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**President Ronald Reagan Letter to General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev
March 11, 1985**

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
March 11, 1985

Dear Mr General Secretary

As you assume your new responsibilities, I would like to take this opportunity to underscore my hope that we can in the months and years ahead develop a more stable and constructive relationship between our two countries. Our differences are many, and we will need to proceed in a way that takes both differences and common interests into account in seeking to resolve problems and build a new measure of trust and confidence. But history places on us a very heavy responsibility for maintaining and strengthening peace, and I am convinced we have before us new opportunities to do so. Therefore I have requested the Vice President to deliver this letter to you.

I believe our differences can and must be resolved through discussion and negotiation. The international situation demands that we redouble our efforts to find political solutions to the problems we face. I valued my correspondence with Chairman Chernenko, and believe my meetings with First Deputy Prime Minister Gromyko and Mr. Shcherbitsky here in Washington were useful in clarifying views and issues and making it possible to move forward to deal with them in a practical and realistic fashion.

In recent months we have demonstrated that it is possible to resolve problems to mutual benefit. We have had useful exchanges on certain regional issues, and I am sure you are aware that American interest in progress on humanitarian issues remains as strong as ever. In our bilateral relations, we have signed a number of new agreements, and we have promising negotiations underway in several important fields. Most significantly, the negotiations we have agreed to begin in Geneva provide us with a genuine chance to make progress toward our common ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

It is important for us to build on these achievements. You can be assured of my personal commitment to work with you and the rest of the Soviet leadership in serious negotiations. In that spirit, I would like to invite you to visit me in Washington at your earliest convenient opportunity. I recognize that an early answer may not be possible, but I want you to know that I look forward to a meeting that could yield results of benefit to both our countries and to the international community as a whole.

Sincerely,
Ronald Reagan
His Excellency
Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev,
General Secretary, Central Committee,
Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Moscow, U.S.S.R.
[Source: Margaret Thatcher Foundation]

Session of the Politburo of the CC CPSU

11 March 1985

Chairman: cde. M. S. GORBACHEV

In attendance: cdes. G. A. Aliev, V. I. Vorotnikov, V. V. Grishin, A. A. Gromyko, D. A. Kunaev, G. V. Romanov, M. S. Solomentsev, N. A. Tikhonov, P. N. Demichev, V. I. Dolgikh, V. V. Kuznetsov, B. N. Ponomarev, V. M. Chebrikov, E. A. Shevardnadze, M. V. Zimyanin, I. V. Kapitonov, E. K. Ligachev, K. V. Rusakov, N. I. Ryzhkov.

GORBACHEV. Comrades, yesterday, at 19:20 Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko passed away. His death came after a long and grave illness. We lost our dear and respected friend, leader, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. I am asking you to honor our good memory of Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko with a moment of silence.

(All rise.)

GORBACHEV. Cde. Chazov is present here. Let us give him the floor.

CHAZOV. You know, comrades, that Konstantin Ustinovich has been gravely ill for a long time, and has been in the hospital in recent months. On the part of the Fourth Main Department, all necessary measures were taken in order to treat Konstantin Ustinovich. But the illness did not submit to the cure, it started to weaken his systems first slowly, and then faster and faster. It became especially aggravated as a result of pneumonia in both lungs, which Konstantin Ustinovich developed during his vacation in Kislovodsk. There were periods when we succeeded in alleviating the lung and heart insufficiencies, and during those periods Konstantin Ustinovich found enough strength to come to work. Several times he conducted Politburo sessions, and put in work days, although shortened ones. Emphysema of the lungs and the aggravated lung and heart insufficiency had worsened significantly in the last two or three weeks. Another, accompanying illness had developed—chronic hepatitis, i.e. liver failure with its transformation into cirrhosis. The cirrhosis of the liver and the worsening dystrophic changes in the organs and tissues led to the situation where notwithstanding intensive therapy, which was administered actively on a daily basis, the state of his health gradually deteriorated. On March 10 at 3:00 p.m., Konstantin Ustinovich lost consciousness, and at 19:20 death occurred as a result of heart failure.

GORBACHEV: His illness was grave indeed. We all observed it. The doctors, of course, were trying to help their patient, but the illness was so grave that the therapeutic measures undertaken by the doctors did not lead to a positive result. It is very hard to comprehend that Konstantin Ustinovich is not among us any longer.

However, life goes on, there is nothing we can do about it. We gathered here today to make decisions regarding Konstantin Ustinovich's funeral, personnel issues, and the convening of an extraordinary Plenum of the CC CPSU.

TIKHONOV: All these decisions have to be made without delay.

1. On the General Secretary of the CC CPSU

GORBACHEV: Considering the fact that all members and candidate members of the Politburo of the CC CPSU, and all the Secretaries of the CC CPSU with the exception of Cde. Shcherbitsky, who is now on his way, are present here, we need to make the decision on the issue of the General Secretary of the CC CPSU first of all. I would ask the comrades to speak on this issue.

GROMYKO: Of course we are all very saddened by the passing of Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko. But regardless of what feelings engulf us now, we should look to the future, and historical optimism and faith in the correctness of our theory and practice should not abandon us even for a moment.

I will speak frankly. When you think about a candidate for the position of General Secretary of the CC CPSU, of course, you think about Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev. In my view, that would be an absolutely correct choice. We all know Mikhail Sergeevich very well. We have been working together for seven years. I remember when L. I. Brezhnev was asking for my opinion and for the opinions of other comrades when he considered transferring M. S. Gorbachev to work in Moscow. I have no doubt that we all did the right thing in supporting that proposal then.

What features come to mind first when one evaluates the candidacy of Mikhail Sergeevich?

First of all, it is his boundless creative energy, his determination to do more, and to do it better.

Second is his attitude toward the people. Because the higher a person's position, the more important is his ability to establish a relationship with the people, a relationship based on principles and high demands. I have never heard that Mikhail Sergeevich gives priority to personal interests. No, he always holds the interests of the party, the interests of society, and the interests of the people above all.

Thirdly, Mikhail Sergeevich possesses great experience in party work. It is an experience of work in the region, and in the center as well. He worked as Secretary of the Central Committee; he was a candidate Politburo member, and finally [full] Politburo member. He conducted sessions of the Secretariat, and then of the Politburo in the absence of Konstantin Ustinovich. For this work, one has to have not only the knowledge, but also the stamina, and the party character. This is a very valuable quality.

One more consideration. When we look into the future, and I will be honest with you that for many of us it is already difficult to do, we have to see the perspectives clearly. And that means that we have no right to allow any violation of our unity. We have no right to let the world see any split in our relationship. And there is more than enough of all kinds of speculation about it abroad. And that means that we all have to act in unity, as one, with an understanding of full responsibility for our great cause.

I am not claiming that I have mentioned all the qualities of Mikhail Sergeevich. However, I think that without doubt we can say that we will not be mistaken if we elect him General Secretary of the CC CPSU. I would like to emphasize once again that he possesses great knowledge and considerable experience, but that his experience should be multiplied by our experience. And we promise to provide the new General Secretary of the CC CPSU with all manner of assistance and help. You, Mikhail Sergeevich, can count completely on this assistance and help.

TIKHONOV. Lately, I have been working together with Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev a lot. We got to know each other especially closely in the period of activity of the Commission for Improvement of the Economic Mechanism.

What can I say about Mikhail Sergeevich? He is a communicable person, one can discuss issues with him, discuss them at the highest level. He is the first of the CC Secretaries in terms of his understanding the economy. You understand how important that is. Tomorrow we will bury Konstantin Ustinovich, but we cannot postpone the issues of economic development, they will not wait. We will have to solve them, and solve them together, as we did before, in close contact between the Central Committee of the party and the government.

That is why my opinion is without doubt: Mikhail Sergeevich is the person who is fit to be the General Secretary of the CC CPSU. Here we need a figure, who possesses both knowledge and experience, and the skill to work with people. That is why I believe that we have all the reasons to propose the candidacy of Mikhail Sergeevich at the Plenum of the CC CPSU.

GRISHIN. We are making a decision on an exceptionally important issue today. We are talking today about the continuation of the cause of the party, about the continuity of the leadership. The General Secretary of the Central Committee is the person who organizes the work of the Central Committee. Therefore, the person who occupies this position should meet very strict requirements. That person must possess the knowledge, the principles, the experience, and in addition, a great tolerance. Last night, when we learned about Konstantin Ustinovich's death, we, in a way, pre-determined this issue by agreeing to confirm Mikhail Sergeevich as Chairman of the Funeral Commission. In my view, he fits the requirements for the position of General Secretary of the Central Committee to the fullest extent. He is a widely knowledgeable person. He graduated from the Law Faculty of Moscow State University, and the Economics Faculty of the Agricultural Institute. He has extensive experience in party work. That is why, I think, we do not have, and we cannot have, a different proposal, other than the proposal to

promote M. S. Gorbachev to the post of General Secretary of the CC CPSU. As far as we are concerned, each of us in our position will support him actively.

Therefore, I fully support the proposal which has just been introduced for this session of the Politburo.

SOLOMENTSEV. It is true, comrades, that we are deciding on a very important issue today because so much depends on the General Secretary in the daily implementation of party policies. I knew Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev back in the days of his work in Stavropol. He left a good, lasting impression there. That is why we supported L. I. Brezhnev's proposal to transfer cde. Gorbachev to work in Moscow. We have been working together for seven years now. Mikhail Sergeevich exhibits boundless energy, and the desire to be actively involved in current developments. When he was in charge of agriculture, he did not pass by other issues, but looked at the issues of the development of agricultural production with a broad perspective, comprehensively, and he made a very significant contribution to moving ahead in plant and animal husbandry as well as machine building for agricultural needs. And as much as nature is poking fun at us, we are still moving ahead in agricultural production nonetheless. And it is precisely Mikhail Sergeevich's contribution that is substantial in this respect.

What do I like especially about him?

It is the spirit of innovation. He prepares for sessions of the Secretariat of the Central Committee and the Politburo really well, introduces new proposals during the discussion of issues, and expresses interesting thoughts. This spirit of innovation is especially valuable. Here the comrades have already talked about his adherence to principles and his demanding character. I would like to note that Mikhail Sergeevich applies those qualities in a very tactful manner. At the same time, he consistently adheres to the course of our party, to its Leninist principles, in his work.

That is why I think that we simply do not have another candidate, and I support the proposal to elect Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev General Secretary of the CC CPSU. We have difficult problems both in our domestic and foreign policies ahead of us. This hard work is laid upon Mikhail Sergeevich's shoulders, and upon all of us. I am convinced that the Plenum of the Central Committee, which is being convened today, will support the proposal to elect M. S. Gorbachev General Secretary of the CC CPSU. He is capable of uniting our collective, and we will assist him in all respects.

KUNAEV. Twenty-five people were summoned and arrived for the Plenum of the Central Committee from Kazakhstan. We represent twenty districts, with 800,000 Communists working in those. We met today at our permanent mission in Moscow to discuss the issues related to the Plenum. And I would like to report to you that I was entrusted to say at the Politburo session that no matter what turn the discussion here takes, the Communists of Kazakhstan would vote to elect Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev General Secretary of the Central Committee.

How was this decision born? It was born from the experience of the Kazakhstan people working together with Mikhail Sergeevich. He has excellent ties with regional party committees, with party organizations, with Communists. And this, comrades, is the most important thing. M. S. Gorbachev possesses a rich working experience. He worked alongside Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, and in the last year with Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko. We wish you, Mikhail Sergeevich, good health, and we want to assure you that all of us, all the Communists of Kazakhstan, will be your true assistants.

ALIEV. The election of General Secretary of the CC CPSU is a serious, historic affair. In my view, the candidacy of Mikhail Sergeevich is quite appropriate. He worked in the Stavropol krai, in Moscow, accumulated great experience in party and economic work, and grew into a prominent party figure, a leader of high rank. He knows the economy and domestic politics well, and exhibits knowledge of many spheres of economic and social life.

M. S. Gorbachev gained considerable authority among working people of our country and in the countries of the socialist commonwealth. As far as contacts with us are concerned, we always felt his support, his ability to unite the Politburo of the CC CPSU, and the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

Mikhail Sergeevich is humble, modest, and approachable. This gives us grounds to say that he will be fully capable of carrying out the duties of General Secretary. That is why I fully support the proposals that were introduced, and want to wish Mikhail Sergeevich health and great success in his work.

ROMANOV. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev went through a rich school of life. He started from grass-roots work in the Komsomol, and then in the party organization. And there he discovered his qualities as an organizer and a leader of the masses. From the experience of my previous work, I can say that the party activists give a high assessment of M. S. Gorbachev's work. He is an erudite person. For instance, he quickly became familiar with many of the most difficult issues of scientific and technological progress. And not just became familiar, but also began to feel out ways to solve many problems related to the introduction of achievements of scientific and technological innovation into production. Nikolai Alexandrovich Tikhonov spoke here about Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev's work in the Commission for Improvement of the Economic Mechanism. Cde. Tikhonov sets the tone in this Commission, and Mikhail Sergeevich, relying on the departments of the Central Committee, tactfully introduces his own proposals, the majority of which have been approved by the Commission.

Mikhail Sergeevich is very demanding in his work. But his demanding character is complemented by his active help to other people and by his trust in them. Therefore, I believe that he will fully ensure the continuity of our party leadership and will be fully capable of fulfilling the obligations that would be placed upon him.

VOROTNIKOV. It is a very big and responsible task to develop the proposal about the candidacy for the post of General Secretary. It means that we should select and give a comprehensive evaluation of a candidate who would fit all these very complex functions. And here one intuitively comes to the conclusion that the logic of life itself has brought us to this decision. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev clearly stood out among the *oblast* and *krai* party secretaries. Among his most important qualities are responsibility for his work, the ability to listen to the opinions of others and his wide knowledge of issues. This is why he gained such respect among the party activists. And all the comrades (and I had to meet with a large number of representatives of regional party organizations from Russia) spoke in favor of electing cde. M. S. Gorbachev General Secretary of the CC CPSU.

Why are there always many people in M. S. Gorbachev's reception room? Precisely because he knows how to listen to them, and because he wants to help them. And yet, he is not just a kind leader. He knows also how to ask a person for results, knows how to demand. And this, as you understand well, is a very important skill in our vast country.

All in all, comrades, I, like the majority of representatives of party organizations from the Russian regions, am deeply convinced that the candidacy of M. S. Gorbachev to the position of General Secretary of the CC CPSU fits in all respects.

PONOMAREV. The post of General Secretary of the CC CPSU is a position of exceptional responsibility. Because it is not just our country—the entire world is looking at our party. For this position, the theory-based education of the person is exceptionally important, as well as his ideological maturity, and his ability to keep contact with the masses. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev is in full possession of these qualities.

Recently we devoted a lot of time to the new edition of the Party Program. And I became convinced personally that he possesses a deep understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory, and is capable of figuring out the most intricate programmatic questions. M. S. Gorbachev takes an active position in the conversations with leaders of Communist and workers' parties of foreign countries. This skill of working with foreign representatives is exceptionally important for the General Secretary of the Central Committee. That is why we all sincerely wish success to Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev in his new and responsible position, and each of us will assist him actively.

In the last three years, we have lost three General Secretaries: Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, and Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko. But the power of our party lies in the fact that we are moving ahead, that we are united, and that no loss can undermine the unity of the Communists of our country. We wish you, Mikhail Sergeevich, great success in your future work.

CHEBRIKOV. Andrei Andreevich Gromyko set the tone for our conversation today. He put it so correctly that we should look to the future. Maybe this ability to look to the future is more important than anything else right now. A. A. Gromyko's words

about the need to preserve and strengthen the unity of the Politburo, the Central Committee, and our entire party as a whole, resonated exceptionally well with my own thoughts. And today, when we are speaking about the General Secretary of the CC CPSU, we must make a precise assessment of the person who would be capable of fulfilling this most difficult task. And I am convinced that Mikhail Sergeevich will be able to fulfill this task with flying colors. L. I. Brezhnev, Yu. V. Andropov, and K. U. Chernenko valued cde. Gorbachev highly for those qualities.

The leader of our party should possess a good theoretical and practical base. One could cite a number of Mikhail Sergeevich's speeches and articles. But I will only mention his speech at the All-Union Theoretical Conference, which took place recently. I think all of us noticed how brave and powerful that speech was.

Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev is a sociable person. He knows how to listen to others, tries to understand the problems that are raised. And we have a lot of problems in our country. And to solve them, we need a person who understands these problems well, a person who possesses a great ability to work and great erudition. M. S. Gorbachev possesses such erudition and the ability to work to the fullest degree.

On my way to the Plenum today, I naturally consulted with my colleagues. Our department is such that we have to know well not only issues of foreign policy, but also problems of a domestic, social character. Therefore, taking into account all these circumstances, the Ch. K. (KGB) members entrusted me with proposing M. S. Gorbachev's candidacy to the post of General Secretary of the CC CPSU. You understand that the voice of the Ch. K. members, and the voice of our activists is the voice of the people. As far as we are concerned, we will do our best to work at the high level of the tasks that are facing the Committee for State Security on our part. The united collective of the Ch. K. will do everything possible to work even better under the leadership of the Politburo of the CC CPSU, which will be headed by the new General Secretary of the CC CPSU—M. S. Gorbachev.

DOLGIKH. Today it is difficult for us to appreciate the historic importance of the moment in which we are living now. I fully and wholeheartedly agree with the comrades who introduced the proposal to put forth M. S. Gorbachev's candidacy for the position of General Secretary of the CC CPSU. We are all united in the opinion that he not only has great experience in his past, but he also has a future. Today our country needs an energetic leader who would be capable of going deeply into the substance of problems, a leader who is sincere, courageous and demanding. That is why I wish you, dear Mikhail Sergeevich, health, success, and all the very best. Our support for you will be assured.

KUZNETSOV. First of all, I would like to emphasize that I fully support the proposal that was introduced today at the session of the Politburo. I also share the assessments that were given here today of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev. He is very accessible and has the ability to get to the substance of a problem quickly. This is

particularly relevant to the activity of the soviets of people's deputies, whose work M. S. Gorbachev knows very well.

It is very good that our party, our country has this collective linked together with unity. This is the condition for a successful resolution of the problems facing us, the condition for our progress, our movement to the future. Our enemies abroad are hoping for disagreements within the party leadership, for a collapse of the Soviet system. Some western magazines, especially the American ones, have published the most unbelievable prognoses and expressed all kinds of speculations regarding contradictions within the Politburo. But nothing can shake our unity.

We wish Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev great success. I have no doubt that the Soviet government institutions and Soviet officials, among whom he is very popular, will fully share this opinion.

SHEVARDNADZE. It is very good that each of us has a chance to speak at this historic session. It shows once again the truly Leninist collective style of leadership of the work of the party's Central Committee and its Politburo. I knew Mikhail Sergeevich even before his work as Secretary of the CC CPSU. I will tell you frankly that even after his election to the Politburo of the Central Committee, he remained the same humble, modest and responsible person. We have a huge multinational country. And I know how sensitively and attentively Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev treats the nationality issue. This is a great and most important quality for a General Secretary of the CC CPSU. As far as proposing M. S. Gorbachev's candidacy for the position of General Secretary of the CC CPSU, I will be frank—our entire country and our entire party is awaiting this decision today. I have no doubts about that.

DEMICHEV. I will be very brief. I am convinced that we are making an absolutely correct choice today. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev is well known in our country. He is well known abroad as well. His trips to Britain, Canada and to the Bulgarian People's Republic have shown convincingly that he is capable of working abroad too.

GROMYKO. And to Italy too.

DEMICHEV. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev possesses a feel for new things, extensive erudition, and organizational talent. He is a charming person. It is no secret that after Yu. V. Andropov's death, he was involved in all aspects of the work of the Central Committee, and that he made an especially important contribution to the sphere of developing our agro-industrial complex. One can say without exaggeration that our scientists, our creative intelligentsia, writers were drawn to him. All in all, he is a worthy person for such a high position.

ZIMYANIN. First of all, I would like to express my full support of the proposal that was made at the Politburo session today, and to add only two positions points.

In our work together in the Secretariat of the CC CPSU, we I saw with my own eyes how active, deep and erudite Mikhail Sergeevich was. He knows how to find the essence, and this is very important, because the General Secretary of the CC CPSU should accumulate the opinions of the masses, and the foresight of the future. And secondly, each time when I put a question to M. S. Gorbachev, I found a quick decision with a thorough knowledge of the subject. He is known for constantly expanding his knowledge. And this is the most important quality for a person's growth. I believe I will express the feeling of all of us if I say that you, Mikhail Sergeevich, can rely on us completely.

KAPITONOV. The comrades have spoken very well here about Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev. I share those wonderful words fully. He is a worthy person in all respects. He possesses experience, extensive knowledge, and a sharp analytical mind. He exhibits great party loyalty and a principled character, and he is demanding of himself and of other people. Therefore, I strongly support the proposal that was introduced, and I am absolutely convinced that our party and our people will approve this proposal.

LIGACHEV. First of all, I would like to commend the very important initiative made today by A. A. Gromyko. Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev undoubtedly possesses all the qualities of a prominent political figure. Besides that, he has a lot of intellectual and physical power in store. It is also important to note that M. S. Gorbachev is characterized by a great passion in his work, an aspiration to search for innovation in issues small and large, and the skill to organize action. And this, as you understand, has great importance for the entire party and its organizational work, and for the improvement of its style and methods. This work comprises personnel policy as well as the activities of the soviets, trade unions, and Komsomol; and Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, who enjoys great respect in the party, trade unions, and Komsomol organizations, among the activists of our party, and among the people as a whole, is very familiar with all this work. Many Secretaries of the oblast and krai party committees were telling me about this today. Promoting M. S. Gorbachev will be received with pride among our people, and will raise the authority of the Politburo of the CC CPSU.

RYZHKOV. I believe that we are making an absolutely correct decision today. At the same time we understand what a heavy, difficult burden will be put on Mikhail Sergeevich's shoulders. We have seen how he has been growing as a political figure before our eyes, how he always tries to move forward rather than stopping at what has been achieved. For us, secretaries of the Central Committee, the work of the Secretariat is a great school. It gives great satisfaction not only to us, but also to all the participants of the Secretariat sessions. M. S. Gorbachev knows the issues of the general economy well. It is exceptionally important for a General Secretary of the CC CPSU. Yes, we understand that it will be difficult for him, very difficult. But he has all the qualities to be able to carry out the most important party and state functions. We, Mikhail Sergeevich, will always be your loyal assistants.

RUSAKOV. I fully share everything that has already been said here about Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev. This is a Man with a capital M. Today's conversation,

in connection with the great sadness that has befallen us, has a cementing importance for our entire party, for the Politburo, and for the people. And I am convinced that we will engage in effective and well-coordinated work under M. S. Gorbachev's leadership. Mikhail Sergeevich is well known in the socialist countries, and that means that there will be intense and well coordinated work by the entire socialist commonwealth in the future. Dear Mikhail Sergeevich, just stay the same as you are now, and everything will go well.

GORBACHEV. First of all, I would like to say that the main and the most important point is that our Politburo session today takes place in the spirit of unity. We are living through a very complex and transformative time. Our economy needs more dynamism. This dynamism is necessary for our democracy, for the development of our foreign policy.

I understand very well that in the end, the Politburo of the CC CPSU will always be able to make the right decision, to find the necessary candidate. However, because today you are talking about me, I receive your words with a feeling of great excitement and anxiety. This is my feeling when I listen to you, dear friends.

I also understand very well that we are talking about extremely hard work. It would be practically impossible to carry it out without your support, without an atmosphere of mutual understanding in the Politburo. That is why again and again I come to the conclusion for myself that the collective spirit and unity are the invaluable qualities of our party, our Central Committee, and its Politburo.

The nine years of my work in the Stavropol *krai*, and seven years of my work here have shown me convincingly that our party contains a great creative potential. It possesses this potential above all else because the people give their active support to the Communists. The latest elections to the Supreme and the local Soviets have shown that persuasively. These elections serve as a sign of the great trust of our people in our party, and at the same time, they show how great is the responsibility, which rests on our shoulders.

I see my task first of all in looking for new solutions, for ways to move our country forward, for ways to increase the economic and defense power of the Motherland, and to improve the lives of our people together with you.

I am deeply devoted to the idea of collective work, and I think that it has a potential that we are not using fully yet. Our collectivist potential should work even more actively, and produce even more results.

We should not change our policy. It is the right, correct, genuinely Leninist policy. We should pick up the tempo, move forward, identify shortcomings and overcome them, and behold the sight of our bright future even more clearly.

I assure you that I will do everything to live up to the great trust of the party and your trust, comrades, I will do everything to organize our smooth collective work. And I hope very much for our mutual support and for our unity.

All the attending Politburo members, candidate Politburo members, and secretaries of the Central Committee have spoken here today. Therefore, as I understand it, your opinion is unanimous, and we can go to the Plenum of the CC CPSU, which will open in 30 minutes, with one recommendation.

POLITBURO MEMBERS. Correct.

GORBACHEV. It will probably be expedient, taking into account the fact that A. A. Gromyko was the first to speak today, to entrust him to introduce the proposal approved by the Politburo for the consideration of the CC CPSU Plenum.

POLITBURO MEMBERS. That's right, we can entrust it to A. A. Gromyko.

The resolution is adopted.

2. On the extraordinary Plenum of the CC CPSU.

GORBACHEV. There is a proposal to convene the extraordinary Plenum of the CC CPSU on March 11, 1985. To introduce one question for the consideration of the Plenum—about the election of the General Secretary of the CC CPSU. I think this is how we will do it: consider all the prepared organizational questions before the start of the Plenum, and start the Plenum at 17:00 in the hall of Central Committee Plenums. I think that by that time all Plenum participants will be able to arrive in Moscow.

POLITBURO MEMBERS. Correct.

The resolution is adopted.

3. On the organization of the funeral of General Secretary of the CC CPSU, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR K. U. Chernenko.

GORBACHEV. We have here the proposals prepared by the comrades. Are there any comments on the text of the announcement of K. U. Chernenko's passing?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. No comments.

GORBACHEV. The proposal is introduced to broadcast the announcement over television and radio on March 11 at 14:00 and publish it in the press on March 12. Any other proposals?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. Agreed.

GORBACHEV. Now we are supposed to consider the text of the eulogy prepared by the group of comrades. Are there any comments on the text of the eulogy?

GRISHIN. I think the text of the eulogy “Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko” has been prepared well. It is approximately similar to the one we had for Yu. V. Andropov’s funeral.

TIKHONOV, GROMYKO, ROMANOV, ALIEV. We can approve this text.

GORBACHEV. Now we have to approve the text of the resolution of the CC CPSU, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and the Council of Ministers of the USSR regarding the organization of Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko’s funeral. It is proposed to create a commission for organizing the funeral with the following composition: comrades M. S. Gorbachev (Chairman), G. A. Aliev, V. I. Vorotnikov, V. V. Grishin, A. A. Gromyko, G. V. Romanov, M. S. Solomentsev, N. A. Tikhonov, V. I. Dolgikh, V. V. Kuznetsov, B. N. Ponomarev, V. M. Chebrikov, M. V. Zimyanin, E. K. Ligachev, G. M. Markov, V. M. Mishin, V. V. Tereshkova, P. N. Fedoseev, S. A. Shalaev, Yu. A. Prokofiev, S. S. Tsiglimov.

Any comments on the composition of the commission?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. No comments.

GORBACHEV. It is proposed to bury K. U. Chernenko on Red Square in a grave.

CHEBRIKOV. I looked at the layout of graves along the Kremlin Wall, and I think that it would be best to locate K. U. Chernenko’s grave next to the grave of S. M. Budenny (Shows a chart).

GORBACHEV. I think we can agree with this proposal.

POLITBURO MEMBERS. We can agree.

GORBACHEV. It is proposed to set the coffin with K. U. Chernenko’s body in the Hall of Columns of the House of the Union on March 11 in the afternoon. To organize the farewell tonight at 18:30 for members of the CC CPSU and the Control Commission of the CPSU, and on March 12 from 10:00 to 22:00, and on March 13 from 9:00 to 11:00 for the working people. To hold the memorial rally in Red Square on March 13, Wednesday, at 13:00.

POLITBURO MEMBERS. Correct.

GORBACHEV. In contrast with the past, I think, we should not cancel classes in schools for the period of mourning.

GRISHIN. That is correct, otherwise it appears that if classes are not held it is some kind of holiday for the children.

The resolution is adopted taking into account the last proposal.

4. On the telegram to the First Secretaries of the Central Committees of the union republics, and oblast and *krai* party committees.

GORBACHEV. You all have the text of the telegram to the First Secretaries of the Central Committees of the Union republics, oblast and krai party committees. Are there any objections to its approval?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. No

The text of the telegram is approved.

5. The Address of the CC CPSU, Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, USSR Council of Ministers and the Communist Party to the Soviet people.

GORBACHEV. Comrades, you all have the text of the address. Are there any comments on the text of this address?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. We can approve it.

The text of the address is approved.

6. On instructions to Soviet ambassadors in the socialist states in connection with K. U. Chernenko's death.

GORBACHEV. Following the experience of the last year, it is proposed to send instructions immediately to our ambassadors in the socialist countries, and also to all our ambassadors in the capitalist countries. The telegram should inform them about the passing of K. U. Chernenko and instruct the ambassadors that if the leadership of the country considers it necessary to send a delegation to Moscow to attend the funeral, then it should consist of no more than 2 or 3 people.

TIKHONOV. Of course the delegation will be larger, as it was before.

GROMYKO. Of course, there will be larger delegations. And we, of course, have to receive them in full.

POLITBURO MEMBERS. Correct.

The resolution on this issue is adopted.

7. On organizational measures in connection with the participation of delegations of foreign countries in K. U. Chernenko's funeral.

GORBACHEV. Following the experience of previous years, all work on this issue should be entrusted to the Department of the CC CPSU, the International Department, the Administration of the CC CPSU, the apparatus of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Administration of the USSR Council of Ministers, USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the KGB.

It is proposed to provide lodging for the delegations in the state guest houses and hotels. It is proposed that the Ministry of Civil Aviation organize transportation of the delegations to Moscow and back to their countries, if such requests are received. It is likely that we will receive such requests from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Cuba. We will have to organize special flights. The Hungarian delegation can come by train. Therefore, we need to prepare a train with a lounge car.

Do the comrades have any other suggestions or objections regarding the organizational measures relating to K. U. Chernenko's funeral?

POLITBURO MEMBERS. No.

The resolution is adopted.

8. On the protocol for foreign delegations arriving for K. U. Chernenko's funeral during their stay in the USSR.

GORBACHEV. Following the current custom, the greeting of the arriving delegations of the socialist countries as well as farewell ceremonies will be conducted in accordance with the resolution that is being prepared by the Department of the Central Committee. These delegations will be greeted by members of the Politburo, candidate members of the Politburo, and by the Central Committee Secretaries. Greetings and farewells for delegations from other countries will be organized by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the USSR Council of Ministers, and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the level of Deputy Chairman of the Presidium, Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, Ministers and their deputies, and officials of the CC CPSU apparatus.

All other questions relating to the stay of foreign delegations in the USSR are listed here. If the need arises to hold other events, we can decide on those as they come up.

The draft of the resolution is adopted.

9. On some organizational issues in connection with the attendance of K. U. Chernenko's funeral by party and state delegations from socialist countries.

GORBACHEV. The members of the Politburo have voted for the proposals on these issues. The comrades have those proposals. Are there any comments?

VOICES. No.

The resolution is adopted.

GORBACHEV. These are all the measures, which we should carry out in connection with K. U. Chernenko's funeral.

And now, Comrades, we can walk over to the conference hall, to the Plenum of the CC CPSU.

[Source: The Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Volkogonov Collection, Reel 17, Container 25. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive]