between constructive revolutionary force and the destruction of revolutionary legality, of the isolation of economic and political leadership from the initiative, the criticism, and creative activity of the masses. We shall welcome competition between communist parties in power to find the best way of avoiding this danger. It will be up to us to work out our own way and method, so that we, too, may guard against the evils of stagnation and bureaucratisation, and we will learn together how to resolve the problems of freedom for the working masses and of social justice, and hence gain for ourselves ever increasing prestige and following among the masses.

Source: Palmiro Togliatti, Interview in Nuovi Argomenti, *16 June 1956, in Dan J. Jacobs,* From Marx to Mao and Marchais *(London, Longman, 1979), pp. 241, 243–4, 245, 248–9.*

Document 8.6 The Impact of the Secret Speech in Georgia

While most of the country heaved a sigh of relief, in Stalin's native Georgia matters were seen somewhat differently. Several thousand demonstrators on 5–9 March 1956 in Tbilisi in support of Stalin's memory were dispersed with tanks and armoured vehicles, leading to dozens of deaths.

Criticism of Stalin's cult of personality dealt a painful blow to my national feeling. Not just because he was a Georgian. Deliberately or not, Khrushchev permitted himself to say things that were offensive to Georgian pride. It was not enough for Nikita Sergeevich to cite facts. He gave free rein to his emotions, like a person humiliated for too long, and descended to degrading attacks on his dead master. He depicted him not only as the tyrant that he was, but as a profoundly ignorant and stupid man. But if he really were so stupid, many asked, how did he build such a powerful state and compel so many millions to follow him? How could he become a worthy adversary and partner with the leading politicians of his era? By scheming, brutality, force, and trickery alone? Impossible!

Sources: Shevardnadze, Moi vybor, *p. 54;* The Future Belongs to Freedom, *p. 20.*

Document 8.7 The 'Anti-Party' Group

In June 1957 some of the figures associated with Stalin in the Presidium (the new name for the Politburo) sought to remove Khrushchev from the leadership, fearing the concentration of power in his hands and alarmed at his policies. Khrushchev successfully counter-attacked, convening a full Central Committee plenum on 29 June (delegates were brought in on military planes provided by Zhukov), which supported him. Khrushchev then accused Kaganovich, Malenkov and Molotov, together with Dimitrii Shepilov (a member of the CC's Secretariat), of having formed an 'anti-party' group within the Presidium. They were charged with factionalism, of having undermined the course outlined by the Twentieth Party Congress, of having opposed broadening the powers of the union republics and of granting more rights to local soviets, fighting bureaucratism, resisting Khrushchev's economic reforms and opposing the denunciation of Stalin's personality cult, all matters at the heart of Khrushchevite reformism.

The Central Committee plenum of 22–29 June 1957 considered the question of the anti-party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov, which had formed in the Presidium of the CPSU's Central Committee . . .

With the aim of changing the party's political line this group sought through anti-party factional methods to replace the party's leading bodies elected by the CC plenum.

This was no accident.

During the past three to four years, when the party has resolutely set its course at overcoming the errors and shortcomings fostered by the cult of personality, and has been waging a successful struggle against revisionists of Marxism-Leninism both in the international arena and within the country, when the party has made an enormous effort to correct past distortions of the Leninist nationality policy, the members of this anti-party group – discovered and fully exposed – kept up constant direct or indirect opposition to the course adopted by the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. This group, effectively, sought to reverse the Leninist course towards peaceful coexistence among countries with different social systems, towards relaxing international tension and establishing friendly relations between the USSR and all peoples of the world.

They were against broadening the rights of the union republics in economic, cultural and legislative matters, and also opposed strengthening the role of local soviets in resolving these tasks. In this way the anti-party group opposed the party's resolute course towards the more rapid economic and cultural development of the Union republics, designed to consolidate further Leninist friendship among all the peoples of our country. The anti-party group not only failed to understand, but even opposed, the party's struggle against bureaucratism, designed to reduce the size of the inflated state apparatus . . .

This group stubbornly opposed and tried to undermine such important measures as the reorganisation of industrial management, the creation of economic councils [*sovnarkhozy*] and economic regions . . . On agricultural issues the members of this group failed to understand the need to increase material incentives for the collective farm peasantry to stimulate agricultural output. They opposed the abolition of the old bureaucratic system of planning in collective farms and the introduction of the new system of planning to stimulate the initiative of the collective farms in running their

own affairs . . . Comrade Molotov displayed conservatism and a stagnant attitude, not only failing to recognise the need to develop the virgin lands but even opposing the ploughing of 35 million hectares of virgin land, which has been of such tremendous importance in our country's economy.

Comrades Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov stubbornly resisted those measures, which the Central Committee and our party pursued to overcome the consequences of the cult of the personality, to eliminate the violations of revolutionary legality that had occurred and to create conditions that would preclude their recurrence.

In foreign policy this group, in particular Comrade Molotov, displayed stagnation and impeded in every way the implementation of new and pressing measures designed to alleviate international tension, to strengthen peace in the world. As foreign minister Comrade Molotov not only failed for a long time to take any measures through the ministry of foreign affairs to improve relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia, but even on occasion spoke against those measures which the Presidium of the CC pursued to improve relations with Yugoslavia . . . He impeded the conclusion of the State Treaty with Austria . . . he also opposed the normalisation of relations with Japan . . .

The CC plenum resolves:

1 To condemn as incompatible with the Leninist principles of our party the factional activities of the anti-party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov and of Shepilov who joined them.
2 To expel Comrades Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov from membership of the Presidium of the Central Committee, to remove Comrade Shepilov from the post of secretary of the Central Committee and to exclude him from the list of candidates for membership in the Presidium of the Central Committee and from membership of the Central Committee. . .

Sources: Pravda, *4 July 1957;* KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh, *vol. 9 (Moscow, Politizdat, 1986), pp. 184–9.*

To consolidate his power further, in October 1957 Khrushchev denounced the hero of Berlin, Georgii Zhukov, accusing him of establishing his own cult of personality in the army (*Pravda*, 10 November 1957). A year later Bulganin was dismissed and Khrushchev doubled as party leader and prime minister. The stage was set for the emergence of Khrushchev's own erratic mini-personality cult.

Document 8.8 Yevtushenko, 'The Heirs of Stalin'

The Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961 deepened the destalinisation process with yet more revelations about Stalin's rule. The Congress decreed Stalin's removal from what had become the Lenin–Stalin Mausoleum, and he was buried in the Kremlin Wall near by. In this poem of 1962 Yevtushenko (see his 'Babii Yar', Document 6.21), who became the bard of the era, reflects the doubts of a whole generation: while Stalin might be physically dead (and in the malevolent world of the Soviets there was nothing guaranteed about this), his spirit lived on in his heirs – that is, not just the new political leadership with their arms elbow-deep in blood, but in every single Soviet citizen.

Silent the marble. Silent the glass scintillates.
Silent stand the sentries in the breeze like bronzes poured.
Thin wisps of smoke curled over the coffin.
And breath percolated through its chinks
as they carried him through the mausoleum doors.
Slowly floats the coffin, grazing the bayonets' edges.
He also was silent – he also! silent and terrible.
Then grimly his embalmed fist clenches,
through the chinks watches a man pretending to be dead.
He wanted to remember his pallbearers;
young recruits from Kursk and Ryazan,
so that, somehow later, collecting enough strength to sally out,
he would rise up from the grave and get those thoughtless youths.
He was scheming. Had merely dozed off.
And I turn to our government with a request;
to double, treble the guard over that gravestone slab,
so that Stalin should not rise, and with Stalin – the past.
I don't mean that past, noble and treasured,
of TurkSib, and Magnitogorsk, and the flag raised over Berlin.
I have in mind the past that is measured
by the people's good neglected,
the innocent slandered and arrested.
In honesty we sowed,
in honesty metal smelted,
and honestly we marched in soldierly formation.
But he feared us.
He, believing in the great goal, did not consider
that the means must be worthy of the ends.
He was farsighted. Skilled in the laws of struggle,
he left many heirs in this world's circumference.
It seems to me, that there is a telephone connected to that coffin:
To Enver Hoxha Stalin sends his latest instructions.
Where else does that line link up to?
No – Stalin didn't give up.
Death is to him a rectifiable mistake.
We carried him out of the mausoleum.
But how do we remove Stalin's heirs from Stalin?!
In their retirement some heirs prune roses,

new class lie primarily in industry. Without industry the new class cannot consolidate its position or authority.

Former sons of the working class are the most steadfast members of the new class. It has always been the fate of slaves to provide for their masters the most clever and gifted representatives. In this case a new exploiting and governing class is born from the exploited class.

When Communist systems are being critically analyzed, it is considered that their fundamental distinction lies in the fact that bureaucracy, organized in a special stratum, rules over the people. This is generally true. However, a more detailed analysis will show that only a special stratum of bureaucrats, those who are not administrative officials, make up the core of the governing bureaucracy, or, in my terminology, of the new class. This is actually a party or political bureaucracy. Other officials are only the apparatus under the control of the new class; the apparatus may be clumsy and slow but, no matter what, it must exist in every socialist society. It is sociologically possible to draw the borderline between the different types of officials, but in practice they are practically indistinguishable. This is true not only because the Communist system by its very nature is bureaucratic, but because Communists handle the various important administrative functions. In addition, the stratum of political bureaucrats cannot enjoy their privileges if they do not give crumbs from their tables to other bureaucratic categories . . . Behind Lenin, who was all passion and thought, stands the dull, gray figure of Joseph Stalin, the symbol of the difficult, cruel, and unscrupulous ascent of the new class to its final power.

After Lenin and Stalin came what had to come; namely, mediocrity in the form of collective leadership. And also there came the apparently sincere, kind-hearted, non-intellectual 'man of the people' – Nikita Khrushchev. The new class no longer needs the revolutionaries or dogmatists it once required; it is satisfied with simple personalities, such as Khrushchev, Malenkov, Bulganin, and Shepilov, whose every word reflects the average man. The new class itself is tired of dogmatic purges and training sessions. It would like to live quietly. It must protect itself even from its own authorized leader now that it has been adequately strengthened. Stalin remained the same as he was when the class was weak, when cruel measures were necessary against even those in its own ranks who threatened to deviate. Today this is all unnecessary. Without relinquishing anything it created under Stalin's leadership, the new class appears to be renouncing not his authority – only Stalin's methods which, according to Khrushchev, hurt 'good Communists.'

Lenin's revolutionary epoch was replaced by Stalin's epoch, in which authority and ownership, and industrialization, were strengthened so that the much desired peaceful and good life of the new class could begin. Lenin's *revolutionary* Communism was replaced by Stalin's *dogmatic* Communism, which in turn was replaced by *non-dogmatic* Communism, a so-called collective leadership or a group of oligarchs.

These are the three phases of development of the new class in the USSR or of Russian Communism (or of every other type of Communism in one manner or another).

Source: Milovan Djilas, The New Class *(New York, Praeger, 1957), pp. 18–19, 19–20, 21–2, 35, 37–8, 39–40, 42–3, 52–3.*

Cultural Thaw and its Limits

Stalin's death and destalinisation opened up new spaces for artists to explore the country's past and present. This generation of the liberal Soviet intelligentsia (primarily its cultural part) that came to maturity at this time came to be known as the *shestdesyatniki*, the people of the 1960s. Much vilified in later years for their apparently misplaced belief in the reformability of the Soviet system and the redemptive power of the arts, they nevertheless represented the first serious challenge to the post-Stalinist regime's claims to a monopoly on the truth. Their ideas laid a long fuse that exploded into the activism of *glasnost* under Gorbachev.

Example 8.15 Solzhenitsyn Emerges

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich was first published in the November 1962 issue of *Novy mir*, edited by Andrei Tvardovskii, one of the leading figures in what was to become the trend of reform communism. The journal itself came to symbolise the liberalisation of communism. Solzhenitsyn's story appears a straightforward narrative of a day in the life of a Gulag prisoner, Shukhov, but also reveals the survival of human qualities in adverse conditions, and is a specific meditation on the quality of freedom in Soviet conditions. Its publication was due to Tvardovskii's determination and Khrushchev's own political predicament at the time, apparently labouring under the misapprehension that the story celebrated 'honest toil' by prisoners who remained loyal to the Soviet system. By the time he understood the story's full implications, hundreds of thousands of copies had already been distributed.

As usual, at five o'clock that morning reveille was sounded by the blows of a hammer on a length of rail hanging up near the staff quarters. The intermittent sounds barely penetrated the window-panes on which the frost lay two fingers thick, and they ended almost as soon as they'd begun. It was cold outside outside, and the camp-guard was reluctant to go beating out the reveille for long.

The clanging ceased, but everything outside still looked like the middle of the night when Ivan Denisovich Shukhov got up to go to the bucket. It was pitch dark except for the yellow light cast on the window by three lamps – two in the outer zone, one inside the camp itself.

And no one came to unbolt the barrack-hut door; there was no sound of

the barrack-orderlies pushing a pole into place to lift the barrel of nightsoil and carry it out.

Shukhov never overslept reveille. He always got up at once, for the next ninety minutes, until they assembled for work, belonged to him, not to the authorities, and any old-timer could always earn a bit – by sewing a pair of over-mittens for someone out of old sleeve lining; or bringing some rich lag in the team his dry valenki [felt boots] – right up to his bunk, so that he wouldn't have to stumble barefoot round the heaps of boots looking for his own pair; or going the rounds of the store-huts, offering to be of service, sweeping up this or fetching that; or going to the mess-hall to collect bowls from the tables and bring them stacked to the dishwashers – you're sure to be given something to eat there, though there were plenty of others at that game, more than plenty – and, what's worse, if you found a bowl with something left in it you could hardly resist licking it out. But Shukhov had never forgotten the words of his first team-leader, Kuziomin – a hard-bitten prisoner who had already been in for twelve years by 1943 – who told the newcomers, just in from the front, as they sat beside a fire in a desolate cutting in the forest:

'Here, lads, we live by the law of taiga. But even here people manage to live. D'you know what are the ones the camps finish off? Those who lick other men's left-overs, those who set store by the doctors, and those who peach on their mates.'

As for the peachers, he was wrong there. Those people were sure to get through the camp all right. Only they were saving their own skin at the expense of other people's blood.

Shukhov always arose at reveille. But this day he didn't. He had felt queer the evening before, feverish, with pains all over his body. He hadn't been able to get warm all through the night. Even in his sleep he had felt at one moment that he was getting seriously ill, at another that he was getting better. He had longed for the morning not to come.

But the morning came as usual . . .

More than once during his life in the camps, Shukhov had recalled the way they used to eat in his village: whole saucepans of potatoes, pots of porridge and, in the early days, big chunks of meat. And milk enough to split their guts. That wasn't the way to eat, he learned in camp. You had to eat with all your mind on the food – like now, nibbling the bread bit by bit, working the crumbs up into a paste with your tongue and sucking it into your cheeks. And how good it tasted, that soggy black bread. What had he eaten for eight, no, more than eight years? Next to nothing. But how much work had he done? Ah! . . .

Shukhov ate his bread down to his very fingers, keeping only a little bit of bare crust, the half-moon-shaped top of the loaf – because no spoon is as good for scraping a bowl of porridge clean as a bread-crust. He wrapped the crust in his cloth again and slipped it into his inside pocket for dinner, buttoned himself up against the cold and prepared for work. Let them send him out now! Though of course, it would be better if they'd wait a bit longer . . .

Why, you might wonder, should prisoners wear themselves out, working hard, ten years on end, in the camps? You'd think they'd say: No thank you, and that's that. We'll shuffle through the day till evening, and then the night is ours.

But that didn't work. To outsmart you they thought up work-teams – but not teams like the ones in freedom, where every man is paid his separate wage. Everything was so arranged in the camp that the prisoners egged one another on. It was like this: either you got a bit extra or you all croaked. You're slacking, you rat – d'you think I'm willing to go hungry just because of you? Put your guts into it, scum.

And if a situation like this one turned up there was all the more reason for resisting any temptation to slack. Willy-nilly you put your back into the work. For unless you could manage to provide yourself with the means of warming up, you and everyone else would peg out on the spot . . .

But he'd had such a good day, he felt in such good spirits, that somehow he wasn't in the mood for sleep yet.

He must make his bed now – there wasn't much to it. Strip his mattress of the grubby blanket and lie on it (it must have been '41 when he last slept in sheets – that was at home; it even seemed odd for women to bother about sheets, all that extra laundering). Head on the pillow, stuffed with shavings of wood: feet in jacket sleeve; coat on top of blanket and – Glory be to Thee, O Lord. Another day over. Thank you I'm not spending tonight in the cells. Here it's still bearable.

Shukhov went to sleep fully content. He'd had many strokes of luck that day: they hadn't put him in the cells; they hadn't sent the team to the settlement; he'd pinched a bowl of kasha at dinner; the team-leader had fixed the rates well; he'd built a wall and enjoyed doing it; he'd smuggled that bit of hacksaw-blade through; he'd earned something from Tsezar in the evening; he'd bought that tobacco. And he hadn't fallen ill. He'd got over it.

A day without a dark cloud. Almost a happy day.

There were three thousand six hundred and fifty-three days like that in his stretch. From the first clang of the rail to the last clang of the rail.

The three extra days were for leap years.

Source: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich *(Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1963), pp. 7–8, 43–4, 45, 51–2, 137.*

The cultural 'thaw' of this period was always fragile, and depended on Khrushchev's mercurial temperament. The award of the Nobel Prize to Boris Pasternak for his *Doctor Zhivago* in 1958 was accompanied by a major scandal, and Pasternak was refused permission to go to Norway to collect the prize. In 1962–3 Khrushchev condemned trends in modern art and attempts to achieve a degree of cultural autonomy for artists.

Decline and Fall

Khrushchev's last years in power were marked by accumulating policy failures. Having restored the party to the centre of Soviet political life, Khrushchev proceeded to undermine it. Particularly unpopular was the decision in November 1962 to divide the regional party organisations into separate urban-industrial and rural-agricultural branches. Mismanagement of the economy provoked a dangerous instability in society.

There had already been bloody demonstrations in Georgia in 1956, but the single most significant outbreak of labour unrest between the end of NEP and 1989 was in Novocherkassk on 1–2 June 1962. Prices were raised on foodstuffs while at the same time a change in labour norms would have led to a wage cut. At least 7,000 workers downed tools and marched towards the centre of town and party headquarters. At first local military detachments refused to obey orders to disperse the demonstrators, and only when outside units were brought in did the shooting begin – 24 were killed outright and 30 wounded, while 105 were put on trial, of whom 7 were sentenced to be shot. Disturbances also took place at this time in three towns in the Donbass (Donetsk, Artem'evsk and Kramatorsk) leading to many casualties. In future years the Soviet regime learned to manage threats of labour unrest more effectively, at first agreeing to demands and then arresting the leaders one by one.

Document 8.19 Khrushchev's Ouster

By 1964 Khrushchev's erratic behaviour and wilfulness had alienated a large part of the Soviet leadership. While Khrushchev was on vacation in the south, the Presidium met over two days (13–14 October 1964) and adopted the following denunciatory resolution.

Recognising that as a result of mistakes and incorrect actions by Comrade Khrushchev, violating Leninist principles of collective leadership, within the CC Presidium recently there has been created a completely abnormal situation, preventing members of the CC Presidium from fulfilling responsible tasks in leading the party and the country.

Comrade Khrushchev, occupying the posts of First Secretary of the CPSU CC and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and concentrating in his hands great power, in a number of ways came to escape from the control of the CC CPSU, stopped taking into account the views of members of the CC's Presidium and members of the CPSU's CC, deciding important questions without the necessary collective discussion.

Revealing intolerance and rudeness towards comrades in the Presidium and the CC, treating their views with disdain, Comrade Khrushchev made a number of major mistakes in practically fulfilling the course outlined by the resolutions of the Twentieth, Twenty-first and Twenty-second CPSU Congresses.

The Presidium of the CC considers that with these negative personal qualities in a worker of mature years and worsening health, Comrade Khrushchev is unable to remedy his mistakes and non-party methods of work.

Taking into account also Comrade Khrushchev's declaration, the Presidium of the CC CPSU resolves:

1 To satisfy the request by Comrade Khrushchev to free him of the responsibilities of First Secretary, member of the Presidium of the CC and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers in connection with his advanced age and worsening health.
2 To recognise the inexpediency in future of uniting in one person the duties of CC First Secretary and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.
3 Considers it necessary to convene on 14 October 1964 a plenum of the CC CPSU.

Sources: Istoricheskii arkhiv, *no. 1, 1993, pp. 4–5;* Rossiya, kotoruyu my ne znali, *p. 302.*

Document 8.20 Suslov's Denunciation of Khrushchev

The Central Committee plenum met on 14 October before Khrushchev could return to Moscow. The charge that Khrushchev had been guilty of 'incorrect methods of leading the party and state' was outlined by Mikhail Suslov, who accused him of 'crudely violating Leninist norms of party leadership'.

Comrade Khrushchev, concentrating in his hands the post of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the party and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, far from always correctly used the powers and duties granted him. Crudely violating Leninist norms of party leadership, he sought on his own to decide the most important questions of party and state work. In recent times even the most important questions he in effect resolved on his own, crudely imposing his subjective and often completely incorrect judgement. He began to consider himself infallible, and claimed for himself a monopoly on the truth . . . Because of Comrade Khrushchev's behaviour, the CC's Presidium became ever less a creative collective organ of discussion and decision-making. Collective leadership in practice became impossible . . .

Could we have called him to order sooner? The members of the Presidium did this, warned him, but except for coarse rebuffs and insults they heard nothing from him, although he did not employ repression in relation to the members of the Presidium. It is harder to struggle with a living cult than with a dead one. If Stalin destroyed people physically, Khrushchev destroyed them morally. The removal of Khrushchev from power is a sign not of the weakness but of the strength of the party, and this should be a lesson.

Sources: 'Report of M. Suslov to the CC CPSU Plenum', Istoricheskii arkhiv, *no. 1, 1993, pp. 5, 7, 8;* Rossiya, kotoruyu my ne znali, *pp. 303–4.*

Document 8.21 Communiqué of the Central Committee

The message released to the country was brief and to the point.

On 14 October of this year a plenum of the CPSU Central Committee was held. The plenum approved the request of Comrade N. S. Khrushchev to be relieved of his responsibilities as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, member of the Presidium of the CC of the CPSU, and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, in connection with his advanced years and deteriorating health.

The plenum of the CC of the CPSU elected as First Secretary of the CC of the CPSU Comrade L. I. Brezhnev.

Source: Pravda, *16 October 1964.*

Suslov went on to become the custodian of ideological dogmatism under Brezhnev. Khrushchev went into retirement and lived on to 1971, writing his memoirs, which were smuggled out and published in the West. For the first time a change of leadership had taken place according to the rules, and was not followed by repression. This alone is a measure of Khrushchev's success in stabilising the Soviet political system. His failure was not to have broadened the political establishment beyond small unaccountable groups of party bosses. Khrushchev promised a new relationship between regime and society but ultimately he failed to deliver.

Brezhnev and stagnation, 1964–1985

9

Leonid Brezhnev was a very different leader from Khrushchev. If the latter was ebullient and confrontational, the former was dour and (mindful of his predecessor's fate) sought to rule by consensus. Ultimately the leadership under Brezhnev appeared paralysed in the face of growing problems. The high economic growth rates of the 1950s inexorably fell until they stopped entirely in the early 1980s . In the social sphere greater resources were devoted to housing, health and education, but here, too, reforms appeared to run into the sands. Destalinisation under Khrushchev was only partial, and then under Brezhnev was effectively reversed. The full-scale rehabilitation of Stalin, sought by hardliners on the ninetieth anniversary of Stalin's birth in 1969, however, did not take place. The relative liberalisation of the thaw years came to an end. In foreign policy the principle of class warfare reigned supreme, although not unchallenged by some academic specialists. Stagnation at home was stimulated by Soviet expansionism abroad and exaggerated hopes of the economic benefits of détente. The social basis of stagnation at home was characterised by the ever-growing demand for unskilled workers, labour shortages, and declining productivity and labour discipline. Despite sporadic attempts at reform in the late 1960s and 1970s, the political system and society were marked by a growing listlessnes, alcoholism and the rise of dissent. Attempts to impose an authoritarian model of reform by Yurii Andropov (November 1982–February 1994) were cut short by his untimely death, and his successor, Konstantin Chernenko (February 1984–March 1985) had neither the desire nor energy to pursue reforms.

The Brezhnevite System

Brezhnev's eighteen years of leadership were the longest period of tranquillity that the Soviet system ever experienced. This was the system in, as it were, its normal state. It soon became clear, however, that without strong leadership to inject dynamism Soviet socialism had a tendency to relapse into stagnation. Despite Khrushchev's attempts to undermine their power by creating some one hundred regional economic councils (*sovnarkhozy*), the powerful economic ministries were reconstituted under Brezhnev. The system bought social peace by ensuring job security, but at the price of low productivity and relative technological stagnation. While workers had to make do with low wages and few incentives, prices also