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22. Such pressure was evident in May 1987, when Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze visited Budapest to convey Gorbachev's dissatisfaction with the Hungarian leadership's procrastination on further economic reform. A month later, Karoly Grosz, reputed to be an able and energetic administrator, was named Hungarian Prime Minister. And in July, after a quick visit to Moscow by Grosz, the Hungarian leadership unveiled a long-discussed, long-postponed set of economic reform (and austerity) measures. A year later, the succession process took a much more decisive turn:

- At a special party conference in May 1988, Grosz was named party General Secretary, forcing out Janos Kadar, who had served in the top party post since 1956.
- Most of Kadar's proteges were also dramatically removed from the top leadership, replaced by a strongly reformist group of younger officials.

Although the initiative for these decisions was probably Hungarian, Soviet pressure clearly forced the pace and direction of change. (S.M.P.)

23. Even without direct Soviet calls for change in Eastern Europe, the demonstration effect of Gorbachev's domestic departures was unsettling. The very existence of a reform-minded Soviet leader, coupled with his critique of Brezhnev-era mismanagement, served to undermine the authority and cohesion of the more orthodox East European regimes. And the new legitimacy accorded to economic "restructuring" and political "openness" threatened to unleash widespread public expectations for rapid change. Nowhere were these trends more evident than in Czechoslovakia, where the seeming vindication of reformist and even dissident ideas sent shock waves through the divided party leadership. These pressures, combined with the declining health of party leader Gustav Husak, led to his abrupt resignation in December 1987. (See inset, page 10.) (S.M.P.)

24. The Czechoslovak succession confirmed Gorbachev's determination to promote change without threatening stability. Through strong, if largely indirect, pressure on the divided Prague leadership, Gorbachev helped secure the removal of Husak, the personification of Brezhnev-era conservatism—only to accept a safe, almost Chernenko-like successor in Milos Jakes. Indeed, Soviet pressure for change probably could not have succeeded had Gorbachev attempted to push a reformist successor on a still-conservative Czechoslovak leadership. Jakes, then, was probably a compromise choice for Moscow as well as Prague; the

The Hungarian Succession

Karoly Grosz



Age 57... General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) since 22 May 1988; Premier since June 1987; Politburo member since 1985... May party conference gave a mandate to institute both economic and political changes... commitment to economic reform untested, accomplishments as Premier limited... respected by business leaders as dynamic, vigorous executive willing to make tough decisions... Budapest party secretary, 1984-87.

Janos Kadar



Age 76... HSWP President since 22 May 1988; removed as party leader, Politburo member at that time... after 1956 revolution, forged social consensus based on consumerism and relaxed relations between party and people... ability to convince Soviets of Hungarian loyalty and stability contributed to long reign... recently seen as impediment to economic and political progress because of unwillingness to expand reforms of 1970s, also declining energy level, progressive health problems.

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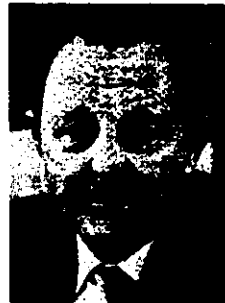
The Czechoslovak Succession

Gustav Husak's December 1987 resignation as Czechoslovak party leader (while retaining the largely honorific state presidency) came in the wake of a long Soviet campaign to push the Gorbachev agenda in Prague; the resulting pressures undoubtedly encouraged the Czechoslovak leadership to move against Husak. His successor, Milos Jakes, brought to the party leadership a mixed bag of credentials:

- Jakes carried the baggage of post-1968 "normalization," having been among the anti-Dubcek conspirators and having directed the 1969-70 purge of party members associated with the Prague Spring.
- He had served since 1981 as party secretary for economic affairs and recently seemed to have sided with pragmatic elements in the party favoring cautious economic reform—stressing, however, that economic change must take place under strict party control. (S NR)

Though hardly a green light for reform, Jakes's elevation will help move the regime toward long overdue economic change and political rejuvenation, already hinted at by the April 1988 changes to the Central Committee secretariat. And Jakes, a firm Moscow loyalist, will be more receptive to Soviet calls for improved economic performance, closer cooperation in Soviet-sponsored joint ventures in high-technology areas, and domestic "restructuring." He is also likely to oversee further changes in the party leadership, still dominated by holdovers from the 1969-70 "normalization" period and now thrown into ethnic imbalance by the overrepresentation of Czechs in top regime positions. (S NR)

These changes are not likely to spark social upheaval, nor will they lead to significant liberalizing reform in Czechoslovakia. But they may herald a long-awaited change in economic policy and encourage opposition groups to become more active, if only to test the limits of tolerance under the Jakes regime. (S NR)



Milos Jakes (U)

Age 66... party leader since 17 December 1987... party Central Committee secretary, 1977-87, responsible for agriculture until 1981, for economy until April 1988... Presidium member since 1981... attended CPSU Higher Party School in Moscow (1955-58), presumably speaks fluent Russian... Czech. (C NR)



Gustav Husak (U)

Age 75... President since 1975... party leader, 1969-87... resigned as party chief but remains a member of policymaking Presidium... has had cataract surgery, suffers continuing vision problems, declining general health... reportedly drinks excessively... Slovak. (C NR)

Czechoslovak succession underscored the limits of the achievable in Soviet policy in dealing with the more conservative regimes in Eastern Europe. (S NR)

25. The gap between Gorbachev's ultimate objectives, as outlined in numerous speeches and documents, and the actual policies he has pursued reflects the fundamental contradiction between his desire for change and the imperatives of party control in Eastern Europe:

- Gorbachev has set an ambitious agenda for Eastern Europe that addresses many of the region's problems, but it is neither broad nor deep enough to remedy underlying systemic weaknesses.

- He has expanded the scope of permissible experimentation for reformist regimes, such as Hungary, and has succeeded in pushing some of the more conservative East European regimes toward long overdue, though still timid, reforms.

- In the process, he has accentuated divisions within the East European leaderships and awakened a combination of popular hopes and anxieties about impending change. These trends, coupled with severe economic problems, have heightened uncertainties in the region and increased the potential for crisis. (S NR)

10  
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