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MR. GORBACHEV - A KENNEDY IN THE KREMLIN?

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Impressions of the Man, His Style and his Likely Impact Upon East West Relations.

For decades, the Soviet Union has been ruled by expressionless men who consciously hid behind a wall of secrecy. In March 1985, it appears this image was put aside. A new type of leader was selected - a leader who, whilst not tall, is, nonetheless physically imposing - a man with a penetrating stare and yet a ready smile who exudes confidence and an inner strength. This man is Mikhail Sergevich Gorbachev, whose signature surmounts the photograph (seen above) of him standing at Lenins desk in Clerkenwell, London in December 1984. He represents a new generation of Soviet leaders. He brings with him a new combination of deep loyalty to the Communist party and an apparent executive ability. Although he is obviously a product of the Soviet system, Mr. Gorbachev not only exudes self-confidence, but also a distinctive charismatic style which may prove to be of much advantage to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, what is of advantage to the Soviet Union may provide a greatly increased challenge to the West. In order the better to understand the new Soviet leadership it is necessary to speculate as to how such a man was selected for top leadership within the Communist party system and to assess what impact his leadership may have upon East - West relations.

In December 1984 Mr. Gorbachev, accompanied by his wife Raisa, led a high powered delegation on a visit to Great Britain. During their stay in London as guests of the English Parliament I was invited not only to serve on the Reception Committee but also to escort them on certain expeditions during their tour. This included a visit to Lenin's publishing house in Clerkenwell, to the British Museum and to the House of Commons. These tours provided me with an unique opportunity to observe Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev at close quarters, to listen to their questions and to observe their reactions to statements and events.

From this unusual exposure to the Gorbachevs, I made the personal observation that Mr. Gorbachev's charisma was so striking that, if permitted by the Communist Party system, Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev could well become the Soviet equivalent of the Jack and Jacqueline Kennedy team. However, I was at pains to point out that Mr. Gorbachev was a tough and dedicated Communist whose actual policies would differ markedly from those of the late President Kennedy. This was merely my own opinion but one that was based none the less upon a relatively long, and an unusually relaxed and diverse exposure to the Gorbachevs.

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It is obvious that, for a man to have climbed to the top of the Communist party system by the age of 54, he must have worked extremely hard using both his ambition and his exceptional political competence and panache. Ambition and ability however arouse feelings of jealousy and suspicion. These feelings are particularly strong within the Soviet Communist system where loyalty to party superiors, dogma and traditions is vital to promotion. To have been promoted so rapidly under these circumstances, Mr. Gorbachev must have shown great patience and loyalty to the party.

From observing Mr. Gorbachev's speeches, presentations and responses to questions, it became evident that he is a thoroughly polished, able and contemporary politician. He is in no way a 'peoples popular leader' propelled from the ranks of either the agricultural or the military communities. He is one of the first representatives of the generation of 'groomed' Soviet politicians to enter the world stage.

Within the first few moments of meeting Mr. Gorbachev it becomes clear that he is intelligent, alert and inquisitive. Not only is he constantly posing questions but he also listens very carefully and attentively to the answers. This quality has important political implications in that people assume that anyone who is genuinely interested in what they have to say is probably worthy of their respect. These qualities, together with his controlled, yet warm smile, make him attractive and indeed beguiling. However, he can also be extremely tough when he makes use of his voice, his piercing eyes and even his physical gestures to emphasize a point.

I witnessed a vivid example of these two extremes of expression. The instance occurred when I asked him why the Soviet Union continued to encourage and finance terrorism in Latin America. He responded, whilst hitting me repeatedly on the shoulder even before the interpreter had translated my question. This gave me the distinct impression that he probably understands English. He asked me whether I would consider that the colonists who fought in the American Revolutionary War were terrorists or freedom fighters. His whole mannerism then changed abruptly when he then tapped me softly on the wrist saying "but of course we are totally opposed to individual terrorists such as those who killed Dr. Morro in Italy."

Not only did the above example show his capacity for very controlled but extreme ranges of expression but it also illustrated his knowledge and use of western history. His knowledge was further evidenced when he questioned the demonstration that took place within the British Museum. In the course of my explanation, I mentioned that in Britain we allowed

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people a great deal of freedom. Mr. Gorbachev replied that "what you are saying Mr. Browne and what is the truth are two entirely different things. Even Lord Byron had to leave England because of the lack of freedom". His curiosity and interest in history were also displayed when he questioned a curator at the British Museum concerning some Saxon coins that the Russians returned to Britain in the 19th century. He was most anxious to determine whether or not there had been trade links between the two countries in those early Saxon times.

Mr. Gorbachev's curiosity throughout his visit seems to have two implications: first, he is anxious to learn from the West that which may be adapted to the Communist system, and second, he never misses an opportunity to challenge evidence that is presented to him. This latter quality is obviously of critical importance to any leader because it will inspire increased respect and loyalty amongst his subordinates and it will reinforce his effectiveness as an administrator.

Apparently Mr. Gorbachev's incessant and open desire to grasp new knowledge is unusual among Soviet leaders. High ranking Communist officials normally avoid any indications of personal ignorance in order to create an impression of omniscience. On the other hand, Mr. Gorbachev's expression of genuine curiosity may prove to be one of his most effective political tools. Not only does this curiosity provide a constant flow of new information in a society where information is severely censored, but it will gain him greater support from both his superiors and subordinates. Recently as part of a tour of Moscow, he was scheduled to take tea in the apartment of an ordinary working couple. On examination of the cup from which he was drinking, he found it was of government issue and obviously planted by his aides to give him a false impression of the improved living standards of working people in Moscow. Apparently Mr. Gorbachev left in a fury on discovering this deception. Such an incident surely will have left an indelible sense of admiration upon the couple and of respect upon his staff.

Not only does Mr. Gorbachev appear anxious to learn as much as possible about the past, but he was also eager to learn about current customs and procedures that presently exist in the West. He made impromptu departures from the planned schedules firstly, to visit St. Pauls Cathedral in preference to visiting the Marx tomb and secondly, to look at the Prime Minister's official residence at No. 10 Downing Street. These changes illustrated an apparent wish by him to gain a strong, first hand and subjective impression of Britain. This reinforced the impression I had that Mr. Gorbachev wishes to grasp the essential tools for success in the Western world and to select, adopt and integrate them for use in the Soviet Union. This may prove to be a stark

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and important contrast to the action of Tzar Peter the Great who on returning from visits to the west, sought to impose on the Russian people rather than to integrate customs that he admired in the West.

Mr. Gorbachev appeared to be extremely sensitive to ideas that conflicted with Communist principles and also references to any potential weakness within the Soviet system. For instance, in the British Museum when he was shown some ancient Egyptian tombs, he displayed distinct discomfort when told that only the names of those of noble birth were carved in stone. This elitest, Egyptian custom was in sharp contrast to the Soviet communist merit system. Mr. Gorbachev's visible discomfort might be attributed to his origins as the son of a peasant farm worker in Stavropol, from whence he rose, to the leadership of his country by the age of 54. He achieved his present position by ascending the extremely competitive ladder by virtue of his own personal merit. A second instance of his sensitivity was apparent when in response to one of his questions about seating in the House of Commons, I mentioned that we had benches as opposed to pre-assigned seats and even then, by packing the benches, there was room for only about 500 of the 650 members. I also explained that benches, as opposed to pre-assigned seats, lent a certain 'dynamic' to the Chamber which was effectively "The Live Theatre Of English Politics". He greeted this with incredulity. As an example, I explained that he and Mrs. Gorbachev were standing in front of the very interesting, front bench below the gangway on the opposition side. I described how, when in opposition, it was traditionally occupied by the left wing socialist members but that, since the right wing of the Socialist party had split off to form the Social Democratic Party, there were now physical struggles to sit on the bench. I further explained that this behaviour often appeared childish to the ill-informed onlooker but that it represented, in theatre form, the acting out of the dilemma that now faces Socialist voters in the country, whether to side with the left or the right wing of their party. Mr. Gorbachev was incensed that I should mention that the Socialists had any political dilemma whatsoever, such as existed in the early days of the Soviet Union between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and is now expunged from their history books. He spun round upon the rest of his delegation and said "what Mr. Browne has just said illustrates vividly the complete hypocrisy of British politics. They elect 650 members of the Parliament and only allow half of them in!"

7 | It is well known that the Soviet leadership is essentially pragmatic. It was interesting to see the blatant manner in which it was displayed during the first reception at Claridges Hotel. Having been with the Gorbachevs throughout most of that first day, I found myself being asked to help introduce other Members of Parliament to them at the reception. The introductions went in

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the usual manner for guests and for MPs. However, it was interesting to note that when Socialist MPs were introduced they often overrode the normal descriptions of "may I introduce Mr A, who is the Member of Parliament for X". They usually insisted upon saying, "I am the 'Socialist' Member for X". This was apparently done to gain an 'inside track' to the Communist leader and his wife. The Gorbachevs, who were moving independently amongst the guests, positively ignored MPs who overrode the introductions in such a manner and moved on to others. It may be possible that this indicated an assessment by the Soviets that, as a result of the recent general election and the current opinion polls which showed the Socialist party at an historic low, it was highly likely that the Conservative party would be in power in Britain for the foreseeable future. It was therefore important to establish contacts with Conservatives rather than Socialists.

Despite Mr. Gorbachev's apparent wish to show, on occasion, that his delegation was very democratic and that he was merely the first amongst equals, it was very evident that he exerted great authority and that this was reflected in the way in which his comrades treated him. During the question and answer period with the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons, I was seated next to a very amiable but tired Russian General on the flank of the Soviet delegation. The General appeared hard pushed to stay awake when he was summoned by an aide to go to Mr. Gorbachev's chair. A few words in his ear and he came back sweating and started to take copious notes! Obviously Mr. Gorbachev is not a man who tolerates much bluffing or laziness amongst his staff.

It was also impressive to see how Mr. Gorbachev fielded unnotified questions from the members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on such difficult subjects as the persecution of Jews and Christians in the Soviet Union and upon Soviet policy in Afghanistan and in the Middle East. It was widely reported, I think wrongly, that Mr. Gorbachev had lost his 'cool'. Whilst it is true that he raised his voice, he did not shout. It is true that he snapped back at the questioners, but he was not personally rude to them. It is also true that he evaded any real answer, but he did this skillfully by throwing back upon the questioner the onus on religious persecution etc. He did so by quoting allegations of religious persecution in Northern Ireland. In short, he answered the questions with a skill that would have done credit to any accomplished Western politician. What was more impressive was that he answered with such authority and confidence - the confidence that can normally be attributed to a position of preeminent power. It was this great degree of confidence that led me to believe, at the time, that he was

possibly already in the position of preeminent, effective power in the Soviet Union under the ailing Chernenko. It convinced me that he was either certain to be selected or had indeed already been selected as Chernenko's successor.

The London programme arranged for Mr. Gorbachev and his delegation was intense, and would have placed heavy physical and mental demands upon any delegation leader. Mr. Gorbachev undertook his role as delegation leader with great enthusiasm, typically talking so much during official meals that he managed to eat very little. He was so hungry that apparently he had to return to the Soviet Embassy for supplementary meals. It was most impressive to see how well he coped both physically and mentally. Whilst his physique appears to be robust, he could also be fairly described as mentally very tough and agile.

In addition to the obvious physical and mental toughness which was exemplified during his visit to London, I sensed that he possessed an inner strength based upon conviction, control and confidence. In this respect I agree with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's remark that she feels she could do business with Mr. Gorbachev.

The Communist system tends to discourage individuality, creativity and flexibility. I believe that Mr. Gorbachev's inner strength will allow him a good chance of exercising a degree of these attributes that are most unusual in the Soviet Union. For since the death of Stalin, with the possible exception of Mr. Krushchev, such qualities have appeared to be singularly absent in the Soviet leadership.

Balancing Mr. Gorbachev's toughness and pragmatism, I detected a distinctly human side to his character. It is this human element in a leader's character that is often so important in contributing to that elusive quality of charisma. The leader appears so human and yet, in himself, is different.

The above photograph depicts Mr. Gorbachev standing, with his wife in the background, at Lenin's desk in his old publishing house at Clerkenwell in London. It was from this desk that much of the very earliest of Communist thought emanated. As one of the very few people able to squeeze in to this tiny office I was most interested to see how deeply moved was Mr. Gorbachev, the potential leader of the Communist world, when standing at Lenin's desk.

It was also interesting to note how very affected and embarrassed he was by the demonstration of three students in one of the rooms at the British Museum. They rushed up to about 12 feet of Mr. Gorbachev and his delegation shouting words to the effect that he was a killer and a murderer. Mr. Gorbachev's blush stretched even down the back of his neck and he appeared deeply shocked.

Despite some tense moments, it was obvious to me that Mr. Gorbachev has a keen and subtle sense of humour. A number of examples have been quoted in the press. The one which most amused me was in the Saxon Department of the British Museum. The Curator had just finished describing the greatness of King Alfred. He ended by saying that "the problem is that the average English school boy only remembers one thing about the great King Alfred and that is that he burnt the cakes." As quick as a flash Mr. Gorbachev replied, "Well, you did not have to do much to become famous in those days".

From the above I determined that Mr. Gorbachev is a very considerable character and personality. The fact that these qualities have shone through, from within the strict stereotype Communist party system is all the more remarkable.

The popular western image of the wives of Soviet leaders is that they are large, bland and uninvolved in their husbands' careers. Mr. Gorbachev's wife Raisa proved to be the antitheses of this popular image. She is extremely well educated, having a PhD, and is alert and attractive. In fact, by Soviet standards I believe she could justly be termed chic. I found her extremely intelligent, and well poised. She also has a keen sense of humour. When the Curator of the Egyptian department at the British Museum apologised for the fact that their route was taking them backwards through time, she interjected "Well you can only travel backwards in time in a museum." What was most interesting and particularly apparent during Mr. Gorbachev's meeting with the Foreign Affairs Select Committee was that Mrs. Gorbachev appeared deeply interested and aware of what was going on. I believe that she takes a keen interest in her husband's career and, I was given the impression, an active interest in his dress. Figuratively speaking, she stands beside rather than behind him. In short, she is a very professional politician's wife and together they make a most formidable and impressive political team.

It is also interesting to note that the Gorbachev's appear to take an interest in the arts, attending the ballet as private citizens. Mr. Gorbachev also remarked that the performance he saw of Così fan Tutte was an example of Mozart at his best. It is possible that this interest in the arts appeals to the intelligentsia within the Soviet Union, a section of society which, since 1917, has been almost totally opposed to the Soviet leadership. It is therefore possible that Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev may provide the political bridge of influence between the Soviet leadership and the Soviet intelligentsia. In time, this could provide a very useful political ally for him if properly managed.

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As I have said earlier, Mr. Gorbachev is no liberal - he is a dedicated Communist and a product of the Communist school to which he must have deep rooted loyalties. However, unlike all of his predecessors, except for Krushchev and Stalin, Mr. Gorbachev has, in my opinion, charisma - western style charisma, and an ability and willingness to use the western media, particularly television.

In evaluating the characteristics of Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev it is hard to imagine what additional public qualities were possessed by President Jack and Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy. I believe it is entirely reasonable to think that Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev, if they are permitted to do so by the party system, could well become the Soviet equivalent of the Kennedy team and, as such, they will make a major impact upon the world. The advent of a charismatic leader in Moscow could have a very beneficial effect upon the Soviet Union. Equally it could have the effect of greatly increasing the challenge to western leaders. Notwithstanding the advantages that may accrue, it does seem strange that the inherently conservative Communist party elite or Nomenklatura, would have chosen Mr. Gorbachev as party secretary.

Exactly how the Soviet leader is chosen is known probably to only very few people even within the Soviet Union. It appears that a mere handful of senior members of the Politburo, and possibly on occasion the outgoing leader, nominate a successor who has to be not only acceptable to the majority power structure within the Politburo but also to the Soviet elite or Nomenklatura.

It is well known that the Soviet Nomenklatura was created by Stalin to run the Union of Soviet Republics in place of the Russian Tzarist aristocracy and Civil Service whom Stalin had largely liquidated. In return for their loyalty this elite were given great privileges including special shops etc. To ensure further their undivided loyalty, Stalin subjected them to part of his Terror. Members of the Nomenklatura who remember Stalin's Terror have a strong distrust and fear of any leader possessing too much individual charisma and therefore power outside the Communist party machine. It is interesting to note, in passing, that when Mr. Krushchev began to develop his own brand of charisma, he was quickly ousted from office, possibly as a result of this innate fear on the part of the Nomenklatura. The Nomenklatura enjoy such relatively vast privileges that their vested interest is in maintaining the status quo within the Soviet system. Amongst the Nomenklatura are, of course, many of the Soviet military and part of the status quo is the maintenance of massive military spending which is sustained by the maintenance of a constant fear of invasion. The Tartar invasion which held Russia in subjection for about 250 years; Napoleon's invasion in 1812; and finally Hitler's invasion in the second world war, lend serious historic weight to this argument.

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In addition the Soviet military point to the apparent encirclement of Russia by western allies, from Canada and the United States over the North Pole to NATO; to CENTO (now dissolved); to SEATO (now dissolved); round to the United States bases in the Far East. The Soviet elite is therefore conditioned both by fear and by privilege, to support the status quo - a status in which they individually have a vested interest. They would naturally support the selection of a 'Committee man' as leader and would be highly suspicious of an individualist, particularly one with potential charisma. Furthermore, the very senior members of the Nomenklatura, namely those in the Politburo, have shown a tendency to choose leaders who are faceless committee men and virtually indistinguishable from themselves.

Why is it that the handful of top Politburo members, who probably make the leadership decision, have chosen, as Party Secretary a man so out of character with the leadership concept that must obviously receive the support of the Soviet Nomenklatura upon whom the entire Soviet Union depends? I believe it is because the Soviet leaders, though cautious, are essentially pragmatic and they see the Soviet Union facing a time of economic, social and military crisis. They realise that their backs are to the wall and that change is not only necessary but desirable if their view of the Soviet Union and the life style of the bulk of the Nomenklatura is to continue.

It is widely believed that the Soviet Union's economy is in a stagnant condition. Both management and workers are desperately under-motivated to produce effectively and profiteering is wide spread. The Soviet military have shown a serious inability to translate research and development on advanced technologies into production and effective deployment. This is one of their greatest concerns over President Reagan's proposed Strategic Defence Initiative. Furthermore, the enormous proportion of Soviet productive capacity that has been devoted to military use has resulted in a serious and continuing shortfall in the production of consumer products.

The Soviet leaders must also be conscious of the fact that they are fast falling behind in the essence of the technological revolution - the race for the new generation of computers. This race for computer technology is not only way beyond the wildest dreams of the third world, but is increasing the difference in the so-called developed world between first and second rate technological powers. It is apparent that the United States and Japan are successfully competing in this race and that the Soviet Union may join Europe in the 'second world', rendering its survival as a super power impossible. This aspect of computer technology and the impact of any acceptance of personal computers, has major implications for a totalitarian state in which the control and censorship of information is a vital

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ingredient to power. Just as the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe was eroded by the advent of the printing press, power of a totalitarian government, such as exists in the Soviet Union, could be severely eroded by the acceptance of personal computers which would enable large numbers of the population to transmit and receive information that, by its very volume, made it impracticable, if not impossible, to censor .

Not only are the Soviet leaders faced by this technological challenge from the relatively 'passive' United States, but they are faced by another new economic challenge from the potentially 'aggressive' China on their south eastern border.

When I was in Hong Kong in October 1983, there was great pessimism with the majority feeling it would be impossible for Great Britain, under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, to conclude a treaty with Communist China that would be acceptable to the Hong Kong Chinese. In the event, this was achieved. Now, the Chinese appear not to be extending Communism into Hong Kong but, on the contrary, to be sucking capitalism into China. Chairman Deng Xiaping appears to be conducting a revolution in China equally as significant as that which occurred in Russia in 1917. He is encouraging limited private ownership, decentralisation, and capitalist profit incentives. Such a change in party dogma must be an enormous challenge to any Communist leader. However, Chairman Deng Xiaping has three major advantages over the Soviets. Firstly, China is relatively closer to its Communist revolution and is therefore able more easily to rekindle a spirit of capitalist enterprise and even to welcome home some of its emigres who are skilled and still of working age. Secondly, the Chinaman is more hard working than the Russian. Finally, Chairman Deng Xiaping can expect less resistance from the Nomenklatura established by Mao Tse-tung because most of them were either liquidated or neutralised in the cultural revolution.

The effects of Deng's reforms are already being felt. A new 'responsibility system' has been introduced in the rural areas and private farming, (in plots of up to 150 acres), has been introduced. Rural income has increased by more than 250% since 1978 and China recorded the worlds highest economic growth rate in 1984.

New slogans such as "strive to be rich" have replaced old favourites such as "better to have socialist weeds, than capitalist seedlings".

The Soviet Union has to face the direct economic challenge now posed by Communist China who already talks of having its own space shuttle mounted on Arian-rockets. The Soviets also have to

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face the fact that the new Chinese, capitalistic style economy may prove abundantly successful in the eyes of the third world. Such relative success could threaten the crucial influence of the USSR in a strategic sense.

The Soviet leaders also have to face a society in which corruption, laziness and drunkenness are reaching epidemic proportions. At the same time, there is a serious groundswell of public opinion demanding more consumer products in the shops. A stagnant or shrinking real economy is placing even greater strains upon the Soviet Union in its hopes of maintaining the military balance and its status as a super power.

Reports emanating from Afghanistan speak of very large Soviet casualties and defectors. Whilst this can be partially discounted as exaggeration, there can be little doubt that it must cause great concern to the Soviet leadership particularly with their large Islamic population. Furthermore, with the successful deployment by NATO of Cruise and Pershing missiles and the advent of President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative, the Soviets are faced with renewed demands for vast military spending if they are to maintain the present military balance. Not only is it unlikely that their economy can sustain such an increase in expenditure but they must also realise their weakness in computer technology and their relative inability to translate advanced, computer based weapon systems from the research phase to effective deployment.

This area of computer technology is one of critical importance to modern weapon systems. Here it is interesting to note the implications of wide ownership of personal computers. The retention of power in a totalitarian state depends largely on the comprehensive censorship and control of information. The wide ownership of personal computers in a totalitarian state will tend to weaken dramatically the power of the Government to control information. This means that if the Soviets push forward with computer technology to the extent that they allow wide use of personal computers they will incur serious weaknesses in their present power system.

Faced with this situation of internal crisis, I believe that the top Soviet leaders felt that change was vitally necessary in the Soviet Union if they were to remain a super power. Not only did they have to choose a leader whom they trusted, but one with the intellect both to see and to grasp the essential problems facing the Soviet Union and with the ability to solve them. More importantly, but involving the greatest risk, I believe they had to choose a leader with the power to persuade the Soviet elite not only of the necessity but of the desirability of change.

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Born on 2nd March 1931 to a peasant family in the village of Priolnoye in the Stavropol region of the northern caucasus, Mr. Mikhail Sergevich Gorbachev was evacuated between 1946 and 1950 when he worked at a machine tractor station near the Caspian Sea. This job must have given him deep experience of the Soviet economy at the 'grass roots' level. He then went on to study law at Moscow State University and joined the Communist party in 1952. Following his graduation in 1955, he was made First Secretary of the Stavropol City Komsomol (the Party youth organisation). This is a most interesting date, being two years after Stalin's death and one year prior to Kruschev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956. It is therefore difficult to see whether Mr. Gorbachev's early political views were strongly Stalinist or more moderate. At 31 he studied for an agriculture degree. At 35 he assumed responsibility for increasing farm production in the Stavropol region, an area that benefited from relatively fertile soil which enabled him to preside over high yielding harvests at a time when Soviet agriculture as a whole was suffering. At 39 he was appointed First Secretary to the Stavropol regional committee. In 1978 he was sent to Moscow where he was placed in charge of Soviet agriculture as Secretary of the Central Committee. In this role he showed himself to be a 'political survivor' for although he presided over a series of disastrous harvests, so bad that the government ceased printing crop statistics, the failure was not attributed to him, but to bad weather. Whilst Mr. Gorbachev was not in a position to implement fundamental changes at that time, he was in a good position to see and obviously had the intellect to understand the processes that drove the agricultural 'machine' but which were not succeeding. He must have seen the problems of collective agriculture. He had a chance to see, at first hand, what needed to be done to restore efficiency to Soviet Agriculture. In 1979 he was promoted to candidate membership of the Politburo and in October 1980, when he was still less than 50, he became a full member of the Politburo of which he was easily the youngest member.

Some people argue, by pointing to his attempt to carry out agrarian reforms during the US grain embargo, that he is somewhat of a 'liberal' by Soviet standards. This is difficult to substantiate.

Essentially Mr. Gorbachev is a product of the Communist party. Obviously he knew his place and must have resisted any temptation to undermine his elders. From past precedent, and in keeping with many other political regimes, promotion does not come by ability and loyalty alone. Patronage and luck are also vital ingredients. Mr. Gorbachev's earliest and perhaps most important patrons were perhaps Fyodor Kulakof and Mikhail Suslov. Like Mr. Gorbachev, both these men had held the post of Party

Secretaryship in Stavropol. Stavropol is a resort. Mr Gorbachev was therefore required to entertain and was able to impress many senior Politburo members during their holiday visits to the area. Mr. Gorbachev followed Mr. Kulakof directly both in Stavropol and subsequently in Moscow. In 1978, Mr. Kulakof died unexpectedly early. This stroke of luck catapulted Mr. Gorbachev forward. Mr. Suslov, who evidently played a leading role in promoting Andropov as Soviet leader was apparently a most important patron for Mr. Gorbachev. For it was Mr. Suslov who was assigned to ensure the continuance of the Marxist/Leninist ideological purity of the Communist party. Apparently, as part of this job he recruited young, ideological and loyal talent for the party which he started to mould in his own style. When in Moscow, Mr. Gorbachev evidently became friendly with Marshal Ustinov. Under the leadership of Yuri Andropov (ex KGB Chief) he was promoted from agriculture to a position of responsibility for the oversight of the entire Soviet economy. (I believe that it is possible that Mr Andropov may have nominated Mr Gorbachev as his successor but that the pro-Gorbachev faction within the Politburo were not, at the time of Andropov's death, a strong enough influence within the Politburo to force through his wishes for succession. It is possible that, in an effort to buy time in order to consolidate further their position within the Politburo, the pro-Gorbachev faction pushed for the selection of the dying Mr. Chernenko, whose fatal illness was first exposed to the world by Dr. David Owen, M.P. In the event, the ailing Mr. Chernenko increased his responsibility still further and before Mr. Chernenko's death, Mr. Gorbachev was seen often in the company of Mr. Gromyko from whom he was assumed to be receiving information and advice.) I believe that the pro-Gorbachev faction within the Politburo succeeded in having him nominated and even unofficially selected as Party Secretary, even before Mr. Chernenko's death. It is possible and indeed probable that, at the time of Mr Gorbachev's visit to London in December 1984, he was in fact 'Managing Director' of the Soviet Union under the 'Chairmanship' of the dying Mr. Chernenko.

In choosing a leader to divert the Soviet Union from impending crisis, the top Soviet elite had to choose a man who was not only able but politically and ideologically loyal. However, at the same time he had to be an 'engine' for change because, however unattractive it appeared, change was probably seen as vitally necessary. The new leader therefore had to be able to communicate and persuade the rest of the Nomenklatura of not only the necessity, but also the desirability of change.

In choosing Mr. Gorbachev, I believe that the Soviet leaders took a calculated risk. Mr. Gorbachev was not only able, energetic and loyal but was a force for change and also potentially charismatic which, in the political infighting of the Communist Party system, must have already been obvious. He was also young

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which meant that if they made a mistake it would remain with them for a long time. It is for this reason that I believe they withheld the other two key posts of Head of State and of Chairmanship of the five man Defence Council.

Following Mr. Gorbachev's visit to London in December 1984 and the deteriorating health of Mr. Chernenko, speculation increased that Mr. Gorbachev might be considered for selection as the next Soviet leader. I said at a number of presentations, both in America and in England, that I believed Mr. Gorbachev had already been selected and was in fact the 'Managing Director' of the Soviet Union under the 'Chairmanship' of the ailing Chernenko. I gained this conviction not only from my personal assessment of Mr. Gorbachev, which I have tried to explain above, and the chronic need for some form of change in the Soviet Union's political machine, but also from a number of indications that I felt occurred during Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev's pre-Christmas visit to London.

It was strange that a visit of such an apparently high powered Russian team would be carried out under the auspices of a Parliamentary as opposed to a Government delegation. The Soviets appeared to be unusually cautious as if to protect against the slightest risk of failure. Secondly, unlike most parliamentary delegations from the Communist block, where the 'real' leader is normally ranked as either second or third, Mr. Gorbachev was very definitely the leader of his delegation from the outset. The way in which other members of his delegation treated him and reacted to his wishes gave me the impression that he was extremely important and in possession of very great power. The authority with which he spoke and the confidence with which he answered unprepared and potentially embarrassing questions from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and others, gave me the distinct impression that here was a man who was no longer jockeying for power but already had the reins in his hands. Finally, when Marshal Ustinof died, the announcement was not made as is customary, in Moscow by Pravda or Tass, but uniquely by Mr. Gorbachev in Edinburgh. This appeared to indicate that he was already in a position of top power and confirmed many of my earlier observations during his visit to London.

Following Mr. Chernenko's death I was impressed by the somewhat unusual speed and smoothness of the succession which again has led me to believe that Mr. Gorbachev had been pre-selected. I was further reinforced in this view by the fact that the Geneva Arms talks were neither postponed for Chernenko's funeral nor did they change in character. Whilst the overall pattern of the talks has not changed much from previous talks, in that both super powers have, so far, circled around each other with no major, serious, new proposals, I believe that the style of the Soviet negotiating team has continued to reflect a style which is

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distinctly of the Gorbachev ilk. This style is vastly different to the Soviet approaches in the past where their negotiators brushed past newsmen with poker faces and without comment. At Geneva, Soviet negotiators not only posed for Western photographers but spoke and joked with the pressmen - a decidedly new style and one with appeal in the West.

At Mr. Chernenko's funeral, Mr. Gorbachev's speech was more than a eulogy of his old comrade. It appeared to be a State of the Union Message in which he told the Soviet people that they must begin to get up and work and that there was no time to lose. Indeed, it was reported that one Communist worker was somewhat worried and asked whether the succession of Mr. Gorbachev meant that workers would now have to work much harder. In the past few months the Western news media has contained many stories of Mr. Gorbachev and, indeed his family, including his daughter and grand-daughter.

Based upon what I heard of remarks he made concerning his family during his London visit, I felt that it would not be long before his family were brought to the fore. This has now begun to happen and represents a radical change from the excessively discreet attitude previously taken by Soviet leaders with regard to their families. I believe that Mr. Gorbachev's more open manner will lend his popular image a humanist side which could prove to be of importance in the increasing struggle for the hearts and minds of not only the Third World but also amongst the people of the industrialised democracies.

Since his succession, it appears that Mr. Gorbachev has not been slow to move his own proteges into positions of power and so start to consolidate a strong personal power base. Furthermore, he has not been shy, indeed he has been unusually frank in his comments upon corruption, drunkenness and laziness within the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the amount and type of coverage he has been given in the Western news media since his succession leads me to believe that the latent charisma I believe he has will not remain unobserved for long.

I strongly believe that Mr. Gorbachev's charismatic leadership style will have a major influence both inside and outside the Soviet Union.

Within the Soviet Union he is likely to be the first leader to succeed in persuading rather than forcing Soviet workers to work. They are therefore likely to work more effectively. This should have a dramatic effect upon the Soviet economy and upon the ability of the USSR to sustain its role as a super power both in terms of impressing and keeping the allegiance of large parts of the third world and also in maintaining its military balance, or

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should I say superiority, with the West. In addition, it will fall to Mr. Gorbachev to persuade the bulk of the Soviet Nomenklatura, in which the military is well represented, not only of the necessity but also the benefit and indeed urgency of the need to accept at least some important economic changes. From this we are likely to see increased flexibility not only in trade but in military and political negotiations. It is unlikely to reflect any weakness in the Soviet position or indeed any change in their ultimate goals, but it will represent increased opportunities for western traders and politicians to do business with the Soviet block. For instance it is probable that major opportunities will exist in the fields of trade and project financing, even including major financings in the Western capital markets.

Mr. Gorbachev is likely to prove to be the first Soviet leader with the ability to use the Western media to talk over the heads of western negotiators or politicians directly to western grass roots. This will be effectively a 'one way street' because western leaders will not be given the same access to the Soviet media to talk in the reverse direction to grass roots in the Communist block. By virtue of television in particular, he is likely to provide external leadership and inspiration for such movements as the CND, Anti-nuclear Movement and also to many surreptitious and anti-democratic forces which the western democracies not only harbour but with which they have to contend internally.

Furthermore, Mr. Gorbachev is likely to use his very considerable powers of personal persuasion directly upon western leaders. He is likely to exploit even the smallest splits and differences of opinion that may occur within the western alliance over such issues as the SDI programme, the transfer of high technology in the fields of trade and the political implications of harbouring American military hardware or bases etc.

It is interesting, when considering the East-West power struggle, to compare the fundamental strengths and weaknesses of the totalitarian states, such as the Soviet Union, and the democracies, such as the United States. The totalitarian state's strength is in its ability to sustain armed conflict when no direct threat to the home country exists. Its greatest weakness is its inability to generate enormous economic wealth. The great strength of a democracy, such as the United States, is its ability to generate enormous economic wealth. Its weakness especially since Vietnam, is its inability to conduct sustained military operations in defence of freedom and other democracies when there is no apparent threat to the mainland of the United States. We should learn that lesson and always be conscious of it. It is always much better for us to use our economic power in preference to risking being placed in an inherently weak position where we have to use our short-term military power.

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It is most unlikely that Soviet goals will change under Mr. Gorbachev, but Soviet style has and I believe will, continue to change. Out will go the brutish Russian Bear and in will come the new image of the Soviet Union - responsible, reasonable and reassuring. (In sighting the contrary view some people point to the recent shooting of US Army Major Nicholson by a Russian sentry. Personally, I believe that this incident was an error similar to the downing of KAL flight 007 in 1983 which caused great embarrassment to the Soviet hierarchy.) The Soviet's dirty work will increasingly be done by surrogate states such as North Vietnam, Cuba, East Germany, etc. Speaking figuratively I feel that whilst the hammer will be kept available, it will be replaced by the sharpened sickle. However, the back drop will remain the same - red, blood red, Soviet red. We in the West must never forget it.

Whilst his public posture may appear attractive and similar to that of the late President Kennedy, there is no way that his active, political posture will be seen or felt as liberal.

I have never intimated that Mr. Gorbachev's policies would be liberal or indeed anything like those of the late President Kennedy. However, when I consider the physical, mental and personal attributes of both Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev, I wonder, what additional public attributes were possessed by President and Mrs. Kennedy. When I look at the impact Mr. Gorbachev has already had in the West, and the ability he continues to show in exploiting the western media, I become increasingly convinced that my initial impression was correct. For instance, have we ever seen a Soviet leader conduct a 'walk about' within the Soviet Union? How often have the photographs of the wife, let alone the daughters or grand-daughters, of Soviet leaders appeared in the Western media? If and when Mr. Gorbachev speaks at the United Nations in the autumn of 1985, I feel that the full effect of what I am trying to communicate will become increasingly apparent. Many people, particularly in the United States, will then see for themselves that Mr. Gorbachev truly has western style charisma. As time passes, they will see that, in addition to ability, appeal and decisiveness, he has a type of inner strength that will make him a formidable foe. This may be good for the Communist block but it spells danger for the West. For Mr. Gorbachev has, I believe, great potential power to beguile and lull western leaders and grass roots opinion. He has the ability to talk billions of dollars off the defence budgets of the Western allies.

Last month I had the great privilege of meeting President Reagan. In the near future, it is possible that both President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev will join in a super power summit meeting. The vast majority of us will hope for some substantial achievement to arise from such a meeting. In reality a serious

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achievement is unlikely and the main battle between the leaders will be one of words to establish a personal leadership credibility in the hearts and minds of the world.

In anticipation of a possible summit in which personality will play possibly a critical role, it is interesting to compare the two leaders. In my opinion, both men are physically impressive, Mr Gorbachev for the reasons given earlier. President Reagan gave me the impression of being larger than I had expected from having seen him previously both on television and from seeing him at a distance such as when he spoke to the English Parliament. He is also strikingly fit for his age, particularly when one considers that not long ago he was the subject of an assassins bullet.

Both men appear to have a sense of inner strength. In my opinion President Reagan's strength seems to be based, like Margaret Thatcher's, upon a genuine conviction in the rightness of his cause. Mr. Gorbachev's strength appears to me to be based upon a great confidence in his own ability and past track record.

Both men are outstandingly good communicators. However, Mr. Gorbachev is new and that in itself is newsworthy.

Both men have great charm. President Reagan's charm is quite remarkable and appears to be perfectly genuine and come from the heart. Mr. Gorbachev's charm, on the other hand, appears to come from the head and is very controlled and calculated.

This latter point may appear to some readers to be frivolous. However it probably forms a very significant part of that elusive quality known as charisma and certainly can play a very crucial role in the image produced on world wide television in the battle for hearts and minds. I believe that President Reagan should be alert, during the televised portion of any summit meeting, to the risk that Mr. Gorbachev might lull him into a situation where both leaders appear to be charming and engaging in 'bonhomie' in front of the cameras. In such an instance, Mr. Gorbachev's control and sharpness could prove devastating by apparently wrong footing the American President and so reducing his credibility.

I also feel that the location of any summit meeting is important. The American press is usually more supportive of their President when he is abroad. My advice to the President is that if he should agree to a summit, then it should be held on neutral territory, outside the United States.

In conclusion, I believe that Mr. Gorbachev does represent the potential equivalent of a Kennedy in the Kremlin. I feel that, despite the powerful strictures of the Communist Party system, he could have a major impact upon Soviet politics. Many will

disagree with this statement upon which only history can be the true judge. However, if I am right, we in the west have reason to alert ourselves. Mr. Gorbachev may remain in the Kremlin for a long time, possibly greatly increasing his power. He is likely to present the West with a set of new and more complex challenges which we must meet with increasing imagination, unity and fortitude. For instance, the battle for the hearts and minds in the non-aligned world and also for grass roots opinion within the western democracies, is likely to be stepped up in new and more subtle ways. The choice and conduct of any super power summit is likely to be of crucial importance.

Politicians of western democracies are likely to face an increasingly sophisticated political challenge from Mr. Gorbachev both at home and abroad.

POST SCRIPT - 2nd July, 1985

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The announcement today of the election of Mr. Andrei Gromyko to the Presidency of the Soviet Union is most interesting. In my main article (attached) I had pointed to the fact that Mr. Gorbachev had not been appointed either to the post of Soviet President or as Chairman of the powerful Defence Committee and that the nominations for these two positions would be of great importance in analysing Mr. Gorbachev's initial success.

I think that Mr. Gromyko will be widely accepted as an international statesman with long experience and knowledge of international affairs. I believe that his appointment will lend stature to the Presidency of the Soviet Union and that he will continue to take an active interest in foreign affairs. It should also be remembered that Mr. Gromyko is believed to be a strong supporter of Mr. Gorbachev as is his replacement as Foreign Minister, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze. When these appointments are taken together with yesterday's removal of Mr. Gorbachev's main contender, Mr. Grigory Romanov, I believe one can see further strengthening of Mr. Gorbachev's power base at senior levels within the Soviet Union.

Personally, I believe there is a subtle element to the strengthening of Mr. Gorbachev's power in that he has held himself back from the appointment to the figurehead position of President and so, whilst increasing his own power he appears to be modest, thus reducing potential antagonism and jealousy.

Evidently the 57 year old Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze is a man in the Gorbachev mold: energetic and gregarious with a career pattern that is very similar to that of Mr. Gorbachev. His position as Georgian Communist Party leader illustrates his party loyalty.

I believe that the appointment of Mr. Gromyko and Mr. Shevardnadze will not only increase further Mr. Gorbachev's personal power base but that it represents evidence of the continuing thrust for a 'new style' of Soviet foreign policy in which the Soviet Union will appear to be increasingly responsible, reasonable and reassuring, whilst their strategic goals remain unchanged. It is possible that Soviet foreign policy will appear to be more concentrated upon Soviet block affairs rather than on an aggressive world-wide strategy. I feel that Mr. Shevardnadze will represent this fresh and potentially beguiling style of Soviet policy whilst Mr. Gromyko maintains the overall strategic goals from his position as President.

Finally, I was very pleased to see that the United States - Soviet summit meeting proposed for 19th/21st November, 1985 will take place, as I had hoped, outside the United States in a neutral country, i.e. Geneva. I believe that this will be to the advantage of the United States President.

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