

# New head, old policy in East Berlin

by Rainer Apel

"Krenz? It's a catastrophe," said an East German refugee in a discussion with this news service shortly after Egon Krenz was named successor to Erich Honecker as head of the communist Socialist Unity Party (SED), on Oct. 18.

The refugee, a resident of the city of Dresden before he made his way to West Germany through Hungary a few weeks ago, pointed out that Krenz, the Politburo member in charge of all security affairs since 1983, ordered all state crackdowns on the political opposition, including the brutal interventions of special riot squads of the Stasi state security agency, in East Berlin during the regime's Oct. 7 fortieth anniversary festivities.

Other refugees interviewed by the media in West Germany, but people in East Germany who spoke out before Western cameras, said they have no hope in fundamental changes under the new man at the party top. Many pointed to Krenz's staunch support of the Tiananmen Square massacre that his Chinese Communist Party comrades in Beijing launched on June 3-4, which has earned him the nickname "Egon the Chinaman."

"Egon smiles, he also laughs very often," a dissident still living in East Berlin who knows him personally commented, "but he'll keep the smile when ordering the execution."

Krenz is generally viewed as the man who, unlike "grandfather-like Erich Honecker," would order the security forces to open fire on mass protest rallies in East German cities. He is viewed as a ruthless party apparatchnik.

Born in 1937, Krenz joined the communist-run FDJ ("Free" German Youth) in 1953, and entered the SED in 1955. Backed by then-FDJ head Erich Honecker, he worked his way up, becoming a student at the international party cadre college of the Soviet Communist Party in Moscow. From 1964 to 1967, he was trained there in ideology and political control of economic cadre.

He was appointed member of the SED party central committee in 1973 and took over the chair of the FDJ in 1974, which he led until 1983. In 1976, Krenz was made candidate of the Politburo, and a full member of this central power group in 1983.

His career was not only promoted by the CPSU, but also by the Soviet KGB's international intelligence section, then headed by Viktor Chebrikov.

In 1983, Chebrikov recommended Krenz to be appointed a full member of the SED party Politburo, assigned to control security, defense, secret intelligence, and cadre affairs in 1983. This concentration of crucial functions in his hands made Krenz the most powerful single member of the Politburo and "crown prince" for the succession to Honecker at the party top. With a personality somewhat like a combination of Soviet Politburo member Yegor Ligachov and "loyal oppositionist" Boris Yeltsin (he also drinks a lot), Krenz was handpicked by the "Andropov kindergarten" cabal in Moscow for being the "East German Gorbachov of the late 1980s."

Elected new SED party general secretary on Oct. 18, Krenz promptly received Gorbachov's congratulations. The Soviet leader welcomed the election as "a prompt response to the challenges of our present time."

These "challenges" were addressed by Gorbachov before. Concluding his talks with the SED Politburo in East Berlin on Oct. 7, Gorbachov told an interviewer on Soviet television he saw three main points on their joint agenda: 1) intensification of bilateral economic cooperation; 2) more rapid application of scientific inventions to the process of high-tech production; 3) continuity of military cooperation, including the diplomatic promotion of in-depth arms reductions in Western Europe (withdrawal of U.S. troops).

Gorbachov thus addressed, again, the role of East Germany as a number-one supplier of high-tech and refined consumer goods for the Soviets, and its geo-strategic function as the "bastion of socialism at the Elbe River line," directly bordering on West Germany.

## Another Gorbachov satrap

Krenz's first official, one-hour address to the East German population, transmitted live on G.D.R. television on the evening of Oct. 18, provided good evidence that the policy of the new man at the top will be entirely along the lines of the Gorbachov agenda.

"Our fraternal alliance with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is of the first order," he said, adding that "exports to the Soviet Union at the full scope of the plan are a top priority, because they also secure the supply of our industry with raw materials and with equipment."

"Economic relations with the Soviet Union," Krenz said, "are the decisive point to be observed." He appealed to East German workers to "show great responsibility," and to be "cooperative and industrious."

Krenz furthermore emphasized, in a style reminiscent of Gorbachov's recent "blood, sweat, and tears" speeches, that "there'll be problems with the material supply," and "hardships which mustn't lead to the loss of confidence in the ideals of socialism."

Spokesmen of the various political opposition groups in East Germany said there would be no slowdown of the mass mobilization for change; indeed, Krenz's call for "working more and harder" is already provoking a new tide of protest.