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world beat

Gorbachev takes Soviet post; Chernenko funeral Wednesday

MOSCOW (AP) — Mikhail Gorbachev, at 54 the youngest member of the Soviet Union's runlin Politburo, ascended to power in the Soviet Union Monday upon the death of long-ailing President Konstantin Chernenko.

The Kremlin announced Monday afternoon that the long-ailing Chernenko, "staunch fighter...for Communism," had died at 7:20 p.m. Sunday of emphysema and related cardiac difficulties. He was 73.

Within five hours a second announcement came — that Gorbachev had been chosen to succeed the late Soviet president in the most important Kremlin post, Communist Party general secretary.

It was not known whether Gorbachev would also be made president, as Chernenko and his two predecessors were. That designation is made by the Supreme Soviet, the national parliament.

Chernenko's death and Gorbachev's assumption of Soviet leadership meant a lightning shift away from the aged elite that has ruled this secretive nation for two decades.

Chernenko was the third Soviet party leader and president since 1982, and his tenure — from February 1984 until Sunday — was the shortest ever for a Kremlin chief.

The sudden transition at the top came on the eve of U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms-control talks in Geneva, Switzerland, reopening after a 16-month suspension. The delegations announced Monday they would begin the discussions as scheduled Tuesday.

From Washington, President Ronald Reagan sent a message of condolence to the Soviets, saying, "I wish to reiterate the strong desire of the American people for world peace."

The American chief executive told reporters

he eventually would "like to have a talk...a meeting of minds" with Gorbachev. But he ruled out attending Chernenko's funeral, saying he "didn't see anything that could be achieved" by coming to Moscow.

Vice President George Bush is to head the U.S. delegation at services for Chernenko Wednesday.

According to Soviet news agency Tass, Chernenko would be buried in Red Square, where all but one of his predecessors — the ousted Nikita Khrushchev — are interred.

Gorbachev said in his acceptance speech Monday that the Soviet Union wants "a major reduction of the arms stockpiles." He pledged to strive for arms control so "the peoples of the world would sigh with relief."

He said the Soviets "value...the relaxation of international tensions achieved in the 1970s" and would welcome peace accords based on respect and cooperation. But he also stressed the importance of maintaining the Soviet "defense capacity."

Although Gorbachev's accession to the seat of Lenin and Stalin marked a transition to a new generation of leadership, it was not expected to mean major alterations in either Soviet foreign or domestic policy.

He is considered a staunch supporter of Yuri Andropov's reform-minded economic policies; more so than Chjernenko was. Those policies included a crackdown on corruption and inefficiency and efforts to boost individual initiatives for Soviet workers.

Diplomats noted that, unlike Chernenko, Gorbachev has long experience in economic management, having overseen the Soviets' troubled agriculture sector for years.

Coors Co. official urges state to overturn pasteurization law

SALEM (AP) — An Adolph Coors Co. executive says Oregon could generate several million dollars in new business activity by repealing a state law that prevents the retail package sales of Coors beer.

Peter Coors also says that while union officials want to keep Coors out of the state, most Oregonians think the Colorado beer manufacturer should be allowed to market its product in Oregon.

The company official's comments Monday were aimed at state laws that prevent the retail package sales of unpasteurized beer while allowing the sale of unpasteurized beer by the drink in taverns.

Coors, which uses a filtration

process rather than pasteurization to purify its beer, has been working in the courts and in the Oregon Legislature to try to get the law changed.

Speaking to the Salem Chamber of Commerce, Coors said allowing retail sales of Coors beer would result in up to \$5 million in new business activity in Oregon.

That would include new distribution facilities, as well as marketing and advertising programs, said Coors, a division president of the Golden, Colo., brewing company.

"I think it could be very substantial," Coors said.

He also characterized as "distortions" the claims made by union officials and some legislators that Coors is antiunion and discriminates against women and minorities.

Despite those charges, the company's beer sales in taverns around Oregon have been better than expected, he said.

Market research indicates that Oregonians "see no reason that Coors, as a legitimate product, shouldn't be marketed in this state," Coors said.





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