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Arbatov, Soviet Foreign Policy Guru, Dies at 87

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Arbatov, left, and U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy in Moscow in April 1974.

Georgy Arbatov, a foreign policy adviser to Soviet presidents who served as the country's top America-watcher during the Cold War, died Friday. He was 87.

State television, which reported Arbatov's death, did not give the cause of death.

Arbatov, who advised leaders from Leonid Brezhnev to Mikhail Gorbachev and was especially close to Yury Andropov, was credited in the West and later in Russia for understanding that the Soviet system was fundamentally untenable.

"He belonged to a group of reformers who believed that the Soviet system could be and had to be reformed," said Yevgeny Primakov, who served as prime minister under Boris Yeltsin, in comments to Rossia One state television.

"His name is associated with the entire epoch of the Soviet Union. ... He was among the closest and best trusted consultants of Brezhnev and Andropov," Primakov said.

From 1967 to 1995, Arbatov ran the U.S.A. and Canada Institute, an advisory body to Soviet authorities that he founded and that had huge sway over policy toward the American continent at a time of heightened tensions between the Cold War adversaries.

Arbatov, who studied international law but started out as a journalist after fighting in World War II, penned speeches for leaders including Brezhnev.

Arbatov was awarded the highest Soviet scientific distinction in 1974, named academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union.

Konstantin Kosachev, head of the State Duma's International Affairs Committee, said Arbatov's legacy remains. "He was a scholar, a politician, a diplomat and everything that made our politics in recent decades politics of civic-mindedness, politics of effectiveness and politics of creativity," he said.

Arbatov remained honorary director of the think tank he created.

His son, Alexei, is scholar-in-residence of the nonproliferation program at the Carnegie Moscow Center.

The funeral will take place Wednesday at the morgue of the hospital of the Office of Presidential Affairs at Ulitsa Marshala Timoshenko in western Moscow, RIA-Novosti reported.

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