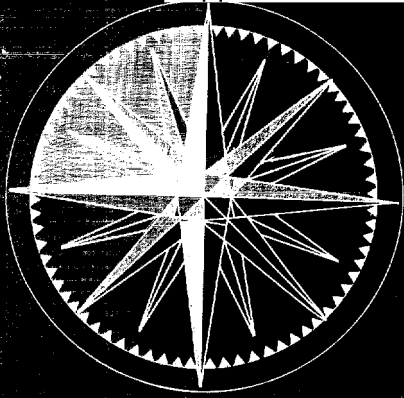


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# SPECIAL REPORT

THE BREZHNEV-PODGORNY RELATIONSHIP IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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**THE BREZHNEV-PODGORNY RELATIONSHIP IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP**

When Khrushchev brought Leonid Brezhnev, the titular head of the USSR, and Nikolay Podgorny, Ukrainian party chief, into the Soviet party secretariat last year, he acknowledged privately that they were leading candidates to succeed him. Subsequently Podgorny, working full time in party affairs, apparently pulled up close on the heels of the more prominent Brezhnev, who was forced to devote much of his time to the largely protocol functions of his government post. By releasing Brezhnev from that job last month, Khrushchev probably had in mind giving him a more equal opportunity to compete for the intraparty support that will eventually determine the succession. The immediate purpose of the shift, however, was probably to strengthen the party executive leadership. Khrushchev's continuing failure to renovate the party presidium and make other needed adjustments in the hierarchy suggests that he has not yet made up his mind as to the future shape of political leadership.

The Role of Second Man

Khrushchev--like Stalin before him--has from time to time utilized a favored senior assistant in the administration and control of party affairs. The chosen man occupies the second most powerful post in the country and is presumed to be the heir apparent.

Malenkov moved up from this role when Stalin died, but proved unable to maintain his leadership in the face of party intrigue against him. Khrushchev has tried two men in the job; Kirichenko, who overstepped his authority and was discarded, and Kozlov, who may have been saved from a similar fate by his stroke in the spring of 1963. Khrushchev's failure to designate a new man since then is probably derived in part from the realiza-

tion that his earlier choices were not altogether satisfactory.

After contemplating the record, Khrushchev may have decided to try a new arrangement, temporize awhile, or perhaps simply exercise greater caution in his choice of a successor. In any case, his good health, abundant energy, and natural optimism probably precluded any pressing concern on his part about selecting another second in command.

There was still the problem, however, of the administrative gap caused by Kozlov's illness. Khrushchev solved this in June 1963 by bringing both Brezhnev and Podgorny into the secretariat. His decision served notice that he had not decided on a new favorite son, and had the added benefit of putting two of his

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most loyal lieutenants immediately at his right hand. Indeed, the question of loyalty seemed to be a prime consideration in the choice. Khrushchev may have felt that his views were not always being given proper consideration--particularly in the field of policy administration.

Both Podgorny and Brezhnev were strong political figures and had been members of the party presidium for a number of years. Podgorny at the time was the political boss in the Ukraine, while Brezhnev, after serving in a number of important assignments, was becoming a leading Soviet spokesman as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet--nominally the Soviet chief of state.

There is no indication that they had been direct competitors in the past, but their current assignments make it likely that they now will be in contention for influence and power.

#### Careers and Associations

Both Brezhnev and Podgorny are members of Khrushchev's Ukrainian clique and seem to see eye to eye with him in matters of policy. Their ties in the Ukraine, however, are with different and possibly competitive regional party organizations--Brezhnev with the metallurgical and missile-pro-

ducing center of Dnepropetrovsk, and Podgorny with Kharkov, the second city of the Ukraine and its foremost machine-building center.

Brezhnev was born in 1906 in an industrial section of the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast of a Russian family which for generations had worked in the metallurgical industry. From the time of his graduation in the early 1930s from the local engineering institute until 1950, except for wartime service as a political officer with Khrushchev on the southern front, Brezhnev held various government and party posts in Dnepropetrovsk or in adjoining Zaporozhye Oblast.

Since leaving the Ukraine in 1950, Brezhnev has had a distinguished career in such varied jobs as chief party leader in Moldavia, political boss of the navy, and Khrushchev's viceroy in Kazakhstan during the launching of the New Lands program. He had also served a first tour in the central party secretariat overseeing industry, construction and perhaps the secret police (KGB). Since May 1960 he had been titular head of state. In all these posts Brezhnev was making valuable contacts and undoubtedly building a personal following. His many years in Dnepropetrovsk, however, have had the most influence on his career, and the men he worked with there probably form the hard core of his support.

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The most prominent of Brezhnev's early associates is presidium member Andrey Kirilenko. Like Brezhnev and most members of the Brezhnev group, he is a Russian who built his career in the Ukraine. He served as Brezhnev's deputy in Zaporozhye from 1944 to 1947 and succeeded Brezhnev as party leader of the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast in 1950. He is now one of Khrushchev's first deputies for party affairs in the Russian Republic (RSFSR).

Another member of the old Dnepropetrovsk group is Nikolay Mironov, now chief of the department in the party apparatus which supervises the KGB. The list also includes the current party boss of Tula Oblast, the chairman of the party-state control committee for the RSFSR, and a deputy chairman of the USSR State Planning Committee. The latter three are also full members of the party central committee.

Unlike Brezhnev, who worked his way up in the Dnepropetrovsk party apparatus and welded his following together slowly, Podgorny arrived late on the political scene and came in at the top of the Kharkov organization, inheriting the leadership of an already powerful apparatus. His subsequent reliance on Kharkov officials to fill key posts in the Ukraine indicates, however, that Podgorny's association with Kharkov was no less significant for his career than Brezhnev's with Dnepropetrovsk.

Podgorny had no connections with Kharkov until after the war. He was born in 1903 near Poltava, trained as a sugar-refining expert, and worked for a number of years as Ukrainian minister of the food industry. In 1946, when Khrushchev was head of the Ukrainian party organization, Podgorny was appointed permanent representative of the Ukrainian council of ministers to the government in Moscow. In this normally dead-end post, he obviously did something to impress Khrushchev, for in 1950, at the age of 47, he was transferred to party work as first secretary of Kharkov Oblast.

After only three years, Podgorny took another big step ahead to become the number-two man in the Ukrainian party, and in 1957 he succeeded Kirichenko in the top Ukrainian slot.

Podgorny's deputy and successor in Kharkov, Vitaly Titov, has also done well. A native Ukrainian like Podgorny, he was sent to Moscow in early 1961 to head one of the cadre departments in the central committee. In late 1962 he was chosen to direct a new commission created to supervise all cadre departments and, in the process, he attained membership in the party secretariat.

Probably the most striking demonstration of Podgorny's use of the Kharkov organization to solidify his own position occurred in July 1963 when the Ukrainian leadership was

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reorganized following his transfer to Moscow. Several officials closely associated with Kharkov were brought up into the top leadership, and Vladimir Shcherbitsky, the second ranking official in the republic under Podgorny and a former party boss in Dnepropetrovsk, was demoted. The reorganization seemed to demonstrate quite clearly Podgorny's ability to influence personnel appointments in the republic.

Shcherbitsky had been the Ukrainian premier since 1960 and a candidate member of the party presidium in Moscow since 1961. There was no official explanation for his removal but the facts suggest that he was not wholly acceptable to Podgorny. While there is no evidence that Brezhnev was involved in or affected by the demotion, Shcherbitsky is a native of Dnepropetrovsk, served there under Brezhnev, and took over leadership of the oblast from Kirilenko in 1955.

Shcherbitsky was replaced as Ukrainian premier by Ukrainian second secretary Kazanets, a man from neither of the two "rival" oblast organizations. Kazanets undoubtedly had hoped to succeed Podgorny as first secretary, but the choice went to Petr Shelest, a lower ranking secretary. Shelest, a Kharkovite by birth, subsequently received Shcherbitsky's candidate slot on the presidium in Moscow.

In addition, two of Shelest's chief assistants in the Ukrainian party are products of the Kharkov organization; one of them was Podgorny's political deputy there. Podgorny seems to have made sure that the present Ukrainian organization was sewed up tightly before he left for Moscow.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

A comparative assessment of Brezhnev and Podgorny suggests that neither has a decisive advantage. In terms of age and education they are about on a par.

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Brezhnev is clearly the more experienced of the two, however, particularly in party administration. He probably has a wider range of friends and supporters and may even have political strength within the KGB.

Podgorny, for his part, should be able to count on valuable support from the powerful Ukrainian party organization. He might profit from his past association with Vitaly Titov to secure a hold over party personnel matters. This is a vital area for the would-be pretender. To date, Khrushchev has exercised this function himself through Titov, a lesser secretary.

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Podgorny also may be aided over the short run by having what appears to be a particularly close personal association with Khrushchev. This relationship could be a disadvantage, however, after Khrushchev leaves the scene. In addition, Podgorny has the handicap of being of non-Russian nationality.

It is the question of relative ability that raises the greatest problems. In the Soviet system the leader so eclipses his lieutenants that the latter rarely emerge into full view. Brezhnev, however, has been put on display more than most of his associates and therefore a fairly accurate assessment of his abilities seems possible.

On balance, Brezhnev resembles a weaker version of Khrushchev

[Redacted]

He is apparently a good administrator but seemingly not a man of great or deep convictions.

[Redacted]

Podgorny gives the impression of being a careful but self-confident administrator.

[Redacted]

he certainly has none of

Khrushchev's ebullience and may have less of his drive.

There is a good possibility, however, that Podgorny is more of a top-flight leader than the record indicates. Moreover, it is to be emphasized that, as a late starter, he has been assessed by very few people in the West. He is undoubtedly ambitious, and may bring to the Moscow scene the special talents of the behind-the-scenes maneuverer.

Recent Activities

Brezhnev's and Podgorny's activities since their appointments to the secretariat have not been sufficiently publicized to provide an adequate picture of their respective responsibilities. Brezhnev has often substituted for Khrushchev at party conferences and meetings with foreign Communist leaders, and during Khrushchev's absences from Moscow he has generally been called upon to manage routine party affairs. In this regard he appears to have been acting as Khrushchev's second-in-command, performing some of the functions previously allotted to Kozlov. As for substantive areas of responsibility, there is almost no information, with the exception of some tentative evidence tying him to the militia, the judicial system, and perhaps the KGB.

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Podgorny's activities have been only slightly more revealing than Brezhnev's. He appears to have steadily expanded his range of responsibilities since his appointment to the secretariat and has played an increasingly

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prominent role in the leadership, particularly since the beginning of this year.

There is some evidence that Podgorny has been moving into Suslov's field of relations with foreign Communist parties. In the summer and fall of 1963, during Suslov's prolonged illness, Podgorny for instance took part in briefing visiting foreign party delegations.

He headed a party delegation to Rumania in the spring of 1963, presumably to assess and attempt to discourage emerging signs of divergence from Soviet policies, and he has been prominent in subsequent dealings with this increasingly independent-minded satellite. He also substituted for Khrushchev at the revolutionary celebrations in Cuba in January 1964 and led a government-sponsored delegation to France the following month.

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[REDACTED] In April, his political status was considerably enhanced by his appointment to head a special commission to work out measures for strengthening the lagging livestock sector. The commission is composed of six other presidium members, including Brezhnev.

Podgorny's growing prominence has been clearly reflected in the portrait displays on national holidays. In November 1963 he still ranked eleventh or twelfth in the leadership. By May Day 1964, however, he

had jumped to fourth place-- joining Brezhnev, Mikoyan, Suslov, and Kosygin in the inner core around Khrushchev.

Future Prospects

In releasing Brezhnev from the presidency last month, Khrushchev probably had in mind giving him a more equal opportunity with Podgorny in the succession competition and at the same time strengthening the executive leadership of the party. There is no indication, however, that Brezhnev--let alone Podgorny--has actually moved into the number-two spot.

Having set up a competitive situation between the two, Khrushchev now may be content to allow "the better man" in the course of time to emerge clearly as second in command. When that happens, Khrushchev presumably will do some recasting of the top leadership to suit the "victor," as he did in May 1960 when Kozlov moved into the slot. In view of his past experience, however, Khrushchev may be reluctant to center full second-in-command authority on one man. He might therefore, try to maintain a permanent balance, preferring to risk an eventual succession struggle in the interests of smooth current operations.

On the other hand, if Khrushchev expects to run the Soviet Union for, say, another five years, he must find it hard to think of either one as his successor. Brezhnev will then be nearly 63, and Podgorny 66, and Khrushchev presumably would



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prefer to select someone with a longer expectancy of rule. The longer he hesitates, the more likely it becomes that a third force outside the influence of either contender will arise.

Khrushchev may therefore hope for the appearance of still

another new leader, younger and more vigorous, in whom he can center his aspirations for carrying forward his policies. Khrushchev can have no assurance, however, that such a third force will develop along lines acceptable to him.

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