Opinion

What after Brezhnev?

The Soviet Union is drifting toward a dangerous crisis that arises from a critical flaw in its own political system, namely how a new leader can succeed to power without a national convulsion. This problem is one of the highest prices the Kremlin must pay for its lack of legitimacy.

The unexpected death of Mikhail A. Suslov at age 79 on Jan. 15, shortly after suffering a stroke, is an urgent reminder that the months and even the days of the aging oligarchy now governing the Soviet Union may be numbered. Leonid I. Brezhnev, president and secretary of the Communist Party, is 75 years old, noticeably enfeebled, and afflicted with poor health. Most of his colleagues in the top reaches of the Kremlin are more than 70. A complete change of leadership cannot be far away and, indeed, reliable indications suggest a struggle for power — an early maneuvering for advantage — is already underway in Moscow.

For a better understanding of the Soviet succession crisis, we must examine the decisive influence exerted by Suslov over the Soviet system during his long life and, indeed, even in death. Suslov possessed perhaps the finest intellect within the Politburo. He occupied the number-two position in the official Soviet hierarchy, by choice it is said, but he exercised an undisputed primacy over policy. He was Joseph Stalin's ruthless surrogate on the Politburo, the living link with Vladimir I. Lenin and the Communist revolution almost 65 years ago.

But Suslov was much more. He was the unique defender of the faith, the powerful guardian of ideological purity against corruption of counterrevolutionaries and Westerners, whom he called "the class enemy" to the end of his days. It was Suslov, the eminence grise of the Kremlin, who engineered the overthrow of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964 and enthroned the neo-Stalinist Brezhnev. Suslov was chiefly responsible for crushing the 1956 Hungarian revolt, for ending the 1968 liberalization in Czechoslovakia, and finally for the martial law crackdown in Poland. It was Suslov who ordained the collective Soviet leadership under Brezhnev for the last 18 years — ever pressuring for advantage against the free world but avoiding rash confrontations such as the Khrushchev-inspired Cuban missile crisis.

Although Suslov vigorously supported the Soviet military in its unprecedented buildup, he zealously blocked all generals and admirals from the seat of power. Suslov was behind the ouster of famed World War II hero, Marshal Georgi Zhukov, from the party Presidium in 1957, and he saw to it that no professional military man sat on the ruling Politburo.

Had Suslov outlived Brezhnev, he would undoubtedly have played a major role in selecting a hard-line successor from the party hierarchy. As it is, his absence has magnified the vacuum at the top and created an opportunity for military encroachment into the Kremlin. The collapse of Communist Party authority in Poland and its replacement by military rule — an unprecedented development in the entire history of communism — has to be of extraordinary interest these days to Soviet military leaders. The generals are reported to be contemptuous of the Communist hierarchy's appetite for luxury and, more recently, of the corruption in the highest circles — black market scandals involving close friends of Brezhnev's daughter, Galina, and also Brezhnev's brother-in-law, Gen. Semyon Tsvigun, who died mysteriously in January, reportedly a suicide.

Meanwhile, the number-two position, which Suslov occupied, is being filled by Constantin U. Chernenko, 71, central committee secretary, Brezhnev's protege and heir apparent. But, when the time comes, Chernenko may find no longer than Georgy Malenkov, Stalin's anointed heir who was toppled by Suslov and Khrushchev within three years. Indeed, as Kremlin watcher Harrison E. Salisbury has pointed out, "Soviet political history teaches us that it is not the first bounce that counts but the second — the man after the man who succeeds."

Actually, no one in the Kremlin, and least of all Brezhnev, can know who will emerge on top because the Soviet system has no mechanism for transferring power. As with so much Communist history, this decision ultimately will be made by force and then sustained through terror. The victor of such a struggle must be a shark among sharks. Whoever the next ruler over all the Russians turns out to be, he will be of the utmost significance for the world because his finger will be on the nuclear button and he will command the mightiest military machine in the history of mankind.

Taking aim on tax cheaters

The vast majority of American taxpayers who don't cheat will applaud a proposal by two U.S. senators to crack down on those who do. Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kansas, and Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, have introduced a constructive bill to catch the growing number of people who fail to pay taxes on capital gains, dividend and interest payments and tips.

The two key members of the Senate Finance Committee — Sen. Dole is chairman — estimate that the cost to the Treasury of tax cheating was $76 billion last year, up a whopping $55 billion from 1973. Imagine what a dent collection of most of those funds would make in the estimated $100 billion deficit that is chilling the nation's recovery from recession!

The senators want to prevent tax revenues from falling through these cracks:

— Security and commodity brokers would be required to report clients' capital gains to the Internal Revenue Service. The Treasury loses an estimated $5.5 billion annually in unreported income from capital gains.

— The Treasury would be required to send 1099 slips to the IRS, as corporations and banks do, when it pays interest on federal notes and bonds.

— State governments would be required to report to the IRS any tax refunds they make to their residents.

— Restaurant owners with more than five employees would be required to report all tips paid through credit card charges.

— Penalties would be increased for those who cheat on their tax returns.

The Dole-Grassley bill obviously would increase paperwork for many businesses. But with tax evasion becoming one of the nation's few growth industries, there seems to be no alternative if cheaters are to be made to pay up.

Letters

To The Carlisle Mercury:

We enjoy your paper so much. It is very informative, interesting, entertaining, has a variety of events, etc., and we like your good journalism in general.

Thank you and we look forward to the Mercury weekly.

Yours truly,
Dr. Ed Ford
State Senate

To The Carlisle Mercury:

Thank you for your support of the Nicholas County Blood Donor Program. The blood drive on Monday, March 8, was extremely successful. A total of 118 persons registered and 107 were able to give blood.

The Blood Center's mobile crew always enjoys coming to Nicholas County as those who participate are very cordial and seem to enjoy this time of community involvement. As for myself, I always appreciate the reliability of those who commit to donate. It is no wonder that Nicholas County can boast the highest number of gallon donors within our system for there are many who are willing to give each time we come.

I am grateful to Rev. Dave Stancil and all of those who helped to make this drive successful. But most of all I want to thank all of those who gave the gift of life.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Fehsh
Donor Service Representative
Central Kentucky Blood Center

To The Carlisle Mercury:

In the past I have read in your paper of various achievement of our local people. Mostly it seems as sports are given quite a "pat on the back." I'm sure that we have every right to be proud. Many times though, we read "Jackets defeated after scrappy performance," while there are other scrappy performances that are of a scholastic nature. I'm referring to the large number of junior and senior class members who held their grade at a level high enough to gain them entry into the National Honor Society on Feb. 25 of this year. Letters of invitation were sent to parents by faculty members. The whole program was conducted by the senior members of this club with a reception following in the library. Many of these students were not even listed in your paper as being on the honor roll. I don't know who is at fault. It would have been nice to have read something in our local paper of the efforts these young men and women put forth. Sometimes we hear only the bad things they do. These are tomorrow's citizens. We for a measured few are very proud of them.

Sincerely,
Doris Payne
Route 1

(Note: Four other persons signed this letter.)

Agree or not

Legislative logjam is due as time runs out in Frankfort

by S.C. Van Curon

With only 11 legislative days left as of March 31, the General Assembly faces its apparent inevitable logjam and organized chaos as it closes its work.

There are only eight days for the passage of bills since the final three days of the session are reserved for consideration of the governor's vetoes. He hasn't vetoed any bills to date, but he has allowed two to become law without his signature, the prevailing wage bill and one increasing limits for small loan companies.

The important budget bill is in position for passage this week. It got its second reading in the House last Friday. Apparently the House Appropriations and Revenue Committee has finally thrashed out the last small problems and has it ready for passage.

Of course there will be the posturing and speechmaking on the floor for benefit of the people back home, but there was no discussion of opposition late last week.

The bill must go to the Senate for final passage the week of March 28, but that normally is considered a routine matter.

As the session enters its final days, the governor as usual is having his way on some key bills that he is interested in and has used his powers to push.

Noteworthy among these last week was the multi-bank bill that cleared the House after earlier trouble that had been called fatal by some, but the doomsayers failed to take into consideration power of the governor.

The controversial bill still alive last week and in trouble from the viewpoint of the governor, is the one that would require legislative committee approval of any government reorganization the governor might undertake when the legislature is not in session.

The governor opposes this bill and has said he will veto it if passed. If his veto should be overridden during the final three days of the session, the governor said he will take it to court.

Having lost his stripping of certain powers from the Commissioner of Agriculture in the Supreme Court, the governor has a bill that would put his plan into law. But, it is in trouble.

However, these bills don't mean much if past actions of the governor are to be taken as to any guide for his acts of the future.

The 1980 legislature refused to pass a bill reorganizing the Public Service Commission, but governor Brown took the action after the legislature went home. The 1982 legislature dutifully approved it, although it was with some posturizing speeches and comments that meant nothing.

The governor purchased the much-discussed helicopter without any legislative or legal authority, but the only action taken has been continuing criticism of his disdain for lack of authority to make the purchase.

The legislature is going to approve in the new budget money for the $1.8 million helicopter that will cost almost another million in finance charges if it is ever paid out by the next governor's administration.

The highway department went against established requirements in letting a road construction job in Shelby County and the only action taken opposing it is some conversation and criticism from professional engineers.

So, why should the governor pay any attention to what the legislature wants between sessions, regulations or law in some instances.

No legal action has been taken by the Attorney General's office, the legal representative of the people, or private citizens.

Some oldtimers around long for return of the days of Hubert Meredith as attorney general when he sided the governor or other state officials on behalf of the people frequently.

After all, the Attorney General's office is supposed to look after the business of the people. It is not the private attorney for the governor.

Down Memory Lane

Scotts escape buggy crash

Thursday, March 29, 1962

John Sharp, sophomore at Nicholas County High School, won a superior rating in the public speaking contest at Morehead State College on Saturday. It was the state contest at the University of Kentucky in April.

Hugh Fretwell, realtor at the College of the Bible, has accepted a call to the ministry of the East Union Christian Church. He is from Jackson, Miss.

The Carlisle Board of Education met on March 6 and elected James A. Handa Jane, March 18 at Good Samaritan Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Shields, a son, Roy Allen, March 20 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Robert Estes a son, Robert Louis, March 24 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Flora, a daughter, Charman Ann, March 24 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Rev. and Mrs. Ambrose Stump, a son, David Ambrose, March 25 at Central Baptist Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Michael D. Abbott Jr., Monterey, Calif., a son, Walter D. III, March 26.

MARRIED — Miss Anne White Sharp and Stephen Lee Scotts, Dec. 27 at the Calvary Presbyterian Church in Johnson City, Tenn.

DIED — Mrs. Stella Bayes, 70, Friday in Dayton, Ohio. — Mrs. Emma Ruth King, 79, Friday at the home of her sister, Mrs. Arthur Snapp and Mr. Snapp in Liberty Heights. — Marion D. Shaw, 73, Sunday at Bourbon County Hospital. — Timmie Harney, 51, at Central Baptist Hospital. — Mrs. Maggie Adams Vance, 81, widow of Ardie Richard Vance, Tuesday at Bourbon County Hospital. — Mrs. Ollie Jane Maher, 76, LaGrange, widow of Phil Maher, Wednesday at the Mallory-Taylor Hospital. — Mrs. Onie Hunt Planck, 52, wife of Thomas Planck, Sunday at home in Buzzard Roost.

Thursday, March 26, 1942

Nicholas County has had three and three-fourth inches of rainfall during March according to Mr. Joe Mathias, the Mercury's one-man weather reporting bureau.

Mrs. Allen O'Neal of Dorseyville was painfully injured Saturday when a dog belonging to her bit her on the face, slashing her cheek. The dog was killed and its head sent to Lexington where a positive result was found. Mrs. O'Neal was started on serum treatments.

MARRIED — Miss Marjorie Glenn Hopkins and Fred Granville Francis, March 25 at the home of her parents. — Miss Lena Hardin Henry and Ed Miller in February in Louisville. — Miss Marjorie Brayfield and John Davis Haggard, March 14 at the chapel at Kessler Field, Biloxi, Miss.

DIED — John Edward Donahue, 19, Friday at Good Samaritan Hospital. — Mrs. Naomi Campbell, 82, Friday at the home of her son, Clarence Campbell. — Roy Edward Letcher, 22, Tuesday at home. — Mrs. S.T. Bramblett, Tuesday at home in Mt. Sterling. — Royce Curtis, electrocuted Sunday at home near Covington. — Ben Marshall Jr., 35, Saturday in Brooklyn, N.Y. — Roy J. Sousley, Ocean Springs, Miss., brother-in-law of Mrs. J. Will Burnaw.

Thursday, March 23, 1922

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Scott were thrown from their buggy but escaped with slight injuries.

Fire which originated in a piano caused damage at the Millersburg theatre.

Hog cholera losses are heavy throughout Kentucky.

The Carlisle Mercury
(USPS 090-820)
Established 1867
Phone (606) 289-2464
Published every Thursday at 234 Locust Street, Carlisle, Nicholas County, Kentucky 40311. Postage paid at Carlisle.

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Op-Ed page

Old bureaucrats never die . . . they are too bottom-heavy to fall over

Last week I made a trip to Bureaucrat City, U.S.A. Why anyone would want to go to the country's biggest prison, filled with monuments of former wardens is beyond me. But, like wearing leather vests made in Korea, it is the in-thing for news junkies, so there I went.

And like any sensible country boy, I came home uttering the blessings be thankful not for what you have, but for what you escape.

Still you can't help but feel sorry for those inmates locked in the hundreds of buildings of Washington with little or no hope of seeing the outside world. It must be mind-shattering to be locked into making license plates for the rest of the country with no hope of parole until you have served 20 or 25 years.

It may be for this reason a company up there has come out with a novelty doll called The Bureaucrat. I'm told it is a real tribute to the lowly everyday man in Washington.

It is fist-size, dressed in a dull green suit and its rear end is far larger than any of the rest of it, the result of years at a desk. Its skull is thick. It has no ears, so it couldn't hear complaints. It has extra large thumbs, the better to twiddle. Its knees are weak, reflecting its courage. It wears thermal underwear to protect it from hiring freezes. Its glasses are opaque, so it can't see your point of view.

Naturally, it comes wrapped in red tape. Put in on a stack of papers and it will just sit on them, doing absolutely nothing. And The Bureaucrat has become a real smash. You'd think a put-on like this would stir up the bureaucratic masses, but it didn't, testifying to the cast-iron constitution of the leech species.

But the maker should have quit when he was ahead. Now he has come out with a $2.50 paperback book called "The Bureaucrat Survival Guide" and this anthology of exaggeration may be his undoing.

The Washington bureaucrat can immediately recognize himself and the smile it brings out may eventually turn into a snarl. Many bureaucrats up there are feeling increasingly picked on and picked apart. People have mocked them for years, and they've lived with it. But now the natives are restless.

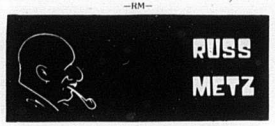
Lately President Reagan has made noises that strike fear in even the hearts of most seniority. El Presidente wants to assign much of the paper shuffling now done in Washington to Carson City and Memphises of the country, for heaven sake. A fate worse than being passed over for promotion for the bureaucrat.

So it may not be the best time for gags like these in the book: "The hold button on your phone in there for a reason. After the caller asks you a question, put him on hold. He has dealt with bureaucrats before: he expects you to put him on hold. Do not disappoint him.

"Always strive for mediocrity. Be one of the bunch that never excels. Those who try to excel have a high potential for failure, so why risk it? If you never try, you can't fail—and will always be at your best. What more could a boss ask for?

"Call unnecessary meetings for all your colleagues regularly. Choose a place where your boss can see you all in one place working on a 'problem.' He does not need to know that the 'problem' you are discussing is John Travolta's latest romance, or last night's ball game . . ."

—HM—



The local Chamber of Commerce keeps wanting to know of a promotion it can get its teeth into and I keep telling those civic-minded folks we have the potential for the most-promising tourist attraction around—out potholes.

Here is something we accept as commonplace, but to the city people, accustomed to driving over silky smooth streets, it is a phenomena. They are just not going to believe the cavities in our roads until they are jarred into appreciation. We are in the unique position of maximizing the tourist traffic and recreational potential of our county's monumental chuckholes.

With a promotion that real and investment of seed money, we could easily become internationally recognized as the Chuckhole Capital of the World. Travelers would flock in to test their Tootas and 4x4's and would unconsciously contribute to enlarging our great natural resource. I tell you, I told them, this is an attraction we have not yet begun to tap.

The Chamber should get busy mapping and naming the county's hundreds of potholes. Eventually it should publish a guide to the most noted. Some of these could include:

Great Mammoth Chuckhole, a canyon of unbelievable proportions on the Ridge Road, which has underground streams and connecting archways still not explored.

St. Peter's Chuckhole, which could be billed as the holiest of them because people invariably say "Great Heavens" when they drive across it.

The Elmer Outpalms Chuckhole, named for the contractor indicted on charges of watering down his blacktopping with hair oil so it would come out after a few years.

The Glory Hole, a bottomless pit known to swallow up packs of foxhounds and transmissioners without leaving a trace.

The Super Bowl, large enough to hold a convention center and domed stadium. This one would be a tremendous attraction as the world's only football stadium safe from a nuclear attack.

Most places are trying to eliminate their chuckholes without realizing the potential tourist attraction they have. With the head start we have, no other community would have a chance of infringing on our claim to fame.

But, for some reason, my suggestion never gets off the ground. I think their brains get scrambled driving to meetings.

—HM—

When the late Jim Jones came unglued and took his whole camp following with him to their maker, most of us were astonished by this man's hold over so many people and how much money he was able to milk from them.

Robert Fabian, the former Bank of America legal counsel who is now the court-appointed receiver for the Peoples Temple mess, so far has collected $8,680,000 from various accounts in Panama, Switzerland and Caracas.

Overpowering that powerful figure, however, are claims against the Temple totalling $1.78 billion, filed mainly by relatives of those who perished in Guyana, and by the Guyanese government itself. Meanwhile, about $1.7 million has been paid out plus, pending court approval, $115,000 in damages to Stephen Sung, a Los Angeles NBC cameraman, who was wounded on the air strip at Guyana.

When will people stop being so gullible as to accept every self-made preacher as a man of God on his own say?

Onward, upward.

Local school participates in Career Day at Maysville

More than 500 sophomores from area high schools, including Nicholas County, participated last week in Maysville Community College's 12th Annual Career Day. Over 30 careers were represented on the program.

Career specialists from Columbus, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville and the Maysville area brought information about careers to the students attending.

High schools participating included Mason County, Maysville, Ripley High, New Lewis, Nicholas County, Tollesboro, St. Patrick, Lewis County and Deming.

Jerome Greiner, Assistant Director for Students Services, supervised.

The Idle Rambler

by James C. Smith

And then there was that AP story last week about college athletic recruits. In case you missed it, the story was a sampling of some of the answers that college recruits placed on questionnaires from their future institutions of higher learning.

Here are a few that I can remember:

— When asked about a church preference, one recruit answered: Red brick.

— When asked what they ran the mile in, a recruit replied: Shorts and a T-shirt.

— When asked about ethnic background, a recruit wrote: Mathematics. He scratched that out and put: Baptist.

— When asked to list father's alma mater, the questionnaires were returned with beauties like: When the going gets tough . . .

—JCS—

I suppose by now most everyone knows that this is the last of these idle ramblings that must be endured. I know that all three of my readers will be saddened. A couple thousand other Mercury readers will be elated by the mere gainful use of this space.

My decision to leave the Mercury for the city daily rat race was not an easy one. Carlisle is my home. Most of the people who are dear to me live here. Yet life is full of tough decisions, and when the offer came, I knew deep inside that I had to give it my best shot. It was one of those career opportunities that simply couldn't be turned down.

Those of us who write for a living are egomaniacs. Someone once said that the major requirement for a writer is a huge ego. He was probably right. It is awfully presumptuous to think that someone will actually take the time to READ what you have written. There are a heck of a lot of better things to do.

But the world keeps spinning and English departments and journalism schools keep turning out writers. I suppose we write in some idealistic attempt to help humanity. In journalism, we feel that by writing about what is going on in the world, by providing people with the facts, we can assist the functioning of a democratic society. We hope to provide the basis on which voters can make informed choices — to help people govern themselves. Among true journalists, there is no higher calling.

Those of us who write the news are supposed to be objective, we're supposed to be totally impartial. It's a shame that God didn't create a separate sub-species to perform that function. That clinical sterility doesn't work in the real world. We are human and sometimes we make mistakes.

As I look back over the time I have worked in Carlisle, I can see some situations that could have been handled differently. Some stories that could have gone unwritten. Ways of making things reflect less badly on the community in times of upheaval.

There are places where they do that. There are places where the news-papers report only the good news. Places where newspapers don't say anything that will reflect badly on the community or local governmental leaders. Those places exist . . . just ask anyone in Poland or the USSR.

As someone else has so accurately put it, "I know how to report the facts. And I know how to write stories that don't hurt people. I just don't know how to do both at the same time."

To those people who have seen less than favorable accounts written about them in this paper, I can honestly tell you that it was as difficult for us to write those stories as it was for you to read them. If everyone would just keep their noses clean, if there was no turmoil or controversy in the county, we would not have to report about any. And if the self proclaimed positive elements in the community would raise a voice to equal that of the so-called negative elements, they would draw just as much ink.

I can only hope that those people who have differed in opinion with some of the things I have done here at the Mercury, and those people who have read bad things about themselves in the paper, will agree on one thing: We printed the truth. We did not manufacture issues, we did not invent incidents. We reported what happened.

There are many positive things going on in the local community. They need more support. It was particularly heartening to have one of my last meetings to cover be that of an attempt to revitive the local economy. We have taken the first and biggest step — recognition of a problem, and a resolution to solve it.

Some of the most positive things are going on in our school system. Both David McMillen and Gerald Hammons are doing, in my admittedly unqualified opinion, fine jobs of administrating the single most important function of our collective community: educating our children.

I better stop naming names. I'll leave somebody out. Somebody like Ben Pumphrey who has done so much to improve the self-concept of so many. I'm not too young to remember the days when NCHS athletics was the laughing stock of the state. It used to be embarrassing to wear a blue letter jacket to Paris or Cynthiana, or anywhere for that matter. Now we have two state champions in track and field and a football team that is no stranger to the playoffs. Kids have something to be proud of. It is no small turnaround . . .

I suppose another reason that some of us choose to write for a living is a usually vain attempt to be remembered, to make a mark on the world we live in. If I would have anything remembered about my tenure as editor of this newspaper, I would have it only be that I worked very hard and that I cared.

To my parents, my family and my friends who have supported me through the good times and the bad, thanks are hardly enough. I will miss you very much.

To Kay and Warren Fisher, who have taught me everything I know about the newspaper business and for whom I hold an affection far beyond the normal employee-employer relationship, thanks are hardly enough. I will miss you very much.

To the people here at the office I work with every day, thanks for putting up with me. I shall miss you too.

To you, dear reader, I apologize for my inadequacies, and I wish for you and your community long, happy and prosperous lives.

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