
The Era of Stability and Stagnation: Brezhnev's Political System in USSR

Dr. Adnan Tariq¹, Dr. Muhammad Mahboob Ahmad², Dr. Muhammad Ahmad³

¹ Assistant Professor, Institute of Global and Historical Studies, GC University, Lahore.

Email: dr.adnantariq@gcu.edu.pk

² Assistant Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature, GC University, Lahore. Email: mahboobahmad@gcu.edu.pk

³ Lecturer, Political Science Govt. Graduate College Township, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: ahmadsheikhlahore@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the political and administrative character of Leonid Brezhnev's leadership and argues that his rule represented the institutionalization of Soviet authoritarianism after the reformist experiments of the Khrushchev era. Although Brezhnev retained certain economic reforms, he restored the dominance of centralized planning, strengthened bureaucratic control, and reinforced the Communist Party's monopoly over political power. His administration emphasized political stability, ideological conformity, and administrative discipline while suppressing dissent and resisting structural reforms that threatened the existing order. The chapter further argues that Brezhnev's policies created a stable but inflexible political system in which bureaucratic interests prevailed over innovation. While this approach minimized political crises in the short term, it also intensified economic stagnation, administrative inefficiency, and institutional rigidity, thereby laying the foundations for the systemic crisis that confronted the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

Keywords: Leonid I. Brezhnev, Brezhnev Era, Soviet Authoritarianism, Collective Leadership, Oligarchic Rule

Introduction

The removal of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964 marked the beginning of a new phase in Soviet political development characterized by the restoration of centralized authority and bureaucratic conservatism. Under Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet leadership abandoned the pace of Khrushchev's reforms and adopted a more cautious approach aimed at preserving political stability and maintaining the supremacy of the Communist Party. Although Brezhnev initially governed through collective leadership, he gradually consolidated his authority and established an oligarchic political order dominated by the Party elite. Brezhnev's leadership did not seek to revive Stalin's personal dictatorship; instead, it institutionalized authoritarian rule through an entrenched bureaucratic system that combined centralized planning, administrative control, and ideological discipline. Political dissent was tightly controlled, while the powers of central ministries and senior officials were expanded at the expense of regional administrators. Economic reforms were introduced only to improve efficiency within the existing command economy rather than to transform it into a market-oriented system. Consequently, Brezhnev's policies strengthened the

stability of the Soviet regime but simultaneously reduced its capacity for innovation and adaptation. This section explores how Brezhnev's conservative approach reinforced the monolithic structure of the Soviet state and contributed to the long-term stagnation that eventually undermined the Soviet system.

Once again, a 'collective leadership' assumed control with the approval of politburo headed by Leonid I. Brezhnev.ⁱ Brezhnev gradually concentrated all powers and had modified one-man autocrat rule over U.S.S.R very after getting consolidated his position he started to draw his policies which were based on the old Stalinistic method by abandoning Khrushchev's policies of relaxation. Brezhnev rule was an era of oligarchy.ⁱⁱ With the help of his oligarchic rule, he tightened control over dissidents and intellectuals and then he combined agricultural sector and industrial sector with the help of coercive and dreadful method. Through this process, he increased the managerial powers of soviet officials, which were curtailed by Khrushchev.

During Brezhnev rule, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had to face declining economic growth in both industrial and agricultural sector and increasing demands of soviet resources. Official reformers were of the view that central planning must be curtailed and introduce the competitive condition by urging the individual plans. But party apparatus and politburo rejected such proposals by considering this as an attempt to undermine the super centralized structure. So they refused to dismantle the central planning mechanism and centrally controlled managerial powers. Brezhnev refused to relax control and move towards market-oriented socialism. Under his guidelines a new policy was launched which was based on new system of planning and incentives. These policies introduced reforms, which included induced managerial economics and profit ideas with strong central economics ministries. In this way, technocrats of politburo regained fully the position and authorities, which were conducted in Stalin's era. Their reformatted policies applied all over the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. These policies increased the authorities of centrally appointed officials and reduced the managerial powers of local officials. Brezhnev dismantled some of the objectionable features of Khrushchev and modified some of his center oriented policies. In order to cope with economic problems, Brezhnev adopted 'Duel Approach Policy.' He continued some policies of Khrushchev with some fundamental changes. He brought a change in Khrushchev's policies by implanting them with many of Stalin's tactics and policies. Brezhnev's era produced no one spectacular impact either on the domestic front of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or on international relations of the U.S.S.R. His era was free of any major crisis and an almost stable domestic front. The major characteristic of this era was manifest in the perpetuation of Stalinist and Khrushchev's legacy of the Monolith Empire. It was an era of Brezhnev's version of soviet monolithic, whatever he did was merely a continuation of Stalin and Khrushchev to construct, consolidate and safe guard the empire. Another significant characteristic of his policy of curbing hostility towards the consolidation of soviet monopoly over union was manifest in his harsh measure regarding dissent voices and nationalist demand.

One of the most significant features of Brezhnev era was the increasing demands of Russian and non-Russians for individual freedom, democratic autonomy and social justice. This phenomenon of dissent was born in the era of Khrushchev due to his relaxation policies. Considering these trends, a threat to the soviet empire Brezhnev administration dealt all these dissents very harshly. During his regime nationalism raised head in various parts of U.S.S.R most particularly in peripheral eastern Europe regions of Lithuania, Caucasus, Central Asia and Non Slavic elements were started to raised their demand of domestic autonomy and were seeking genuine soviet federalism and autonomy accordingly to the constitutional prerogative. The problem of new emerging nationalism varied from region to region and spoke for the broader political autonomy. They tried to promote local or indigenous cultural. In order to achieve identity these nationalist

movements resisted all Russian efforts to reinforce Russian linguistic and monoculture assimilation, these projects represented central Russian efforts to implant a mono culture all over federation by surpassing every sort of pluralism. This mono cultural and-mono linguist projects were resisted by union thus they gained enough momentum by reasoning non-Russian nationalism. Great Russian an all-top party and politburo position enjoyed power monopoly. Under the guise of communism Russian culture was imposing on all non-Russian satellite and so called conferred countries. Religious dissent attracted the Frustrated and disillusioned youth who were seeking truth, justice civil rights and moral values which soviet government failed to provide them. Brezhnev administration dealt all these dissent voices and concern very harshly. Moscow officials received the demands and concern of non-Russian nationalist as very dangerous and subordinator they considered all these dissent as threat other solidarity of Kremlin monolith control. Brezhnev regime reacted harshly to all these voices and branded them bourgeois nationalist s and executed harsh and tough measures to eradicate them. Brezhnev followed the old Stalinist method to eradicate them and that was another phase of purge. Major purges took place in all the satellite states of Lithuania, Ukraine, Estonia Latvia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Subsequent trials and draconian oppression were proceeded to diminish every major uprising which could repudiate the Kremlin's centralized set up.

Prague Spring was the most important and significant episode of Brezhnev era, which further manifested his commitment to the consolidation of centrally controlled imperialistic outreach of U.S.S.R.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1953, Khrushchev had to face the almost same situation of revolt in case of Hungary uprising which he suppressed brutally. Brezhnev had to suppress the revolt of Czechoslovakia more brutally than Khrushchev did. Although both revolts were different due to difference in their framework, however both had many similarities. Both uprising was result of saturated sentiments about domestic issue. Both were aimed at regional autonomy and enough freedom to promulgate their domestic version of socialism free of soviet monolithic domination. Both revolts sought to introduce the balanced and a humane element into the communist way of affairs. Final and most important similarity was that both were suppressed by soviet through heavy militant means. Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia came on 1968. Soviet forces crushed the insurgent and occupied the entire country.

Czech masses were untied for the social justice and domestic autonomy. They did not desire for complete secession from Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Nevertheless, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics conceived an impression that Czechoslovakia was falling in to the hand of those who wanted to exclude it from Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. To Union of Soviet Socialist Republics administration this event could become explosion for the full scale launching of pluralism which could ultimately become threat towards the solidarity of monolithic control of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics over not only peripheral regions of non-Russian but with the main land Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Czechoslovakia's traditional tendencies towards democratic socialism were considered by Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Such tendency which could transcend the pluralism in other countries which could undermined the sovereignty of soviet monolithic. So it was the democratic character and content of the Czechoslovakia experiment which emphasized a powerful reactionary moment that sought to overturn socialist system. That was why Moscow claimed justification for the right to intervene anywhere to prevent any opposition to their socialist set up. All this precipitated to ultimate invasion to perpetuate the superstructure of the Kremlin.

Another great threat to the soviet bloc developed and came into the front in Poland. In the decade 80s Poland was facing severe recession. All programs to bring reform were failed and workers started to form independent trade union movement. It was known as solidarity movement,

another big blow to soviet authoritarian system. In this polish episode Union of Soviet Socialist Republics confronted an acute policy dilemma of what the method must be adopted to cope with situation. This moment could trigger a series of discontent and dissent in the whole soviet block and thus put the solidarity of the soviet empire in the threat of withering away. Solidarity moment sought not only free trade union but also the institution of free election, independent court, and the abolishment of police authority. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics could not tolerate this radical movement. Instead of opting for a military option because it could result in to harsh fire back, Brezhnev decided to opt very politically by using the option of military political intervention. Kremlin instigated the polish army to capture the regime of local government by proclaiming marshal law. This military government disbanded solidarity moment. But this was all about status quo so that enough time could be gain to reconcile these insurgencies in long terms perspective. Brezhnev administration was not satisfied with curbing of uprisings and dissent voices. This dissatisfaction had produced a dire need for some constitutional arrangements so that a so-called patch up could intend to redefine the state-masses relationship and state peripheries mechanism could be redrawing. All this was aim to consolidate the empire. This constitution of 1977 was aimed at apparently on individual liberty and reinvigorating the cordial relationship among satellites and peripheries. The preamble of the constitution emphasizes on continuity stability of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. According to the constitution, soviet regime enjoys an absolute monopoly over all origins and sphere of powers.

All the prerogative of the constitution regarding individual rights and satellite reformation were remained unworthy because Kremlin still was holding of almost all the supreme powers of decision making regarding every sphere of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This drafting of the new constitution was mere a misnomer about so-called liberalism it solidified the existing static set up with special reference to state and society. Brezhnev Era wars a mere continuation of traditional policies that were based on the establishment and consolidation of the Monolithic structure of state and Brezhnev dealt with all these concerning issues continuously and never realized any option to reconcile these issue by any other moderate means and solution.

Successors of Brezhnev

The last three or four years of Brezhnev are characterized by constant stagnation in almost all sectors of the static premise. The agricultural and economic sectors became rigid. The Decision-making process became the victim of paralysis.^{iv} It seems all the state apparatus of the falling Brezhnev era become paralysis. With the Andropov^v step in the office, it was assumed that Andropov must cope with the dire need of overhauling the whole system and must bring radical reform packages to get efficiency most particularly in a financially disrupted society. He did whatever he could do but whatever he did, was based on the slow pace reform. He did not try to challenge the status quo by introducing radical progress to halt the multi-faceted corruption and disruption in state and society. Every reform package, which he innovated, was based on the pro-centralized conception of dealing issues up to the end of the Brezhnev era bureaucratic policy-making process become extremely institutionalize and due to this hyperactive institutionalized character of decision making Andropov could not afford to escape this mechanism while doing reforms. So whatever he did was confined to this institutional premise. Although, very after his succession he consolidated his sole rule by appointing his close associate at an important party position this was the apparatus through which Andropov had to work according to the determined requisites and that was just to follow the precedent. So because of this Andropov found it difficult to concentrate enough power to promulgate political changes on radical lines due to the state

apparatus, he was confined to make a program with precedent features of enforcement and coercive measures.

All these policies were not based on drastic reform of economic agricultural sectors but he attempted for improvement in management and to bring efficiency in workers' occupations. He stressed on work discipline, strict observance of the planning policies, and emphasize on the reduction of absenteeism among functionaries and workers to solve the problem of inappropriate working conditions, he launched a program which was operated at several levels. Through this program, he started a process of dismissal and imprisoning of the corrupt official so that the governmental function could be reinvigorated and re-activated. He ordered police forces all over the country to establish a checking process over workers This destabilized era of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not free of curbing of dissent voices either these dissent uprisings were against the soviet regime or just aimed at immediate reforms, they had to become the victim of brutal suppression through formal official warnings, harassment, imprisonment and expulsion from U.S.S.R. Some of the measures to curb these dissents was carried out through legally constituted style and some were carried out through secret police. Andropov's era was characterized by the tightening of political and ideological control. All his policies of consolidating the central structure of state were promulgated very restricted but on the other side he also tried to re-assess the role of central planning by including the segment of liberalism and restrained decentralization in local industry but all his little bit liberalism was rolled back by Cherenkov who was for strict in his policies to solidify the failing and falling monolith super-structure of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.^{vi}

As it is a widely accepted political notion that the crumbling empire becomes more authoritarian to stop its decline. So this was manifested in the mid-eighties of the U.S.S.R particularly in Konstantin Cherenkov's era. He was a stern conservative and found an empire that was in fact in dire need of comprehensive overhauling but the monolith ruling elite was not ready to let it happen. Was the consolidation period of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics characterized by the intent to get success in the socialist program or it was just aimed at the empowerment of the ruling elite. A close study of the background and historical requisites proved that it was initially a program started by Stalin but very after his death ruling elite emerged with designs primarily about their consolidation and safeguarding and very secondarily anything else. Careerists and politburo members had been converted into the new ruling class. Stalin was required of a particular and loyalist apparatus to operationalize his authoritarian policies. Stalinist construction of monolith structure was the grim requirement of a step by step response to emerging challenges. Soon after his death this situation of uncertainties was no longer exist. So this authoritarian system was of no use but this structure became self-dynamic and converted into an oligarchic version of authoritarianism from Stalin's sole control. So the post-Stalin era was the Stalinist era without Stalin and continuously characterized by perpetuation, consolidation, and safeguarding of this monolith setup.

This controlling class comprised various hierarchical strata, in first-line, these were soviet official spread all over the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the second layer comprised on Russian over non-Russian in third line urban Russian over the rural-Russian and the fourth and most important class of this hierarchy was Nomenklura Rested in kremlin. Centralization of power in the premise of this kremlin Nomenklutra was one of the main factors causing the confinement of this ruling class in the shadow of monolith formation of static set up in a very reciprocal fashion.^{vii}The post-Stalinist period of stability showed a complicated and contradictory set of policies. e.g. Khrushchev policies about agriculture were based on restrained de-centralization, but his policies about the industrial sector were contrary and messy his political approach was also

characterized by contradiction. While the policy of mass terror was abolished by Khrushchev but the police apparatus was the same as Stalin's era and was not dismantled. Various methods of coercion were abolished and terrorist elements were contained but the supremacy of super centralized state with its confined bureaucratic apparatus grew stronger so that was why monolithic despotism reached its apogee in a post-Stalin period very particularly in the ending period of Brezhnev in the late 70s. Brezhnev's period was initially aimed at to dump the critique on Stalin and his institutional policies. He also attempted successfully to solidify and re-invigorating the traditional Stalinist version of the static setup. However, he replaced the cult of Stalin's personality with the corporate style party of the bureaucratic elite. It was a faceless Stalin period.^{viii}

Reforming the policies of Brezhnev and his successor was based on the objective of maintaining the central structure. Such policies would ultimately result in neither reform nor smashing of the status quo and caused by stagnation in all spheres of state and society. Thus foundations of collapse were laid down by these features of consolidating the system. Brezhnev's stable government had produced a proliferation of corruption. Despite awareness, Brezhnev did not consider it seriously as it was aforementioned to him the possible outcome of the dismantlement of the empire. Politburo did not want to let loose the grip of monolith control whatever their policies were in the name of so called reforms, bound to proceed without disturbing the centralized super structure whatever reforms they introduced had to function within the premise of centralized structure. Ending phase of consolidation was of slowing economy with stagnant state function and paralyzes process of decision making. Brezhnev recognized this and attempted to patch these problems rather than completely overhaul the system.^{ix} All his efforts were failed. It Brezhnev would have tried to completely overhaul the system, ruling elite could have defeated Brezhnev's efforts. Brezhnev ended with genesis of potentially produced crisis. Emergence of Gorbachev with his paradigm shift in policies brought this passive crisis into active orchestration.

Conclusion

Brezhnev's period of leadership represented the consolidation of a bureaucratic form of authoritarianism that prioritized political stability over institutional reform. By restoring centralized decision-making, strengthening the authority of the Communist Party, and limiting the scope of economic and political liberalization, his government reversed many of Khrushchev's reformist initiatives without abandoning the command economy. The resulting political system was characterized by collective leadership, bureaucratic dominance, ideological conformity, and extensive state control over society. Although Brezhnev succeeded in creating a relatively stable political environment and avoided the upheavals that had characterized previous decades, this stability came at the cost of declining economic dynamism and administrative flexibility. The growing power of the party bureaucracy, resistance to meaningful reform, and persistence of centralized planning generated widespread stagnation in both economic performance and political governance. Consequently, the Brezhnev era transformed Soviet authoritarianism from a system centered on the personality of a single ruler into a deeply institutionalized bureaucratic order whose structural weaknesses became increasingly evident during the final decade of the Soviet Union.

Reference

ⁱ Leonid Brezhnev, (1906-1982), was a Soviet statesman and Communist Party official who was the leader of the Soviet Union for 18 years. Brezhnev became a full member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1931 and studied at the metallurgical institute in Kamenskoye. After graduating (1935), he worked as an engineer and director of a technical school and also held a variety of local party posts; his career flourished under Joseph Stalin's regime, and by 1939 he had become secretary of the regional party

committee of Dnepropetrovsk. During World War II Brezhnev served as a political commissar in the Red Army, advancing in rank until he became a major general (1943) and head of the political commissars on the Ukrainian front.

When Stalin died (March 1953), Brezhnev lost his posts on the Central Committee and in the Politburo and had to accept the position of deputy head of the political department of the Ministry of Defense with the rank of lieutenant general. But in 1954 Nikita Khrushchev, who had gained full power in Moscow, made Brezhnev second secretary of the Kazakhstan Communist Party (1954), in which capacity he vigorously implemented Khrushchev's ambitious Virgin and Idle Lands Campaign in Kazakhstan. Brezhnev was soon promoted to first secretary of the Kazakhstan Communist Party (1955), and in 1956 he was reelected to his posts on the CPSU Central Committee and in the Politburo. A year later, after he had loyally worked against the "antiparty group" that attempted to remove Khrushchev, Brezhnev was made a full member of the Politburo, and in 1960 he became chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet—i.e., the titular head of the Soviet state. In July 1964 he resigned that post to become Khrushchev's assistant as second secretary of the Central Committee, by which time he was considered Khrushchev's heir apparent as party leader. Three months later, however, Brezhnev helped lead the coalition that forced Khrushchev from power, and, in the division of spoils that followed, Brezhnev became first secretary (after 1966, General Secretary) of the CPSU. Following a brief period of "collective leadership" with Premier Aleksey Kosygin, Brezhnev emerged clearly as the dominant figure. During the 1970s Brezhnev attempted to normalize relations between West Germany and the Warsaw Pact and to ease tensions with the United States through the policy known as *détente*. At the same time, he saw to it that the Soviet Union's military-industrial complex was greatly expanded and modernized. Under his leadership, the Soviets achieved parity with the United States in strategic nuclear weapons, and their space program overtook the American one. A huge navy was fitted out and the army remained the largest in the world. The Soviet Union supported "wars of national liberation" in developing countries through the provision of military aid to left-wing movements and governments. But Brezhnev's unceasing buildup of his defense and aerospace industries left other sectors of the economy increasingly deprived of funds. Soviet agriculture, consumer-goods industries, and health-care services declined throughout the 1970s and early '80s as a consequence, resulting in shortages and declining standards of living.

In 1976 Brezhnev was made marshal of the Soviet Union, thus becoming the only other party leader after Stalin to hold the highest military rank. The system of collective leadership ended with his dismissal of Podgorny as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in May 1977 and Brezhnev's election to that position the following month. He thus became the first person in Soviet history to hold both the leadership of the party and of the state. In 1979 Brezhnev reached agreement with U.S. President Jimmy Carter on a new bilateral strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II), but the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the treaty, and soon afterward the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan (December 1979) in an effort to prop up a faltering communist government there. Brezhnev's government also helped plan General Wojciech Jaruzelski's suppression of Poland's Solidarity union in December 1981. His efforts to neutralize internal dissent within the Soviet Union itself were similarly determined. Brezhnev retained his hold on power to the end despite his frail health and growing feebleness. He gave the Soviet Union a formidable military-industrial base capable of supplying large numbers of the most modern weapons, but in so doing he impoverished the rest of the Soviet economy. After his death, he was criticized for a gradual slide in living standards, the spread of corruption and cronyism within the Soviet bureaucracy, and the generally stagnant and dispiriting character of Soviet life in the late 1970s and early '80s.

ⁱⁱ Oligarchy is a form of power structure in which power rests with a small number of people. These people may be distinguished by nobility, wealth, education or corporate, religious, political, or military control. Such states are often controlled by families who typically pass their influence from one generation to the next, but inheritance is not a necessary condition for the application of this term. Throughout history, oligarchies have often been tyrannical, relying on public obedience or oppression to exist. Aristotle pioneered the use of the term as meaning rule by the rich, for which another term commonly used today is plutocracy. In the early 20th century Robert Michels developed the theory that democracies, as all large organizations, have a tendency to turn into oligarchies. In his "Iron law of oligarchy" he suggests that the necessary division of labor in large organizations leads to the establishment of a ruling class mostly

concerned with protecting their own power. This was already recognized by the Athenians in the fourth century BCE: after the restoration of democracy from oligarchical coups, they used the drawing of lots for selecting government officers to counteract that tendency toward oligarchy in government. They drew lots from large groups of adult volunteers to pick civil servants performing judicial, executive, and administrative functions. They even used lots for posts, such as judges and jurors in the political courts which had the power to overrule the Assembly

ⁱⁱⁱ The Prague Spring of 1968. As the new first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Dubček was propelled into the role of chief reformer, even though he was not particularly qualified for it. He was a young Slovak who had spent his political life in the party apparatus, and, because he was a compromise candidate, people did not expect much from him. Yet in the effort of ridding the government of the old guard, Dubček was aided by the pressure of public opinion, which was growing stronger, especially after members of the press became determined to express themselves more freely in early March 1968.

The crown achievement of the new reformist government was the Action Program, adopted by the party's Central Committee in April 1968. The program embodied reform ideas of the several preceding years; it encompassed not only economic reforms but also the democratization of Czechoslovak political life. Among its most important points were the promotion of Slovakia to full parity within a new Czechoslovak federation, long overdue industrial and agricultural reforms, a revised constitution that would guarantee civil rights and liberties, and complete rehabilitation of all citizens whose rights had been infringed in the past. The effect of the liberalization movement—which became known as the Prague Spring—on the Czechoslovak public was unprecedented and quite unexpected. There were efforts to reestablish the Social Democratic Party, forcibly fused with the Communist Party in 1948. With the collapse of the official communist youth movement, youth clubs and the Boy Scouts were resurrected. Christian churches, national minority associations, human rights groups, and other long-forgotten societies became active as well. The Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact allies were far more alarmed. After Dubček declined to participate in a special meeting of the Warsaw Pact powers, they sent him a letter on July 15 saying that his country was on the verge of counterrevolution and that they considered it their duty to protect it. Nevertheless, Dubček remained confident that he could talk himself out of any difficulties with his fellow communist leaders. He accepted an invitation by Brezhnev to a conference at Čierná-nad-Tisou (a small town on the Soviet border with Slovakia), where the Soviet Politburo and the Czechoslovak leaders tried to resolve their problems. On August 3, representatives of the Soviet, East German, Polish, Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Czechoslovak Communist parties met again at Bratislava; the communiqué issued after that meeting gave the impression that pressure would be eased on Czechoslovakia in return for somewhat tighter control over the press.

However, on the evening of Aug. 20, 1968, Soviet-led armed forces invaded the country. The Soviet authorities seized several leaders and secretly took them to Moscow. Meanwhile, the population spontaneously reacted against the invasion through acts of passive resistance and improvisation (e.g., road signs were removed so that the invading troops would get lost). Soviet troops were going to stay in Czechoslovakia for the time being, and the leaders had agreed to tighter controls over political and cultural activities.

^{iv} Ibid., 88.

^v Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov (1914–1984) was the sixth paramount leader of the Soviet Union and the fourth General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Following the 18-year rule of Leonid Brezhnev, Andropov served in the post from November 1982 until his death in February 1984. Earlier in his career, Andropov served as the Soviet ambassador to Hungary from 1954 to 1957, during which time he was involved in the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. He was named Chairman of the KGB on 10 May 1967. In this position, he oversaw a massive crackdown on dissent carried out via mass arrests and the involuntary psychiatric commitment of people deemed "socially undesirable". Upon Brezhnev's death, Yuri Andropov succeeded him as General Secretary and leader of the Soviet Union. During his short tenure, Andropov sought to eliminate corruption and inefficiency within the Soviet system by investigating longtime officials for violations of party discipline and criminalizing truancy in the workplace. The Cold War intensified, and he was at a loss for how to handle the growing crisis in the Soviet economy. His major long-term impact was bringing to the fore a new generation of young reformers, as energetic as himself,

including Yegor Ligachyov, Nikolai Ryzhkov, and, most importantly, Mikhail Gorbachev. However, upon suffering kidney failure in February 1983, Andropov's health began to deteriorate rapidly.

^{vi}Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko (1911 –1985) was a Soviet politician and the fifth General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He briefly led the Soviet Union from 13 February 1984 until his death on 10 March 1985. Born to a poor family from Siberia, Chernenko joined the Komsomol (the Communist Party's youth league) in 1929 and became a full member of the party in 1931. After holding a series of propaganda posts, in 1948 he became the head of the propaganda department in Moldavia, serving under Leonid Brezhnev. After Brezhnev took over as First Secretary of the CPSU in 1964, Chernenko rose to head the General Department of the Central Committee, responsible for setting the agenda for the Politburo and drafting Central Committee decrees. In 1971, Chernenko became a full member of the Central Committee, and in 1978 he was made a full member of the Politburo. After the death of Brezhnev and his successor Yuri Andropov, Chernenko was elected General Secretary in February 1984 and made Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in April 1984. Due to his rapidly failing health, he was often unable to fulfill his official duties. He died in March 1985 after leading the country for only a year and a month, and was succeeded as General Secretary by Mikhail Gorbachev.

^{vii} Moshe Lewin, *Russia U.S.S.R. Russia* (New York, 1995), 27.

^{viii} Seweryn Bialer *The Soviet Paradox* (New York, 1989), 12.13.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 23.