

Scott Jones
Soviet Russia

Andropov in Power: From Komsomol to Kremlin. By Jonathan Steele and Eric Abraham. (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984. Pp 216.)

On November 15, 1982, heads of state gathered in Moscow for Leonid Brezhnev's funeral. They came as much for paying their respects as seeing the new mysterious leader of the Soviet Union, Yuri Andropov. Despite living most of his life heavily involved in Soviet politics, including 15 years as head of the KGB, the Western countries knew surprisingly little about the man. His American counterparts in the Central Intelligence Agency were not even sure if his wife was alive. *Andropov in Power* was an attempt to fill in the information void for the West about Andropov's life and career. Sifting through Kremlin propaganda, Jonathan Steele and Eric Abraham interview those who know him throughout his life in an attempt to write a biography of the man. The result is a well-written account of how this college dropout, against the odds, rose to the most powerful position in the communist world,

The authors begin their book with an account of Andropov's incomplete schooling. He left school at the age of 16. He returned for a brief time, but again was forced out of school, this time by the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. During the war, the Andropov that would later rise to power emerges. Sent to serve as a youth leader in charge of organizing the Communist Party in the Karleo-Finnish Republic, Andropov rose to eventually become the Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Republic. While the authors were unable to uncover much information about his time in the Finnish Republic, they do argue this quick rise was unusual and was probably due in part to the political ability of Andropov.

The second example of Andropov ability occurred after he joined the diplomatic corps and was sent as Ambassador to Hungary. While in Hungary, Andropov was the Soviet representative during the uprisings in 1956. At this time, the authors argue, that Andropov played an essential role in securing the future of the communist party in Hungary by deftly working behind the scenes while Soviet tanks worked for the public. The authors give Andropov credit for the rise of Janos Kadar in Hungary and the reestablishment of communism in Hungary.

The final example of Andropov's political ability occurs after his time as head of the KGB. His duty at the KGB was to bring the secret police under Party control, which Andropov successfully did. This earned him a seat in the Politburo. However, the authors portray Andropov move to win the top spot in the Kremlin as his biggest achievement. As Brezhnev's physical health worsened, everyone in the Kremlin, and in the West, assumed Konstantin Chernenko would be the next leader of the Soviet Union. However, as Brezhnev continued to weaken and not resign, the authors argue that he became increasingly unpopular in the Communist Party. Using this to his advantage, the book states that Andropov was able to discredit Chernenko. By the time of Brezhnev's death, Andropov had gained just enough support to defeat Chernenko and become the fifth leader of the Soviet Union.

Unfamiliar with such a position, Andropov's first year was shaky, but as he grew more comfortable in the job, the authors argue that Andropov would be a formidable leader of the Soviet Union in the years to come. Written at the end of 1983 and published in early 1984, the book was able to fill in the information void about the life and times of Yuri Andropov. The Andropov that emerged was one that was capable of politically

adapting to any situation that he was presented. However, during their exhaustive research, the authors were able to find out that Mrs. Andropov was *probably* still alive at the time of his rise to supreme power in the Kremlin, which was better information than the CIA had at the time.