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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

The Soviet Party Leadership

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
 Directorate of Intelligence
 3 April 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Soviet Party LeadershipSummary

The most significant development on the Soviet political scene during the past year and a half has been the emergence of General Secretary Brezhnev in the new role of spokesman for detente abroad and champion of consumer interests at home. In the process he has broadened his range of policy involvement and become the most authoritative figure in the Soviet leadership. He also has taken on greater political risks than ever before.

To some extent Brezhnev simply has taken advantage of events at home and reacted to developments elsewhere. As the prevailing view has shifted within the Soviet leadership, particularly in foreign affairs, Brezhnev, a perennial middle-grounder, has moved with the tide. But Brezhnev is first and foremost a politician, and in the past year he has taken the lead in assuming public responsibility for controversial policies. His colleagues probably recognize that Soviet interests abroad are best served when there is one undisputed leader able to speak with full authority.



Leonid I. Brezhnev

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Brezhnev's increased standing as a result of political gains at the 24th party congress has facilitated the decision-making process and enabled the regime to move forward in several tough foreign policy areas. Many aspects of current Soviet policy, such as detente with West Germany, the forthcoming talks with President Nixon, and reaction to movement in Sino-US relations, are controversial in the USSR and call for incisive leadership.

Brezhnev's assertiveness has shaken up political relationships in the USSR, changed the relative influence of individuals, and generated political static every step of the way. By shifting to a more activist stance on foreign affairs and a more consumer-oriented position at home, Brezhnev has effectively undercut his colleagues on what we call the moderate end of the Kremlin political spectrum. These moderates were put in the uncomfortable position of seeing policies they had long espoused finally adopted, but with the credit for whatever gains these may bring largely taken by the party boss.

Brezhnev was able to neutralize or divide those who had earlier been his main critics, but his new course has created a possibility of a breach between Brezhnev and some supporters from his more orthodox days. Those within Brezhnev's immediate political entourage presumably have more to gain by going along with Brezhnev than in opposing him. But there are persuasive indications that other conservative elements have been dragging their feet, especially Ukrainian party boss Shelest who emerged last year as the principal spokesman for the foot-draggers.

Shelest and those sharing his conservative views have not prevailed in Soviet policy deliberations. But, in terms of power in the Kremlin, Brezhnev's maneuvers seem to have provoked a reaction from those of his colleagues who are concerned that further gains by Brezhnev would jeopardize their own positions. At the central committee plenum held last November, there were

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signs of a movement to check the growth of Brezhnev's personal authority. While his policies were approved, the central committee failed to accord him the high degree of personal acclaim that he had been receiving in the public media in the period before the plenum. There were no personnel shifts, despite signs that an effort to remove Voronov--a moderate and long-time critic of Brezhnev--from the politburo had been in the works before the plenum.

We believe that the idea of collective leadership--a basic notion since Khrushchev's removal in 1964--was reaffirmed at the November plenum. The composition of the leadership was unchanged. There seems to have been agreement to mute criticism of present policies. This instinct of the collective for survival has maintained stability in the ranks of the politburo in the post-Khrushchev years, despite policy and political differences. Brezhnev can reduce the power of his politburo opponents, but it is difficult for him to remove them.

Although Brezhnev was under pressure to move against Voronov, he apparently was reluctant to do so unless he could at the same time get rid of Shelest, a troublemaker at the other end of the political spectrum. The politburo is so evenly divided between moderates and conservatives that to remove one without the other could upset the balance that Brezhnev has long played to his advantage. Thus, when Brezhnev found that he could not achieve both his policy aims and personal political goals, he seems to have chosen to concentrate, for the time being, on his policy objectives.

Brezhnev's domestic and foreign policies do not appear to be endangered by the existing opposition. Unlike Khrushchev, Brezhnev has been careful not to accompany his policy of detente with relaxation of internal controls, which would inevitably arouse real conservative ire. In fact, as the time for President Nixon's visit approaches, the regime has stepped up domestic vigilance as a reminder that detente does not extend to the ideological sphere.

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There are, of course, many risks ahead for Brezhnev. External events could give him serious problems at home. He is in an exposed position on the issue of detente, having assumed public responsibility for this policy. Ratification of the Soviet - West German treaty is of particular importance because his entire European policy and a good deal of personal prestige are tied up with that agreement. If the treaty fails, Brezhnev may come under fire from members of the leadership who prefer that Soviet relations with the West remain cool. Similarly, Brezhnev must watch his step in negotiations with the US and in shaping policies in response to movement in US-Chinese relations. These matters involve the security of the USSR, and a major setback could cause a shakeup of the leadership.

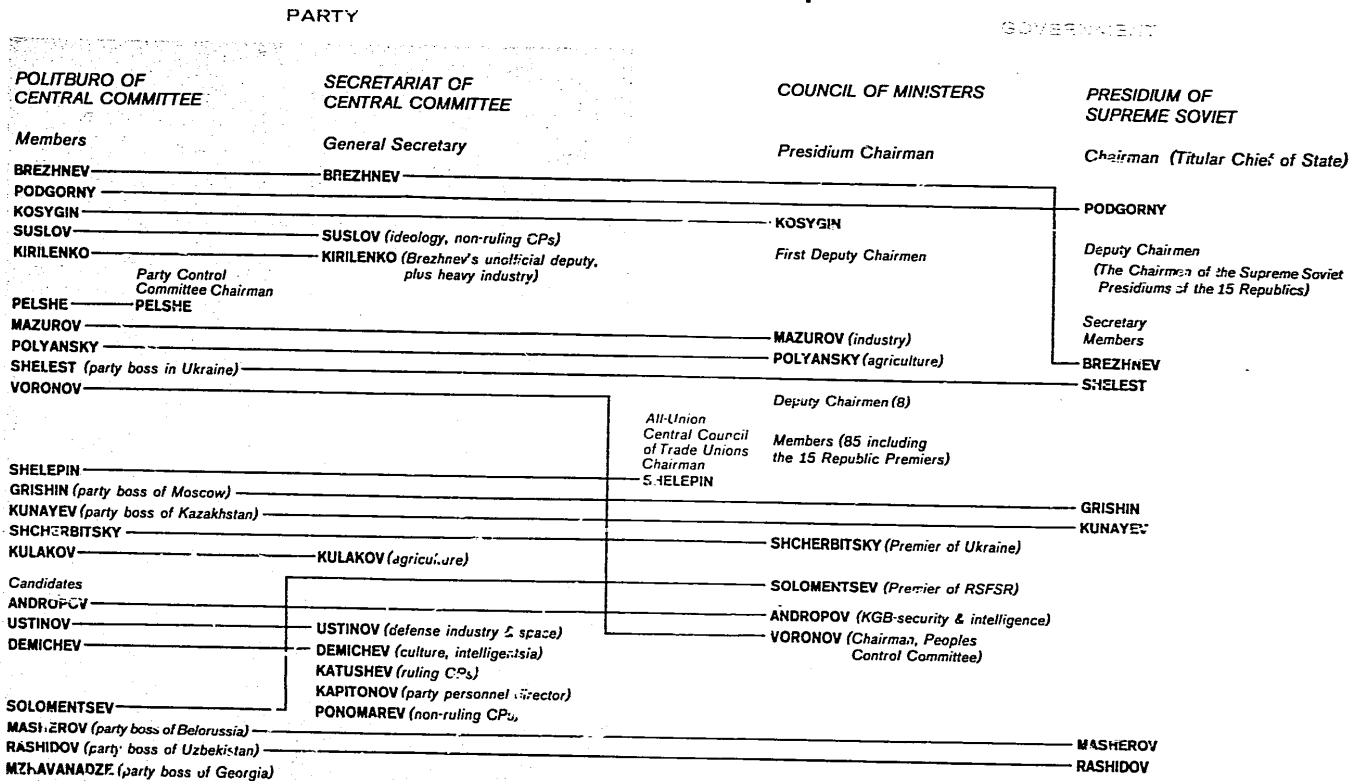
Brezhnev also is under the gun because of his domestic policies. Even the weather seems to be conspiring against him. The unusually severe winter has done extensive damage, and prospects for a good agricultural year are thus dim. Brezhnev is closely identified with current agricultural policies, and his critics will undoubtedly attempt to hold him responsible if the harvest turns out to be poor.

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Soviet Leadership



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Brezhnev's Response to Challenge

1. In the early days of the collective leadership, the principal challenge to Brezhnev came from the ambitious Shelepin who spoke for neo-Stalinism and rode the wave of reaction against Khrushchev. Brezhnev, in classic political style, moved with the flow of conservatism to limit the ground available to Shelepin, at the same time undermining Shelepin's political base. By late 1967, Brezhnev had control over the conservative wing of the party, and Shelepin had been reduced to the politically powerless post of trade unions chief.



Aleksandr N. Shelepin

2. Shelepin evidently was forced to look elsewhere for new constituents, new issues, and a new image. Because of expediency, or a change of heart, he gravitated toward what we call the "moderates"--Kosygin, Mazurov and Voronov. Although there are many differences among these men and they never act as a faction or bloc, they apparently do hold certain views in common--in particular, an interest in modern methods of management and in economic efficiency. They also share a deep hostility toward the agricultural lobby represented by Polyansky. Kosygin and Shelepin have both been identified with consumer needs. Possibly most important, these men are "outsiders"; they do not belong to the Ukrainian coterie clustered around Brezhnev. Suslov, another "outsider," has on occasion joined with them on certain issues.

3. On foreign policy questions, Kosygin has long been associated with a policy of reducing international tensions. Suslov had provided a theoretical rationale for positive response to a Brandt

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move toward the East a full six months before Brandt himself came to power. There were hints of similar receptivity to overtures from the West in some of Shelepin's trade union activities.

4. In late 1969 there were reliable reports that Brezhnev was under fire from Suslov, Shelepin, and Mazurov for lack of dynamism and a tendency to tread water on policy questions. His efforts to increase the cohesion of the Communist world were frustrated, and the stalemate with China persisted. The "Brezhnev doctrine" was useful to justify, after the fact, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, but was hardly the basis for a Brezhnev foreign policy. Brezhnev needed an opening for fresh initiatives, and Brandt's election as West German chancellor provided an opening in the foreign policy field. Seizing on it, Brezhnev used the tactic that had served him in the past--adopting the platform of his critics while undercutting their political positions. In the following months, a new, activist Brezhnev began to emerge.



Mikhail A. Suslov

5. Brezhnev first seemed to move to secure the support of his conservative colleagues on the politburo, most notably Polyansky and Shelest, by supporting a costly agricultural investment program which they favored. Such a program was embedded in the 1971-75 economic plan in July 1970, long before work on other sections of the plan were completed. Having secured his right flank, Brezhnev started to change course by espousing a policy of detente and by promises that consumer interests would be given more attention. The twin programs of peace abroad and butter at home were not in keeping with Brezhnev's earlier cautious style of leadership and generally orthodox outlook. And they exposed him to greater political risks than before.

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6. Immediately after the Soviet - West German treaty was signed in the summer of 1970, Brezhnev spoke out in favor of normalizing relations with West Germany. At the party congress the following spring, he put considerable stress on the theme of European detente and peace in general, and in a speech in Tbilisi in late May 1971 he enlarged on these themes.

7. But until the visit of West German Chancellor Brandt to the Crimea in mid-September 1971, Brezhnev clearly was operating as spokesman for the collective leadership; the troika of Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgorny was sharing responsibility for the conduct of foreign policy. Brezhnev's solo two-day meeting with Brandt marked a significant departure from this pattern. Brezhnev used the visit to establish himself publicly as the chief spokesman for detente policy, the one person in the leadership responsible for its conduct. He thus put himself in a position to reap the benefits should it succeed.

8. As a measure of how far Brezhnev had come, it is worth recalling that at the signing of the Soviet - West German treaty in 1970 he had insisted on calling all of his colleagues back from vacation to stand at his side. A year later he went it alone. He was at great pains to stress to Brandt that he was speaking not just as the party chief but as the leading Soviet statesman. His performance at the meeting conveyed the message that he, rather than Premier Kosygin or President Podgorny, was the man in the Kremlin for President Nixon to talk to. The Nixon visit to Moscow was announced the following month.

9. On the domestic front, Brezhnev has for some time championed various measures to raise living standards, but his efforts to satisfy all important interest groups, particularly the military-defense complex, blurred his image. He had made clear his commitment to greater agricultural investment in July 1970. In February 1971, the draft five-year plan for 1971-75 was published

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over his signature, rather than under the auspices of the central committee, as had been customary since Stalin's death. His identification with consumer interests was underscored in the draft, which highlights the task of raising living standards. At the 24th party congress in March and April 1971, Brezhnev reiterated these positions. The image has been created even though, in real terms, the attention to consumer goods appears to be in large measure propaganda froth that will have little immediate impact on the country's economy. In a political sense Brezhnev's move is both real and controversial. It marks a departure from the long sacrosanct tenet of the primacy of heavy industry over light industry and, over the long run, it could have important economic results.

Political Impact in the Kremlin

10. Brezhnev's departures in foreign and domestic policy once again cut ground from under his critics and rivals. Shelepin again found Brezhnev crowding his political platform. Although Shelepin managed to hold his position on the politburo at the 24th party congress, he dropped in ranking from sixth to last place. His speeches since the congress suggest that he sees no alternative for the moment but to go along with Brezhnev.

11. Premier Kosygin suffered a slight loss of status at the congress. He dropped from second to third place, behind President Podgorny. One of the principal spokesmen for closer Soviet relations with the West, Kosygin has steadily been pushed aside as Brezhnev assumed leadership in this field. It was Kosygin who visited France in 1966 and England in 1967, and who met with President Johnson at Glassboro later that year. But in 1971 it was Brezhnev who traveled to France and met with Brandt. While Kosygin welcomed Brezhnev's support for



Aleksey N. Kosygin

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policies that he had long espoused, he can hardly appreciate the accompanying loss in his own prestige.

12. Not only has Brezhnev encroached on Kosygin, but Brezhnev also has helped his political ally, President Podgorny, to do likewise. The last-minute inclusion of Brezhnev and Podgorny in what were originally scheduled as private talks between Kosygin and Mrs. Gandhi had every appearance of a deliberate elbowing in on Kosygin. The premier has had a special interest in relations with India, at least since the Tashkent Conference in 1966.



Nikolay V. Podgorny

Brezhnev went out of his way to demonstrate his support for Podgorny by making an unusual trip to the airport to see him off for Hanoi.

13. Kosygin's status on the domestic front also diminished. The economic reform program he sponsored in 1965 has not lived up to the high expectations with which it was launched. It was pretty well buried at the 24th party congress. Moderate elements who had supported the reform may have been mollified to some extent by the increased emphasis on consumer goods. They may doubt that the attempt to provide these goods by the traditional system of tight centralized controls will work, but they seem to be willing to give Brezhnev a chance.

14. Of the politburo members who hold generally moderate views, Voronov suffered the most grievous set-back, both at the congress and later. Voronov has long been at odds with two of Brezhnev's political allies, Kirilenko and Polyansky. In the past he competed with Kirilenko for political control of party affairs in the Russian republic, more recently, with Polyansky over agricultural policies. Voronov has advocated administrative reform as an alternative, or at least a corollary, to huge

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capital investments in the agricultural sector. He vigorously campaigned for the adoption of the controversial "link" system of organizing farm labor, a system that, to the ideologically orthodox, smacks of private farming.



Gennady I. Voronov

15. Officials in Polyansky's agricultural bureaucracy clearly opposed this system, and their hostility was shared by officials in the Ukraine. Over and above his commitment to the link system as one answer to the ills of Soviet agriculture, Voronov clearly tried to use the issue politically to embarrass the agricultural lobby and its spokesman, Polyansky. The two engaged in a bitter public exchange in the spring of 1970, and the matter was resolved in Polyansky's favor only when Brezhnev gave his full backing.

16. Following this defeat, Voronov's political fortunes began to plummet. Several of his proteges were demoted, and on his 60th birthday he was pointedly snubbed in an official party greeting, receiving less than the full honors due a politburo member. Voronov went on criticizing aspects of the agricultural support program and undoubtedly won Brezhnev's enmity. Although Voronov retained his seat on the politburo at the 24th party congress, he dropped in ranking from fifth--the position he had held in 1966--to next to the last.

Potential Conservative Backlash

17. Brezhnev was thus able to counter the more moderate wing of the politburo, but the quickening pace of detente evidently began to alarm conservative elements in the country. As Brezhnev was clearly identified as the architect of this policy, it has made him a prime potential target for the conservatives' ire.

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18. The depth and strength of conservative feeling in the Soviet Union is difficult to measure, but a series of public lectures in Leningrad last fall provided a sample of public--and presumably party--opinion in one locale outside the capital. The lectures uncovered a fairly rich vein of conservatism on foreign policy. During the question periods, the audiences voiced considerable suspicion about a wide range of current Soviet foreign policy--from China, through Germany to the visit of President Nixon. "It is strange that Nixon can find a common language with China while we cannot. Have we forgotten our Leninist precepts?" "What compromises did we have to make to obtain a Berlin agreement?" "Whatever happened to the West German revanchists we used to read about?" "Aren't we helping Nixon to get re-elected?" Other questions showed marked hostility to Brezhnev. There were, for example, repeated queries about why his trip to France received more publicity than Kosygin's or Podgorny's travels.

19. Leningrad, it should be noted, cannot be considered typical. Brezhnev is considered to be Ukrainian because of his long career there, and the Ukrainian and Leningrad party organizations have long been rivals for political influence in Moscow. Even so, there is little question but that the foreign policy attitudes of the Leningraders are reflected at higher levels of the party and government. Many rank-and-file party workers see the world in simplistic black-and-white doctrinal terms. The leadership may make some accommodation with "class enemies" in West Germany and the US, but this is bound to arouse visceral uneasiness among certain party workers at all levels. Conflicting views are inevitable, and they invariably are a factor in Kremlin politics as leaders are tempted to exploit them to further their own ambitions.

20. In the present case, we think Brezhnev can feel reasonably confident that his flank is guarded against attacks from conservatives. His record of orthodoxy and his close ties with important elements in heavy industry and the military reduce his vulnerability to criticism from

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the conservative wing. Furthermore, unlike Khrushchev, he has been careful not to combine a policy of detente with relaxation of internal controls. On the contrary, the authorities have intensified their pursuit of dissident elements.

21. Brezhnev can take comfort in the fact that most of the important spokesmen for conservative causes had either been removed from office before the detente policy got under way or were sufficiently beholden to him politically to ensure their compliance. One influential foreign-policy conservative, Leningrad party boss Tolstikov, was maneuvered out of the country as ambassador to Peking before the 24th party congress. His successor appears to be somewhat more open to Brezhnev's blandishments, and as a "new boy" carries considerably less weight than had Tolstikov.



Dmitri S. Polyansky



Kirill T. Mazurov

22. Critics could arise from within Brezhnev's own political circle. Polyansky, for example, reportedly sought in the pre-congress period to appeal to hardliners by supporting their positions on a variety of cultural matters. He is said to have even flirted from time to time with the ultra-conservative neo-Stalinists. But Polyansky is indebted to Brezhnev for support on agricultural policy. Moreover, Polyansky's most visible rival to succeed Kosygin when the premier steps down is Mazurov, whose ties are with Brezhnev's critics. If Polyansky is ambitious, as is likely, his ambition would seem to be best served by loyalty to Brezhnev. The same holds true for Kirilenko, who displayed a marked conservative

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cast during the access of orthodoxy following the invasion of Czechoslovakia. As Brezhnev's right-hand man, and presumably with hopes of becoming his successor, loyalty again would seem advisable. So, even if these "Moscow Ukrainians" are a bit uneasy about a future of detente and butter, their interests lie with Brezhnev and the political slip-page of their mutual rivals.

When Ukrainians Fall Out

23. With these former spokesmen for the conservative cause biding their time, at least in public, the field has been left to Ukrainian party boss Shelest, who has emerged as the principal champion for conservative interests and the noisiest critic of Brezhnev's policies, domestic and foreign. Brezhnev, possibly because he has in Ukrainian Premier Shcherbitsky a protege and an attractive alternative to Shelest in the Ukraine, has made little effort to accommodate the Ukrainian party boss. On the contrary, Brezhnev evidently sought a political break with Shelest at the 24th congress. Brezhnev successfully maneuvered to promote Shelest's rivals in the Ukraine and has tried to keep him continually off balance.



Petr Shelest

24. The breach between Brezhnev and Shelest is rooted in Ukrainian politics, where factionalism has been exacerbated by the presence in Moscow of many former Ukrainian officials who continue to meddle in Ukrainian affairs. Brezhnev, though not of Ukrainian parents, was born and made his career in the industrial area of Dnepropetrovsk in the southern Ukraine. He headed the party organization in Dnepropetrovsk for several years and, since attaining high position in Moscow, has been a patron for officials from that area. He has been particularly warm in his support of Shcherbitsky, who was also a party official in Dnepropetrovsk.

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25. Shelest, on the other hand, got his start in the Kharkov party organization, long a rival of the Dnepropetrovsk faction. Podgorny was once a patron of the Kharkov group which was badly hurt in the campaign against Podgorny after Khrushchev's ouster. It no longer has much political clout. As a result, Shelest has had to look elsewhere for political support. He has fixed on the Donetsk party organization. The Donetsk is an important coal mining area, and its party organization has emerged as a new force in Ukrainian politics. Shelest has been busily ingratiating himself with its rank and file.

26. Shelest has sought to buttress his position by appealing to Ukrainian nationalism, which he contrasts with the Moscow-oriented policies of the Dnepropetrovsk group. He has been tolerant of Ukrainian nationalist writers and has promoted a policy of gradual, limited, and controlled Ukrainization of the cultural and economic life of the republic. He evidently has tried to use the support that this has brought him from lower party and government officials, particularly in the nationality-conscious western areas, to win a measure of independence from Moscow.

27. In keeping with this emphasis on local interests, Shelest has consistently shown an interest in administrative reforms that would bring some devolution of authority from Moscow to the republic level. On other subjects, Shelest is a thorough conservative. His long association with the defense industry has made him a spokesman for this special interest group and a champion of defense spending in general. He has generally taken a hard line on foreign-policy questions and is particularly insistent on maintaining cohesion in Eastern Europe.

28. Rivalry between Shelest, on the one hand, and Brezhnev and his protege, Shcherbitsky, on the other, was more or less dormant during the

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years when Brezhnev was struggling against Shelepin. Brezhnev may have seen a need for Shelest's support (or neutralism) in those years, and the Ukrainian party boss' orthodox views were generally in vogue in Brezhnev's circle then. The first breach between the two men came in late 1969 at a collective farmers' congress when Brezhnev reneged on a promise to support one of Shelest's decentralization schemes. Relations were strained by the signing of the Soviet - West German treaty in 1970 and by disagreements over the allocation of resources in the new five-year plan. The drafting of the plan was clearly not easy. It was not discussed at a party plenum before the party congress last spring, as was customary, and it was issued over Brezhnev's personal signature, suggesting that controversies may have necessitated unconventional measures to get the document out for the congress.

29. At the congress, it was almost a public row. Shelest complained openly that funds earmarked in the draft plan for the Donetsk coal enterprises were insufficient. In part, this complaint was a gesture to curry favor with the Donetsk leadership.

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30. Brezhnev seems to have taken up the nationality issue to beat Shelest with. The Brezhnev report to the congress contained an uncharacteristic paean to the Great Russians, which was picked up by some, but by no means all, subsequent speakers. The regional party leaders who praised the Great Russians also had publicly expressed their support for Brezhnev, suggesting an orchestrated drive against Shelest and other nationalist or independent local leaders. Brezhnev's praise of the Great Russians also seemed designed to help him shed his own Ukrainian image.

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31. The split between Shelest and Shcherbitsky, the latter a proxy for Brezhnev, was much in evidence at the congress. Scherbitsky stressed that the labor of all the Soviet people formed the basis of Ukrainian success, and added that "great credit" was due to those in Moscow who were unflinching in their concern for all the republics. Shelest's speech, in contrast, contained no word of thanks to the Great Russians. Instead, he insisted that the shoe was on the other foot--that the Ukraine was responsible for a great part of the nation's production. Shelest was joined in this stance by the same republic party bosses who before the congress had shown the greatest reluctance to praise Brezhnev personally.



Vladimir V. Shcherbitsky

32. The result was one-sided. Brezhnev emerged from the congress much strengthened; two reliable proteges, Kunayev in Kazakhstan and Shcherbitsky in the Ukraine, were promoted from candidate to full membership on the politburo. Shelest retained his ranking on the politburo, but his position in the Ukraine was considerably weakened. Officials connected with Dnepropetrovsk were favored over Shelest associates in the elections to the new party central committee. But the most serious blow was the elevation of Shcherbitsky. It is most unusual for both top posts in a republic to be represented on the politburo, and the promotion of Brezhnev's personal protege removed any pretense of neutrality on his part. Indeed, it seemed to eliminate whatever chance there might have been of patching up his differences with Shelest. The breach, if not final, was fully visible.

Thunder on the Right

33. Shelest did not lie low after the congress. Far from it. Throughout the summer and fall his speeches were punctuated with thinly disguised expressions of disagreement with Brezhnev on an array of subjects. On economic issues,

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Shelest consistently and deliberately ignored or distorted the 24th party congress formulations on the tasks of the new five-year plan. As formulated in the congress material and stressed by Brezhnev, the "main task of the plan is to ensure a considerable upsurge in the material and cultural well-being of the people, on the basis of a high rate of development of socialist production and improvement of its efficiency." Shelest, referring vaguely to a decision "to strengthen further the economic and defense might of the country," put consumer welfare last on his list of priorities, or turned the congress formulation on its head so that increased efficiency and technical innovation became the main task. In sharp contrast to Shelest's studied downgrading of consumer interests, Shcherbitsky warmly endorsed the congress decision and in the main report at a Ukrainian central committee plenum discussed measures to increase production of consumer goods.

34. In a speech to the Ukrainian writers union in May, Shelest continued his low-keyed appeal to Ukrainian nationalist pride by deploring the practice of "littering" the Ukrainian language--an obvious reference to borrowing Russian words. He told the writers that the consolidation of the socialist community was the most important theme of the 24th party congress. He made no mention of Brezhnev's peace program. He warned against underestimating "ideological diversions of the class enemies" and asked for greater political vigilance and the cultivation of a "hatred for our foes." So much for the spirit of detente.

35. The danger of ideological subversion from the West has been a continuing theme in Shelest's speeches. His tactics were plain. He would parry attempts by his critics to pin on him the label, Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist, with hints of ideological laxness and political blindness in Moscow. He has studiously refused to suggest that there might be any problem with nationalist sentiment in the Ukraine itself.

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36. In June Shelest again stressed the importance of unity in the socialist camp and referred approvingly to the blow dealt "rightist" elements in Czechoslovakia in 1968. He had some jarring remarks on defense too. He dusted off an argument of Soviet doves--that a nuclear war would mean the destruction of civilization--but turned it around to use it as an argument for a still stronger defense establishment to deter would-be aggressors. This speech came only a few weeks after the US and the Soviets had announced plans to negotiate a limited SALT agreement. Brezhnev's later lengthy defense of the wisdom of negotiation with the US seemed in part intended as a riposte to Shelest and others of his persuasion.

37. At the end of June, after Brezhnev's statement in East Berlin that Moscow was ready to see the Berlin negotiations succeed, Shelest again sounded a sour note designed to revive old fears of the Germans. In a speech at a Soviet-Bulgarian friendship meeting, he remarked that, although 30 years had passed, "We have no right to forget, we must not forget the high price paid for our victory. Twenty million lives were sacrificed." The next day, he again warned of the danger presented by the spread of hostile ideology and of bourgeois views and morals.

A Busy Summer

38. Following the announcement on 15 July that the President was going to visit Peking, the conservatives seemed to grow stronger. On 24 July Voronov, who had tangled with Kirilenko and Polyansky, was removed from his post as premier of the Russian Republic and demoted to an insignificant post. The shift removed any rationale for keeping him on the politburo, and it seemed it would be only a matter of time before he was removed. Brezhnev interrupted his vacation in the Crimea to attend the installation the following week of Voronov's successor, party secretary

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Solomentsev. In his remarks at the ceremony, Brezhnev snubbed the outgoing Voronov and went on to praise Solomentsev.

39. With Brezhnev at the ceremony were the "Moscow Ukrainians," Podgorny, Kirilenko and Polyansky--the last two being prime beneficiaries of Voronov's removal. Those leaders who would seem to have had the most to lose from Voronov's political demise and who probably opposed his ouster--Kosygin, Suslov, and Shelepin--were absent, perhaps as a deliberate gesture to dissociate themselves. Moreover, rumors began once again to circulate about Kosygin's impending retirement, due to "ill health." It is true that Kosygin has health problems of long standing. They do not, however, seem to be of an incapacitating nature thus far. Rumors of his retirement because of poor health, which recur sporadically have not coincided with any of the identifiable periods where the Premier was ill and seem to be less a reflection of any such intention on Kosygin's part than a symptom of temporary political weakness. They may have been started by others in the leadership eager to see him go.



Andrey P. Kirilenko

40. The specter of a US-Chinese rapprochement arose at a time when the Kremlin was annoyed by China's flirtation with Romania and Yugoslavia, and it spurred Soviet moves to warn Eastern Europe against using contacts with China as a pressure tactic against the USSR. Preparations were noisily made in late July for Warsaw Pact troop maneuvers in the Balkans. Pressure was applied against Romania to participate, raising memories of similar pressures against Czechoslovakia in 1968. In this tense atmosphere, the party chiefs of all the East European members of the Warsaw Pact except Romania--pointedly excluded--were called to the Crimea for consultation with Brezhnev and Podgorny on 2 August. The added presence of Shelest, who had played a prominent part in the Czechoslovak crisis, lent a further ominous note to the occasion.

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41. We do not know what happened, except that a new and more hopeful mood seemed to ensue. Within a few weeks the Soviet leadership was engaged in a burst of diplomatic activity. There must have been a decision not to be stampeded by the President's visit to Peking and to attempt to stay out in front of the Chinese. We also speculate that negotiations between the US and the USSR for President Nixon's visit to Moscow prompted at least some of the change. In any event, by the end of August the militant spirit of the Crimea meeting had all but evaporated. The Warsaw Pact maneuvers failed to materialize, and Brezhnev's peace offensive gained new momentum. On 18 August the four-power draft agreement on Berlin was signed, clearing away many long-standing obstacles in the path of rapprochement with West Germany. During the last two weeks in August, the Soviet leaders arranged trips that would soon take the three top leaders to Yugoslavia, France, Hanoi, Canada, and Scandinavia. The groundwork was also laid for Brandt's visit to the Soviet Union in mid-September.

Renaissance of the Moderates

42. As movement toward detente gained momentum, the influence of those who had long favored such a policy, particularly Kosygin and Suslov, began to rise again. Although critical of Brezhnev in the past, neither Kosygin nor Suslov is a political rival in the same sense as Shelepin or even Shelest. Neither Kosygin nor Suslov has designs on the top party post, and thus do not feel compelled to offer alternative policies to those set forth by the party boss. Furthermore, as Brezhnev became identified as the spokesman for detente, particularly after his solo meeting with Brandt in September, he needed the support of moderates to counter the mounting attacks of the conservatives.

43. Far from making plans to retire, Kosygin seemed to regain some of his former vigor. In addition to a long interest in the policy that was

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being pushed, he may have had other considerations in mind. The alacrity with which he accepted invitations to visit Canada and Scandinavia, and his performance on these trips, suggested that he and others interested in preserving collective rule were anxious to bolster his position in the leadership. His initiatives in behalf of increased US-USSR trade, particularly his role in the visit of Secretary Stans, may have served the same purpose. Indeed, Kosygin seems to have responded to Brezhnev's encroachment on his position as Soviet spokesman for relations with the West by himself striking out into new territory. In pursuing opportunities in US-Soviet trade, he is in an area where his expertise and experience are great assets.

44. Party secretary Suslov, out of the public eye in July and early August, subsequently became considerably more active in public than has been customary lately. In an unusual gesture of good will toward the US, he met with Senator Scott on 20 August and was cordial and forthcoming. During the fall, he addressed a number of ideological conferences providing carefully reasoned theoretical arguments in support of the current Soviet line. Moreover, on at least one occasion, he attacked "dogmatism," a familiar target before the invasion of Czechoslovakia, but rare in recent years. This, coupled with a cautious plea for greater creativity in theoretical work, suggests that he may be attempting to nudge the leadership further away from the rigid orthodoxy of the past few years.

Run up to A Plenum

45. In mid-October, the politburo announced approval of the draft five-year plan. The move, which is without recent precedent, undercut the public role of the central committee in considering and approving such plans. In the official report on the plan, stress on raising living standards as the main task came through with particular force.

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46. Brezhnev's journey to France in late October was the high point of his drive to become the Soviet spokesman for detente. Shortly after his return, a joint decision of the politburo, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and the USSR Council of Ministers was announced. It approved his activities in France and dubbed the visit an "act of great international importance." The statement enhanced Brezhnev's image and, like the politburo approval of the economic plan, narrowed the range of permissible public dissent for critics, like Shelest, by tying them to an officially approved line.

47. At the end of October, it was announced that the Supreme Soviet would convene on 27 November to give final approval to the five-year plan. The central committee routinely meets before sessions of the Supreme Soviet, and rumors began to circulate that there would be significant personnel changes marking new political gains for Brezhnev. The conspicuous absence of Voronov from the 6-7 November anniversary celebrations reinforced the impression that his days on the politburo were numbered and that his removal might open the way for other adjustments in the leadership.

48. Rumors also began to spread that the central committee would approve the establishment of a super-body that would provide Brezhnev a state position befitting his new role. The rumors could have been floated by Brezhnev to test the water, or by his opponents in an effort to head off what they feared was a likely development. Whatever their source, the rumors added to the sense of expectation concerning the central committee plenum.

49. Brezhnev's pre-plenum maneuvers seem to have provoked a reaction from some of his colleagues. During the period before the plenum Kosygin and Suslov, the two most influential "independents" on the politburo, were increasingly prominent. Most remarkable, however, was the assertiveness of Shelest. Shelest's activities suggest that he may have sensed that he would be next on the list after Voronov. After all, the seating of the two leading Ukrainian

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officials on the 15-man politburo was the most glaring anomaly of all the personnel actions taken at the party congress. Shelest appears to have decided to fight for his position.

50. Shelest traveled to East Germany in early October. Rather curiously, he went under the auspices of the Supreme Soviet, rather than in his party role, and spent considerable time with retired party boss Walter Ulbricht. Given Shelest's frequently expressed suspicions of the policy represented by the Brezhnev-Brandt meeting, the visit was bound to raise eyebrows. Whatever may have been said in private, Shelest's public remarks were above reproach.

51. Back in the USSR, in two speeches immediately before the plenum, Shelest seemed to go all out to exploit vulnerabilities in Brezhnev's position and to make common cause with other conservatives, particularly Belorussian party boss Masherov. Shelest continued to divert attention from his own nationalist stand in the Ukraine by hammering at the dangers of ideological laxness--by implication, in Moscow. And for the first time he broadened his attack on Brezhnev. He directly attacked the attention given to consumer welfare, echoing the warning voiced earlier by Masherov against "vulgar" attitudes of "consumerism." The entire leadership had assumed responsibility for the plan, but it was Brezhnev alone who had publicly played up the consumer aspect and, astonishingly for an experienced Soviet politician, failed to cover himself with a nod to the dangers of "consumer attitudes." Adding insult to injury, Shelest implied that Brezhnev had promised more than he could deliver in the consumer goods program. Masherov followed up with a second moralistic attack on "consumer attitudes," specifically taking issue with Brezhnev's reference to the need to "saturate" the market with consumer goods.

52. In the past, the Ukrainian and Belorussian party organizations were rivals, and their party chiefs were more often than not on opposite sides of policy disputes. The synchronized attacks on Brezhnev's consumer-goods policies on the eve of the

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plenum suggested a community of interest, at least on some issues. Something of this sort may also have been in Shelest's mind when he uncharacteristically referred to the similarities between the Great Russians and Ukrainians. In part, this reference may have been an attempt, like Brezhnev before him, to shed some of his provincial image and broaden his appeal to conservatives elsewhere, particularly among the Great Russians. His attack on Zionism-- by no means his first--would also sit well with ultra-conservative elements among the Great Russians.

53. At his most contentious, Shelest stated that the draft of the five-year plan had only been reviewed by the politburo and would be submitted for review by the next plenum of the central committee. This formulation ignored the publicly announced politburo approval of the plan and left the implication that there was still room for revisions by the central committee. Once again, he misrepresented the "main task" of the plan. He seemed, in fact, perilously close to appealing to the central committee over the heads of his politburo colleagues for a change in economic priorities. If he actually believed there was any chance at this late date of forcing some adjustments in the plan, he was to be disappointed, but his trouble-making did create a diversion.

Collective Reins

54. The general secretary dominated the proceedings of the two-day plenum at the end of November, as he had at previous plenums. Brezhnev gave a major--as yet unpublished--report on foreign policy. He summed up the debate on the report, as well as the debate on the plan and budget report, the only other main item on the agenda. Nevertheless, there seemed to be a sort of a stop-Brezhnev movement. Although his policies were endorsed, the central committee failed to accord Brezhnev the high degree of personal acclaim that he had been receiving from the media in connection with his excursions in foreign policy. Furthermore, Kosygin held the spotlight at the Supreme Soviet session that followed, presenting the main report on the five-year plan and the 1971

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plan and budget. Brezhnev, contrary to his usual practice, did not attend the Supreme Soviet session after opening day.

55. The party plenum failed to remove Voronov from the politburo, despite all the signs and rumors. Only minimal changes were made--the removal of Solomentsev from the party secretariat and his election as a candidate member of the politburo. No one was named to fill Solomentsev's post on the secretariat. The plenum, like the 1971 party congress, left an impression of loose ends.

56. Voronov probably owed his reprieve in part to the reluctance of some of his colleagues, despite policy and political differences, to vote against him. Some of them probably reasoned that his ouster would make it that much easier for one of them to be removed later. The instinct for survival has apparently been responsible for the stability in the ranks of the politburo over the years. It has been easier for Brezhnev to reduce the power of his politburo opponents than to remove them.

57. Brezhnev, although under pressure from Polyansky and Kirilenko to move against Voronov, may have been reluctant to do so unless he could at the same time get rid of Shelest, the main trouble-maker at the other end of the political spectrum. The politburo seems to be so evenly divided between what we label as moderates and conservatives that to remove one without the other might tend to upset the balance that Brezhnev has long played to his advantage. The noisy performance of Shelest during the period before the plenum suggests that he may have been aware of this linkage.

58. But there were other reasons why Brezhnev may have found it no longer politically expedient to move against Voronov. Brezhnev badly needed the support of the moderates as his detente policy moved into the uncertain triangular relations among Communist China, the US, and the Soviet Union. Suslov, on whom Brezhnev relies heavily, had acted as a protector of Voronov in the past. Thus, for a variety of reasons, Brezhnev was apparently not able to achieve

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both his policy and his political goals. For the time being he has apparently decided to concentrate on his policy objectives.

Winter in the Country

59. In mid-December, following the central committee plenum, members of the leadership fanned out across the countryside to address regional party meetings on the decisions of the plenum. Although party leaders touched upon a range of subjects in their talks, including economic questions and specific local problems, the main purpose of the meetings apparently was to explain the current line on foreign policy as outlined in Brezhnev's report.

60. The leadership has resorted to this sort of whistle-stop tour on a number of occasions in the past in an effort to ensure that sensitive and complex policy issues were understood and to sound out grass-roots sentiment. Given the controversial nature of the detente policy, the Moscow leaders may have felt particularly obligated to carry the word to the local level.

61. All members of the politburo and secretariat participated in the campaign, with one notable exception, Ukrainian party boss Shelest. Ordinarily he would have been expected to report to Ukrainian party workers on the plenum decisions. But in an unprecedented move, President Podgorny was sent from Moscow to do the honors in the Ukraine. His colleagues in Moscow may have assumed that Podgorny, because of his Ukrainian heritage and his past association with Shelest, would be the most acceptable emissary, but reports in the Ukrainian newspaper suggest that he met with a distinctly cool reception.

62. Since then, Shelest's published speeches have stayed away from foreign policy questions and other controversial issues. He appears to have been muzzled, at least in public and for the time being. Curiously enough, Belorussian party boss Masherov has continued his attacks on Brezhnev's policies in language stronger than before. In a speech at an ideological conference in Minsk in early February,

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Masherov combined his earlier complaint against "consumerism" with a harsh attack on the West and the ideological threat--just as Shelest had in November.

63. Masherov differed with Shelest on one important issue, the nationality question. This sets limits on their cooperation. Consistent with his ideologically militant set of mind, Masherov sharply attacked the "poison weed" of nationalism and urged that greater strides be made toward the goal of drawing all the peoples of the Soviet Union together. In this he appeared to be responding to the note sounded by party theoretician Suslov, who stressed the same points in a report in December. Suslov's treatment of the nationality question and dogmatism had apparently been aimed at Shelest and his allies.

64. There is other evidence to suggest that Brezhnev and his supporters are trying to silence Shelest, or at least to turn his harpings against him. First, the central press in early December charged that Lvov officials were lax in their reaction to nationalist manifestations in their bailiwick. These accusations were followed by the sudden arrest of more than 20 Ukrainian intellectuals on charges of nationalist activities. The arrests were part of a nation-wide roundup of dissidents that appears to have been carried out on the orders of the KGB in Moscow.

65. Shelest has consistently sought to play down the problem of nationalist sentiment in the Ukraine.

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The charges against the Lvov officials could only have been embarrassing to Shelest. He had just presented the Order of Lenin to Lvov, accompanying it with words of unstinting praise for all aspects of work in the city.

66. During the winter there was evidence that Brezhnev was also trying to counter Shelest's appeal to other conservatives. In the briefing campaign after the November plenum, Brezhnev spoke not only

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in Moscow but in Leningrad. During his four-day visit to Leningrad, Brezhnev was intent on overcoming the ingrained hostility of local officials to him personally and on gaining their support for his policies. Brezhnev praised the Leningraders' initiative in setting up production associations and in drawing up a comprehensive economic and social plan for the city. He apparently promised to support the extension of this concept of integrated planning to other cities. His remarks reportedly were appreciated by the local officials, and his standing in the city may have risen.

67. Brezhnev is not prepared to compromise policies of detente or his commitment to consumer interest at home, but his actions in Leningrad provide an example of the kind of concessions he can make and is apparently willing to make to conservative elements in order to win them over. His gestures to the Leningraders should hold some appeal for the Belorussians. Like the Leningraders, the Belorussians combine an interest in progressive innovations such as complex planning with an ultra-conservative stand on foreign policy questions and ideological matters.

The Road Ahead

68. There are, of course, many pitfalls ahead for Brezhnev. In the first place, he seems to be presiding over a divided politburo. He has not altered its composition enough to ameliorate this problem, and he may find it increasingly difficult to keep its factions at least partially content. Suslov and some other moderates appear to be pushing for further adjustments in party dogma to meet new requirements in a changing world, but this pressure only increases the alarm of conservatives.

69. Furthermore, Brezhnev's failure to move against Voronov in November may have disappointed Kirilenko and Polyansky, in particular, and points up the limits to Brezhnev's ability to come up with political concessions for his allies in return for their support of his policies. Although Polyansky still seems to be beholden to Brezhnev and there is no evidence that he has bolted the party boss, on

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one occasion he apparently went out of his way to associate himself with Shelest. Polyansky was the only politburo member on hand to see the Ukrainian party boss off to East Berlin in early October and greet him on his return, a reminder that the two have political ties and that Polyansky's support for Brezhnev is not unconditional.

70. The weather appears to be against Brezhnev. The extent of the damage done to crops by the unusually severe winter is still being assessed, but it may be extensive and will require much resowing at great cost and effort. The prospects for a good harvest are thus dim. Brezhnev's critics will undoubtedly attempt to hold him responsible if there is a major setback. Brezhnev's close identification with agricultural policy and his insistence on taking the credit when things were going well make him especially vulnerable. Certainly the fortunes of the principal critic of his agriculture policies, Voronov, should brighten if the year brings a disappointing harvest. In fact, a sudden renewal of attention in the press to his pet "Link" scheme last month suggests that he may already be benefiting.

71. External events could compound Brezhnev's problems at home. He is in an exposed position on the issue of detente, and he will need tangible successes. The ratification of the West German - USSR pact by the Bundestag is of particular importance because Brezhnev's European policy and a good deal of personal prestige are linked to that treaty. Moreover, Shelest's ability to hold out against Brezhnev suggests that other important members of the leadership are skeptical of Moscow's present course and, perhaps, are standing by if it should fail.

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