trademark.<sup>52</sup> The *apparatus* stopped challenging Gorbachev and realized that anyone more conservative would lead the CPSU the way of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Hedrick Smith lucidly captured this Gorbachevite tactic: "It was a typical Gorbachev tactic to force his critics into a predicament where they felt they had no alternative but to side with him, despite strong differences with him."<sup>53</sup> We can get a sense of this tactic at a speech made to the Central Committee plenum on 9 December 1989. There, Gorbachev not only hinted at a parallel between the overthrown leaders and the more recalcitrant elements in the USSR, but he also associated the revolutions with his own perestroika:

The vigorous process of renewal which recently has swept most East European countries, began at different times and in different forms in various countries. . . . First of all, the causes of the reforms are the same. . . . Administrative orders [words indistinct] became the obstacle to progress in the socialist countries. Therefore, the reforms are aimed primarily at the dictatorial bureaucratic system and replacing it with a new mode of socialism . . . the economic reforms are aimed at eliminating excessive centralization in the management of the national economy. . . . The ultimate goal of their reforms is to improve the people's livelihood and to raise the standards of their material life. . . . The democratization of social life inevitably will continue and enter the sphere of social life because it will be difficult to achieve economic advances without political reforms. This is why these countries have increased the openness, encouraged diversified opinions, and instituted the system of multiple candidates in elections to political power organs so that the broad masses of the people will participate actively in social life.<sup>54</sup>

Second, the revolutions swiftly discredited the Stalin-Brezhnevite political and economic systems. Until that point, Gorbachev's warnings that the CPSU could lose popularity and power and be swept away without radical reforms enjoyed no cogent proof. The 1989 revolutions seemed to vindicate Gorbachev's warnings. Poland's and Hungary's more gradual transition and democratization, which left the Communists participating in politics to a greater degree, were obviously welcomed.

Third, the four East European leaders whom Gorbachev disliked were "hedging their bets" against the Soviet leader by holding out against reform. Their open defiance of Gorbachev would be a source of inspiration for hardliners in Moscow unhappy with the course of reforms.

The fourth reason was geopolitical. The revolutions seemed to remove an obstacle in East-West dialogue and could lead to the reduction of tension, to the "common European home," and to increased cooperation with the West, the hallmarks of new political thinking. Gorbachev was giving up hope on his alliance with the socialist countries, but was pinning great hopes on his relations with Western Europe and the United States.<sup>55</sup>

The revolutions in Eastern Europe not only coincided with the highest popularity ratings Gorbachev ever enjoyed, but the leaders who swept into power in the outer empire were not as antagonistic to Gorbachev as the previous ones. Although Ceausescu had always been a thorn in the side of the Soviet Union, he was especially defiant of Gorbachev, to the point of refraining from applauding his speech at a Romanian party conference in Bucharest in May 1987. Honecker, similarly, had questioned where perestroika was leading the USSR and banned the distribution of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* in the GDR for being too “revisionist.” The Czechoslovakian leaders similarly had rejected all of Gorbachev’s calls for increased reform, as did Todor Zhivkov of Bulgaria. In 1988, Jakes had gone as far as expelling 500,000 party members who were suspected of being unduly sympathetic to Dubcek and, presumably, to Gorbachev.<sup>56</sup>

Most of the leaders who followed those men received warm words in Gorbachev’s memoirs, especially Alexander Dubcek, who became chairman of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly after the Velvet Revolution. As previously mentioned, Gorbachev made no secret of his respect and admiration for Dubcek, even before Husák was ousted as president of Czechoslovakia.

If Gorbachev may have suspected that Moscow hardliners were drawing inspiration from Honecker, Husák, and Ceausescu, he would be especially averse to rescuing them. Doing so would also contradict his anti-Brezhnev campaign and his promise not to intervene in the internal affairs of other states. In addition, Gorbachev was known to attack his opponents by decimating their power bases. This he probably learned from Khrushchev, whose main mistake was to attack Stalin without attacking Stalinism. For example, Gorbachev had originally brought in Yeltsin to head the Moscow party organization with orders to decimate the allies and political base of Gorbachev’s erstwhile rival for the job of general secretary, Viktor Grishin.<sup>57</sup> Blessing the fall of Honecker and Ceausescu was the equivalent of blessing the end of Brezhnev and an alternative model to perestroika.

At that time, Gorbachev was placing far more emphasis on his office as head of the Supreme Soviet rather than as Communist Party leader (and the legislature would not have tolerated military intervention in Eastern Europe). Gorbachev’s main guarantee against the party conservatives at the time was his dual role. Provoking the Supreme Soviet to recall him or to question his leadership also would not have augured well for his chances as general secretary. In addition, Gorbachev was making plans for an executive Soviet presidency, which would have to be approved by the Congress of People’s Deputies.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Power Ministries**

To carry out a successful campaign to prop up the outer empire of the USSR, the power ministries would be essential to put muscle behind the call for ideological and political conformity. Judging from the invasions of Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979 (and even Chechnya in 1994), one can surmise that Moscow would have used the army, the KGB, and the elite OMON detachment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to carry out such an invasion. Below I will examine the status of those, their lines of com-

mand, and their leaders, to assess whether they could have acted, either independently or in conjunction with a marginal party faction, to invade Eastern Europe in fall 1989.

Although the power ministries had traditionally been the sole responsibility of the Communist Party, Gorbachev's drive to transfer more powers to the soviets and to the state bodies had already affected them. As mentioned, the Tbilisi incident served to place the armed forces more firmly under the command of the Supreme Soviet, the Defense Council, and Gorbachev himself (who headed both). As Peter Reddaway mentions, "the resolve of Party officials and commanders of MVD and KGB troops, as well as army troops, concerning the prospect of killing people in future policing actions of this sort was severely weakened."<sup>59</sup> All three of the power ministries were headed by Gorbachev appointees. Moreover, Gorbachev had purged several high-ranking military officers who were dissatisfied with perestroika and the army reform. That purge had begun in earnest with the landing of Matthias Rust's Cessna in Red Square, and was largely complete by fall 1989.<sup>60</sup> The elections to the Congress also marked a reversal of fortune for the top brass, as several of them lost their elections, even when running unopposed.<sup>61</sup>

The Ministry of Internal Affairs was headed by Vadim Bakatin, a loyal Gorbachevite liberal reformer who drew the ire of more conservative elements in the leadership for agreeing to grant more autonomy to the Baltic branches of the MVD. Bakatin was already far ahead of other Soviet leaders in his level of reform proposals for the USSR. He had made his famous declaration that the KGB was an unnecessary institution and should be dissolved. Bakatin was also one of the first Soviet leaders to cooperate with Western law enforcement agencies.

The KGB's interests in Eastern Europe are murky at best. On one hand, it was Vladimir Kryuchkov who flew to Poland in spring 1989 after the formation of Poland's first non-Communist government, to receive assurances that Poland would remain in the Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, the KGB is reported to have actively encouraged the collapse of the pact regimes, or at least that of Czechoslovakia. This link was documented by the Czech and Slovak Federal Assembly commission investigating the causes of the Velvet Revolution.<sup>62</sup>

Before perestroika, the party had strict political and operational control over the power ministries. The Politburo controlled the KGB and shared control of the MVD and the armed forces with KGB directorates specifically designed to ensure loyalty and compliance in the police and army. By fall 1989, the Politburo had ceded control of the power ministries, which had been placed under the jurisdiction of the USSR Defense Council (which included several Politburo members, but not those considered to be enemies of Gorbachev). The Supreme Soviet also obtained de jure power of oversight and accountability over all of the ministries, including the KGB.<sup>63</sup>

Most of the above structure was in place at the time of the attempted coup in 1991, but as of fall 1989 most analysts had not foreseen the possibility of the power agencies acting alone or in conjunction with some hardline faction to stage a coup.<sup>64</sup>

### 1968 versus 1989

The motives for Moscow's 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia remain disputed. But whichever hypothesis one adopts, it is readily noticeable that these motives were absent in Moscow in fall 1989. One account, by Jiri Valenta,<sup>65</sup> explains the invasion through the prism of Graham Allison's "bureaucratic politics paradigm."<sup>66</sup> Valenta explains the outcome as the result of a struggle inside the Soviet elite, with the pro-invasion lobby being party leaders in non-Russian Soviet republics, *apparatchiki* in ideology, the KGB, the political control network of the armed forces, and the Warsaw Pact high command. In addition, the Soviet leadership's view of the Prague Spring was colored by alarmist reports from the Soviet embassy in Prague and by the KGB and the censored Soviet press. The second approach belongs to the young scholar Kieran Williams, whose archival research after the collapse of communism in both Prague and Moscow reveals that the invasion was less a result of bureaucratic struggles and more a personal decision by Brezhnev, who needed little prodding by his bureaucracies.<sup>67</sup>

However, by fall 1989, the ingredients that made an invasion possible in 1968 were largely absent. Republican and regional leaders throughout the USSR were unconcerned for the fate of the socialist allies. Ideology played a minimal role by then, the armed forces were opposed to further interventions and were coming under political criticism at home, and the press described events in Eastern Europe favorably. Moreover, the Politburo was no longer preeminent, and "democratic centralism" under Gorbachev was severely weakened by democratization.

### Conclusion

By the time the Communist regimes fell in Eastern Europe, the USSR's domestic political situation and its new party-state relations would have made an armed intervention in those countries extremely difficult and politically suicidal for Gorbachev. This conclusion derives from the following points:

- By fall 1989, the Communist Party's main organs had been emasculated. These include the Secretariat, the Central Committee, and the Politburo. None, according to the analysts, were in a position to order the military to invade nor to remove Gorbachev.
- Marxist-Leninist ideology had suffered a mortal blow and was declared dead shortly after at the Twenty-eighth Party Congress in July 1990.
- What did remain of the party, especially the action channels on foreign policy, was firmly in the hands of Gorbachev loyalists and reformers such as Alexander Yakovlev, Georgy Shakhnazarov, Vadim Medvedev, Georgy Arbatov, Georgy Ostroumov, Rafael Fyodorov, Oleg Bogomolov, and Valentin Falin.
- The power ministries, which ostensibly would carry out an invasion, were placed under the Defense Council and the Supreme Soviet (that is, under Gorbachev), and were removed from the line of command of the Politburo. The April 1987 incident in Tbilisi taught the army leaders not to obey individual Politburo members.
- The power ministries were in the hands of men appointed by Gorbachev. One of them, Vadim Bakatin, the head of the MVD, was known to be a firm reformer.

- The Foreign Ministry was headed by a new team that opposed foreign interventions, and was actively disengaging the USSR from confrontations of an ideological and geopolitical nature.
- The new and highly popular legislators had been elected mainly to solve the USSR's domestic situation. Their foreign preoccupations, when expressed, were often more reform-minded than Gorbachev's. The legislators had annulled several of Gorbachev's less democratic proposals and decisions in other areas.
- The action channels of the legislators were controlled by Gorbachev loyalists such as Shakhnazarov and Primakov.
- Several key members of the USSR legislature had already publicly stated that the Brezhnev Doctrine was dead. Many expressed open contempt for some East European Communist leaders.
- Republican leaders and legislators throughout the USSR showed no concern for the fate of the East European Communist leaders when revolution swept them away.

The Soviet political situation during the fall of 1989 could be described as a confluence of republican leaders, local and regional party officials, the USSR Congress of People's Deputies/Supreme Soviet, state bodies, moderate All-Union Party officials, public opinion, the main media and Gorbachev on the one hand; and All-Union Party conservatives on the other. No discernible element in the first group had the political will or inclination to support an armed intervention in Eastern Europe. And they were winning the domestic battle for the inner empire as well.

#### NOTES

1. The books include Gwyn Prins, ed., *Spring in Winter: The 1989 Revolutions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Charles Gati, *The Bloc That Failed: Soviet-East European Relations in Transition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Alex Pravda, ed., *The End of the Outer Empire: Soviet-East European Relations in Transition, 1985–1990* (London: Sage, 1992); Elie Abel, *The Shattered Bloc: Behind the Upheaval in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev and Reform: The Great Challenge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Odd Arne Westad, Sven Holtmark, and Iver B. Neumann, eds., *The Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, 1945–89* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
2. Nikolai Ryzhkov, 18 July 1989, in *FBIS* 21 July 1989, 65–68. Cited in Hedrick Smith, *The New Russians* (New York: Avon Books, 1991), 501.
3. Telephone interview with Galina Starovoitova, 7 September 1998. She added that while the fall of the socialist governments in Eastern Europe aided the morale and momentum of the democratic forces in the USSR, the Russian democrats actually condemned the execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. "I told [Romanian democrat] Petru Roman that it was wrong."
4. Dawisha, *Eastern Europe, Gorbachev and Reform*, 215.
5. See Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, 27 October 1989, 25.
6. See "Lukyanov Elected Deputy Chairman" in *The USSR First Congress of People's Deputies, Complete Documents and Records, May 25, 1989–June 10, 1989* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 855.
7. Smith, *The New Russians*, 468–69.
8. Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 122.

9. Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, 10 November 1989, 28.
10. "Sakharov Decries CSSR Crackdown, Soviet Support," *FBIS-SOV*, 1 February 1989, 14.
11. "Yeltsin Calls for Dismantling Central Control," Moscow Television Service, 15 December 1989, cited in *FBIS*, 18 December 1989, 56.
12. *Izvestiya*, 13 December 1989, 2; cited in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 41, No. 50 (1989): 10.
13. See Kathleen Mihalisko, "Reaching for Parliamentary Democracy in Belorussia and Ukraine," *Report on the USSR*, 15 December 1989, 17–19. Mihalisko comments that the "Latvian proposal that the republics be given the choice of electing their Supreme Soviet chairmen by direct and popular vote. Mikhail Gorbachev also condemned the idea, arguing that such a system would concentrate too much power in too few hands. Unexpectedly, Gorbachev lost the argument; the Supreme Soviet not only approved granting the republics the right to dispense with quotas for public organizations, to elect only standing parliaments, and to put the choice of chairmen of republican Supreme Soviets to popular vote, but also decided to eliminate public organizations' one-third share of the seats in the USSR Congress of People's Deputies with effect from the next elections. Although it is not certain that the Congress will act to make the relevant changes in the constitution, the vote was a remarkable victory for the liberal forces within the Soviet parliament and an unusual personal defeat for the country's head of state," 17.
14. Soviet people's deputy, former dissident, and close friend of Gorbachev, Roy Medvedev. He mentioned that the idea of perestroika would find fertile soil in these lands, and the local Communist parties would be compelled to change their nature into social-democratic parties. "Roy Medvedev Views Changes in East Europe," Rome ANSA, 15 November 1989, cited in *FBIS*, 16 November 1989, 32–33.
15. Such as Marina Pavlova-Silvanskaya, senior associate at the Institute for the Economics of the World Socialist System, USSR Academy of Sciences. See "Scientist Analyzes East European Developments," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 3 January 1990, cited in *FBIS*, 5 January 1990, 28. She added that "Yes, 20 years ago it was possible to bring tanks into Prague with impunity. Nowadays the supporters of violent methods in politics cannot justify the Tbilisi action even before their own parliament."
16. See Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, 29 December 1989, 34. Gorbachev also mentions in his memoirs "I have frequently been asked why the USSR did not intervene in the Romanian drama to assist the dictator's departure." Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 484.
17. Stephen White, *After Gorbachev* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 68–69.
18. *Ibid.*, 71.
19. Nikolai Zlobin, "Perestroika versus the Command-Administrative System," *Demokratizatsiya* 1 (Fall 1992): 55.
20. See Dawn Mann, "Gorbachev's Personnel Policy: The Non-Russian Republics," *Report on the USSR*, 1 December 1989, 8–13.
21. Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, 1 December 1989, 29.
22. Mann, "Gorbachev's Personnel Policy," 8–9.
23. See "Gorbachev Remarks on Panama, Romania, Lithuania," Moscow Television Service, 21 December 1989, cited in *FBIS*, 22 December 1989, 33.
24. "Gorbachev Briefs Congress on Romanian Events," Moscow Television Service, 22 December 1989, cited in *FBIS*, 26 December 1989, 32.
25. Giulietto Chiesa, *Transition to Democracy: Political Change in the Soviet Union, 1987–1991* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 38.
26. See "Reportage on Ukraine Supreme Soviet 10<sup>th</sup> Session," Radio Kiev in English to North America, 28 October 1989, in *FBIS-SOV*, 31 October 1989, 71–72.
27. For an analysis of his ideas see Kevin Devlin, "Brezhnev Doctrine Dead: No More Invasions," *Report on the USSR*, 29 September 1989, 14–15.

28. For party reforms, see Alexander Rahr, "Gorbachev and the CPSU Apparatus," *Report on the USSR*, 29 December 1989, 3.

29. Gerhard Wettig, "The Kremlin's Impact on the Peaceful Revolution in East Germany," paper presented at the Norwegian Nobel Institute International Conference, 28 February–1 March 1992, 9, cited in Adam Roberts, "Civil Resistance in Revolutions," in *The Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, 1945–89*.

30. Roman Solchanyk, "The Current Situation in Ukraine: A Round Table with 'Rukh' Chairman Ivan Drach," *Report on the USSR*, 10 November 1989, 21.

31. *FBIS-SOV*, 15 September 1989, 5.

32. *FBIS-SOV*, 10 October 1989, 77.

33. See Rahr, "Gorbachev and the CPSU," 4.

34. This fact is widely known, but it was acknowledged by Gorbachev in his memoirs (279). He even speculates that he would not have stood a chance of being elected either.

35. See for example, Vera Tolz, "The Soviet Union Retreats from Marxism-Leninism," *Report on the USSR*, 20 October 1989, 9–14. See also Charles Fairbanks, "The Nature of the Beast," *National Interest* (Spring 1993): 54, where he succinctly portrays the willful destruction of Marxism-Leninism by the party beginning in early 1987, and then "the most decisive step of all was taken in February 1990, when the [Central Committee] voted for Gorbachev's proposal to end its monopoly of power, agreeing in principle to a multi-party system, and to end its opposition to private property, thus abolishing the core of Leninism and the core of Marxism in one three-day meeting." See also Fairbanks' article "The Suicide of Soviet Communism," *Journal of Democracy* (Spring 1990).

36. See Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, 1 December 1989, 26.

37. "Kryuchkov Tells Newswomen Sakharov Exile 'Mistake,'" *FBIS-SOV*, 20 December 1989, 87.

38. *FBIS-SOV*, 26 September 1989, 61–62.

39. Valery Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 142. He attempted to answer his own question by claiming that "It was known even in the Politburo and the government that international affairs were the prerogative of two or three people, and chiefly the general secretary. . . . Gorbachev and the foreign minister had a virtual monopoly over information about the processes taking place in the world at large, particularly in the public mood and the political leadership of the Socialist countries." He added that "The Supreme Soviet and its commissions knew little about the substance of proposed agreements, and the handling of important decisions sometimes seemed more like rubber stamping than a thorough and critical consideration by the deputies," and signaling the reluctance of the Politburo to tackle such a problem, "When Gorbachev announced on his return from Berlin in October 1989 that Honecker's days were numbered and that we should start thinking about the reunification of Germany, there were no particularly strong objections," 143.

40. Alexander Rahr, "Opposition to Gorbachev in the Politburo," *Report on the USSR*, 8 December 1989, 2.

41. See Dawn Mann, "First Session of USSR Supreme Soviet Ends," *Report on the USSR*, No. 33, 1989, 1–3.

42. Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, 1 December 1989, 33.

43. See Rahr, "Gorbachev and the CPSU," 4.

44. David Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb* (New York: Random House, 1993), 515.

45. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*.

46. *Ibid.* 466, 474, 475, 474, respectively.

47. *Ibid.* 468. However, a very different account of Gorbachev's relation with the socialist leaders emerges from the memoirs of his former chief of staff. Boldin mentions that "Yanosh [*sic*] Kadar [*sic*], Erich Honecker, Voichekh [*sic*] Jaruzelski, Todor Zhivkov and Nicolae Ceausescu . . . [had] amicable, trusting relations, frequent phone conversations, and regular exchanges of gifts and best wishes on both official and private occasions" with Gorbachev. He continues that "Both Gorbachev and Raisa were really shocked and horrified by the death of Ceausescu and his wife . . . Tragically, though, the general secretary did

nothing to help or defend them at the time of their greatest difficulties." However, Boldin's poorly edited book reads more like a puerile attempt to embarrass and belittle Gorbachev than a serious historical account. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 140–42.

48. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 198–199.

49. Vera Tolz, "The USSR This Week," *Report on the USSR*, 1 December 1989, 34.

50. *Ibid.*, 22 December 1989, 32.

51. All quoted from Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 485.

52. Gorbachev's increasing drive toward "centrism" as a tool for political relevance and survival is discussed in Andrei Ryabov, "Can Centrism Work in Russia?" *Demokratizatsiya* 1 (Spring 1993): 96–105; and by Gorbachev himself in an interview, Yuri Shekotchikhin, "Mikhail Gorbachev: The Last Days of the Presidency," *Demokratizatsiya* 1 (Summer 1992), 1–26.

53. Smith, *The New Russians*, 483.

54. "Common Features of 'Renewal' in Socialist Countries," Moscow International Service, 16 December 1989, cited in *FBIS*, 18 December 1989, 3.

55. In his memoirs, Gorbachev recounts cynically how he had seen as early as 1986 how Bulgaria, Hungary, and many of the other socialist allies would use cheap Soviet raw materials to make semi-finished products for export to the West, and how they periodically lied about it. See Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 464–86.

56. Abel, *The Shattered Bloc*, 58.

57. Sergei Chugaev, "Khasbulatov & Co," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, (January/February 1993): 26.

58. See "From the Archives: The Establishment of the Soviet Presidency," *Demokratizatsiya* 2 (Spring 1994): 316–31. In these documents one can see what the scholars as well as Gorbachev's admirers and critics were confirming at the time, that Gorbachev was neglecting his party duties in favor of building the legislatures and state structures in the USSR.

59. Peter Reddaway, "The Role of Popular Discontent," *National Interest* (Spring 1993): 61.

60. See Dale R. Herspring, "The Soviet Military and Change," *Survival* (July/August 1989): 321–38.

61. Chiesa, *Transition to Democracy*, 39.

62. The KGB link in provoking the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 has been made by several Western and East/Central European observers, and even by some high-ranking former Soviet officials. The KGB's involvement was alleged by the Czechoslovak parliamentary committee investigating the revolt on 17 November 1989. See for example, Edward Lucas, "Czech Revolt May Be Result of KGB Plot," *The Independent* (London), 15 May 1990, cited in Roberts, "Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions of 1989-91," 189; presentation by Victor Kuvaldin, senior political advisor to citizen Mikhail Gorbachev, at the Davis Center for Russian Studies, Harvard University, 28 October 1997. In answer to a question about Gorbachev's involvement, Kuvaldin answered "I doubt Gorbachev was active in unseating the Communist leaderships in Eastern Europe. Probably some people in the KGB and the party apparatus were making plans in doing something in this direction."

63. The oversight mechanisms remained de jure, as the legislature (both Soviet and Russian) failed to implement real mechanisms. See Fredo Arias-King, "Attempts to Place the KGB Under Civil Oversight and Control in Russia, and Why They Failed," masters thesis, Harvard University, 1998.

64. See Rahr, "Opposition to Gorbachev," 1.

65. Jiri Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968: Anatomy of a Decision* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

66. This paradigm is elaborated in Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: HarperCollins, 1971).

67. Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 29–38.