

July 1st, 1985.

I was at the Plenum, which lasted for half an hour. Gorbachev, without taking the podium, began to speak in a free manner, saying: tomorrow there will be a session of the Supreme Soviet, we will have to discuss questions about the session, including questions of organization. The first is about the head of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. You know that since 1977 this post was combined with the post of the CC General Secretary. Perhaps it was justified then. The times have changed now; separate organs have different tasks and responsibilities. The General Secretary must concentrate on the role and work of the party.

And, without any kind of transition, he suggested Gromyko as candidate to the head of Supreme Soviet post. [Gorbachev] characterized him with much reserve, did not repay Gromyko's March Plenum speech, showing once again that the "personal" aspect does not matter to him. He only said that Andrey Andreyevich has been in the party for a long time, has always consistently followed the party line, is devoted to the principle of collective leadership... And that was all! He spoke neither of his mind, nor his knowledge and abilities.

He moved on to the Supreme Soviet tasks, and tasks of soviets in general; spoke about the need to raise the role of permanent Supreme Soviet committees, right there and then endowing them with the right to not only discuss the Ministries' work, but also to evaluate the Ministers' work, even to censure whether they are fit to occupy their posts.

He spoke of the Public Prosecutor's Office, whose "work leaves much to be desired;" [spoke] about the fact that the Public Prosecutor's Office must keep the law **for everybody**, and must stop the Ministries' and departments' practice of not only interpreting the laws to comply with their needs, but even correcting [the laws to fit their needs].

He named the candidates to the posts of committee chairmen and the deputy chairman to the chairman himself, by the way—without saying a word about his (Gromyko's) role in foreign policy. Everybody took notice of this.

Then [he spoke] about the [post of] Minister of Foreign Affairs. We, Gorbachev says, discussed this question thoroughly at the PB and propose comrade Shevardnadze for this post.

For us, the staff members, this was like a bolt from the blue.

As Ponomarev told me in terrible secrecy, this is what happened at the PB [Politburo]. Unexpectedly for all, Gorbachev named Shevardnadze, making the following comments: we do have major diplomats, who are worthy of being ministers, for example, Kornienko, Chervonenko, Dobrynin. At this point Gromyko interrupted and named Vorontsov, but the General Secretary gave him a sidelong glance and did not respond. The allotted work, he went on, must be directly in the hands of the party and that is why we must nominate a comrade from the party's leadership for this post. Ponomarev also added about Vorontsov: M.S., he says, "did not notice" this name because to give the MFA to Vorontsov, who is practically a relative of Gromyko's, would be to let everything remain as it is.

At the PB session [Gorbachev] gave a testimonial to Shevardnadze: he was able to manage a most difficult situation in Georgia, he is characterized by a sense of the new, by the courage and originality of his approaches.

The Plenum, of course, promoted Shevardnadze from candidate member to full membership of the PB.

I consider all this very indicative of the end of Gromyko's monopoly and the power of the MFA's staff over foreign policy.

Furthermore, Romanov was removed from the PB and dismissed from his CC Secretary post "in accordance with his request, due to declining health." Gorbachev did not give any explanations as to whether there was any reason [for his removal] or whether it was just decided to get rid of the good-for-nothing swine.

Zaikov, the Leningrad obkom secretary, was elected CC Secretary. He will replace Romanov in dealing with the defense industry. Yeltsin, recently the secretary of the Sverdlovsk obkom, was appointed CC Secretary with a post in the CC apparatus—as deputy of the Construction and Capital Investment Department.

[Source: Diary of Anatoly S Chernyaev, donated to the National Security Archive.
Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive]