

Editorial

Where is Gorbachov?

Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov has not been seen in public since Aug. 7, 1987, fifty days as of this writing. The Soviet foreign ministry obligingly informed us that a) he is on his usual vacation in the Crimea—presumably somewhere near Yalta?—which “for Politburo members is 30 days,” and b) he suffered a minor cold.

Even though the record-holder of the lengthiest “minor cold” is not Gorbachov, but the late lamented Yuri Andropov, still, eyebrows are raised when a senior Soviet diplomat, such as Pyadyshev, fails to see the difference between 30 days and 50 days (after all, we are not counting disputed ICBMs; we are counting the number of days a vacationing Politburo member needs to nurse a “minor cold.” Is it too early to begin speculating about what may have happened to Mikhail Gorbachov?

No, not really. After all, President Reagan committed himself to holding a summit with this man, sometime this November. Now, this is very important. You see, President Reagan, many years ago, had committed himself to holding a summit with the late lamented Leonid Brezhnev. But Brezhnev suffered a “minor cold” and cheated President Reagan of the much desired summit. Then came Yuri Andropov, with whom President Reagan might have wished to hold a summit, but Andropov suffered an unfortunate “minor cold,” to which he eventually succumbed, thus depriving President Reagan of the pleasure of having a summit; subsequently, a new big boss of the Kremlin came along, Konstantin Chernenko, with whom President Reagan desired to have a summit. But, the late, lamented Konstantin Chernenko, contracted a “minor cold,” nursed it for awhile, became both late and lamented, and, thus, also deprived President Reagan of the great pleasure of having a summit with him.

Now, dear reader, you will recall that what transpired last year, Oct. 12, 1986, at Reykjavik, Iceland, the meeting between President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachov, was not a summit. It was officially called first a “pre-summit,” and later, a “non-summit summit.”

There are certain medical authorities who insist that the only reason that Mikhail Gorbachov did not contract a “minor cold” during 1986, was that President Reagan did not experience the great desire to hold an actual summit with him. The President had only desired a “pre-summit,” or, at best, a “non-summit summit.” Had the President desired a full-scale summit during 1986, it would have been more than statistically likely, according to these medical authorities, who wish to remain anonymous, that Gorbachov would have contracted a “minor cold” last year.

Of course, we shall never know for sure, especially since medical education has so drastically deteriorated in our days. However, one is inclined to suspect that these anonymous medical authorities know something that laymen like you and I do not know. After all, it is an indisputable fact that, during 1987, President Reagan, beyond any reasonable doubt, became possessed by the desire to have an actual, honest-to-goodness summit with Mikhail Gorbachov. Not a “pre-summit” or a “non-summit summit” as in Reykjavik, but a real summit, like the ones he would have had with Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko, had not these gentlemen contracted a “minor cold,” and had they not gone on some Politburo-approved vacation to nurse it.

And just as President Reagan was seized by this desire for a summit, there came the Soviet foreign ministry spokesman, Mr. Pyadyshev, to announce that Mikhail Gorbachov is indeed the victim of a minor cold which he is nursing during his 30-day vacation. Which prompts us to suggest another Radio Armenia joke for President Reagan’s collection, in the form of an imaginary conversation between Gennadi Gerasimov and the Moscow press corps:

The Press: Why has Comrade Gorbachov not been seen in public for 50 days?

Gerasimov: He is on his regular 30-day vacation nursing a minor cold.

The Press: But 30 days is not 50.

Gerasimov: Not to worry. It is not a minor cold either.