

Our Brezhnev, Our Pravda, Our Soviet Union. . .

By Victor Davis Hanson

Leonid Brezhnev led the former Soviet Union as General Secretary of the Communist Party until 1982. But like most Russian apparatchiks who excessively smoked, drank, and gained weight, he aged prematurely. Also like them, his disabilities never led to his abdication.



By Brezhnev's late sixties and early seventies, he was too ill to travel abroad or make public appearances. Indeed, his debility left the Soviet Union without a real leader for the final six or seven years of his tenure.

Brezhnev got away with it because the Soviet state-controlled media doctored photos and videos to attest to his supposedly vigorous health and constant hands-on involvement.

"Journalists" sent out false communiques. They spun narratives that Brezhnev was robust, hale, and working long hours on behalf of the Russian people. Any dissenting journalists who sought to report the true, sad state of affairs were in danger of losing their jobs, freedom—or even their lives.

Instead, the “reporters” of *Pravda* (“Truth”), the official print megaphone of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, wrote lies about Brezhnev’s busy workdays. *Pravda*’s handlers spun fables about the respect (and fear) the rest of the world held for such a dynamic leader—even as Brezhnev became an ill virtual recluse.

The cynical Russian people shrugged because they had long been accustomed to their lying media and the falsehoods they peddled. And besides, Brezhnev was a doctrinaire Stalinist communist. So his job was not to rock the boat or upset the Russian communist hierarchy.

Instead, he reigned over the penultimate Soviet “era of stagnation,” while an ossified communism increasingly destroyed all incentives and hope, leaving the Russian people poor, cynical, and helpless.

Something similar has happened to a calcified America under President Joe Biden. Like the late-stage Leonid Brezhnev, Biden is now a president in name only. He has outsourced his administration to a vestigial hard-left apparat from the Obama years.

Now, Biden can no longer even perform his assigned ceremonial tasks of putting a moderate veneer on radical, nihilist agendas that are stagnating the country.

Yet our *Pravda* journalists have sworn to the American people that, in private, the reclusive, three-day-a-week Biden outpaces the energy and drive of those half his age. Obsequious staffers plant stories in the Soviet-like ears of reporters about Biden’s singular dynamism.

Any dissenters are publicly demonized as peddlers of “cheap fakes.”

When Biden’s reclusiveness prompts too much gossip that he is near senile, he is wheeled out for a staged interview that

must be edited before release. Or he answers questions secretly shown to him in advance.

On sporadic occasions where the state media and the Biden nomenklatura cannot control events—such as rare presidential debates or international summits—our *Pravda* media go into overdrive to convince the public that what they see and hear is not real.

In the end, Brezhnev could not even hobble to the May Day dais to celebrate communism's national holiday.

He soon reached the point that his debilities were so manifest that even his hirelings and the media could not hide them. He then vanished from public view, leaving the Russian people with no idea as to who was running their communist nation.

Then one day, Soviet propagandists announced suddenly but matter-of-factly that the dynamic Brezhnev had died and that his successor, Yuri Andropov, was now brilliantly running the Soviet Union.

Biden, too, is at that point of stasis. He cannot do press conferences, town halls, debates, or real interviews. To do so would confirm to the public the truth: that Biden is too cognitively challenged to continue his presidency.

And yet the cloistered Biden can no longer hide during a campaign season with his accustomed three-day workweek.

The media has done its best to continue its Orwellian ruse. They claim that Trump interrupted Biden (he did not) in the recent debate and that he lied (if so, not as much as did Biden). Sometimes, the press corps just blurts out that an inert, left-wing Biden is still preferable to a dynamic, conservative Trump.

What is next for our increasingly Soviet state?

We will continue to be lectured on the vigor of Biden—until

one day we aren't, when Biden either steps down—or worse.

Then, our *Pravda* will likely present the new official narrative. They will convince us that his successor, Vice President Kamala Harris, is an underappreciated genius whose past portfolios led to solving the border crisis and renewing American dominance in space.

One day, the same reporters who swore Biden was a virtual Socrates behind closed doors and then suddenly just confessed he was not when their lies were no longer operative will sing the praises of our new comrade leader—the brilliant, accomplished, eloquent, and articulate Kamala Harris.

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