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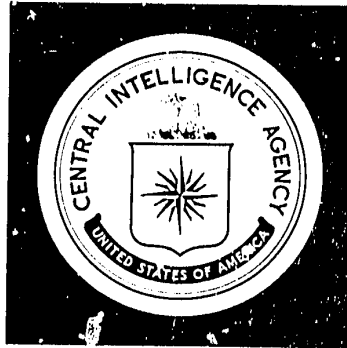
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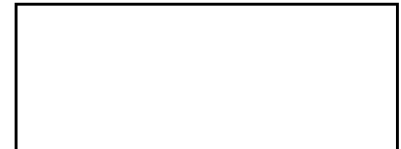
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Intelligence Memorandum

Soviet Politics on the Eve of the Summit

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
28 April 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Soviet Politics on the Eve of the Summit

1. To a Soviet politician who has made it to the top, the key problem is staying there. The system provides no alternative jobs in which a man can survive a run of bad luck. True political comebacks are rare in Soviet politics. Thus the relations among the leaders are a matter of unusually intense concern to them all.

2. While Soviet theory calls for a collective form of leadership, the present rulers are keenly aware that in the past collectivity has inevitably given way to one-man rule. After Stalin's death, they saw their predecessors fall in a series of quarrels which only Khrushchev (and the careful Mikoyan) survived. They profited from Khrushchev's victory, but in the aftermath they proved unable to hold him to the collective principle, and he reduced them all to followers. When they finally combined against him in 1964, it was around the principle of collectivity that they united.

3. This determination has prevailed beyond all early expectations, primarily because of the absence of a politician with enough strength and ambition to shoulder his colleagues aside. But it also reflects the insistence of the majority that one-man rule shall not return. This insistence is embodied in an agreement--mentioned only once in

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and was coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence and with the Office of National Estimates.

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the Soviet press--that the two posts of party leader and government premier may not be held by a single man. The agreement falls far short of a constitutional guarantee, but Khrushchev's successors have built upon it to check individual power-seekers and to create a set of procedures regulating the political interplay among them. In the last eight years they have developed various arrangements and understandings which, with the passage of time, have become more binding and less vulnerable to individual manipulation.

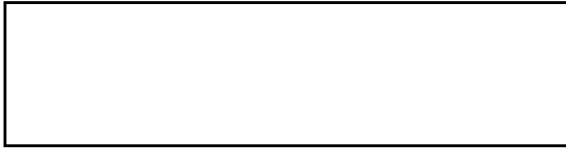
4. One way of doing this has been to build a sort of balance of power into the Politburo itself. Nearly all the members represent various important institutions, interest groups, and regions, such as agriculture, the government bureaucracy, and the Ukrainian Republic. Naturally, those who represent the most important institutions carry the most weight in Politburo politics, with Brezhnev, who heads the party apparatus, as the most powerful member. But it is evident in practice that no one institution or leader is to be allowed to grow so important as to squeeze the others out.

5. Another way of keeping the collective principle alive has been a scrupulous observance of what are called "the norms of party life." Thus the division of responsibility among individuals is more clearly defined than in Khrushchev's time. The distinction between the party's guiding, monitoring role and the government's administrative function has also been made more clear.

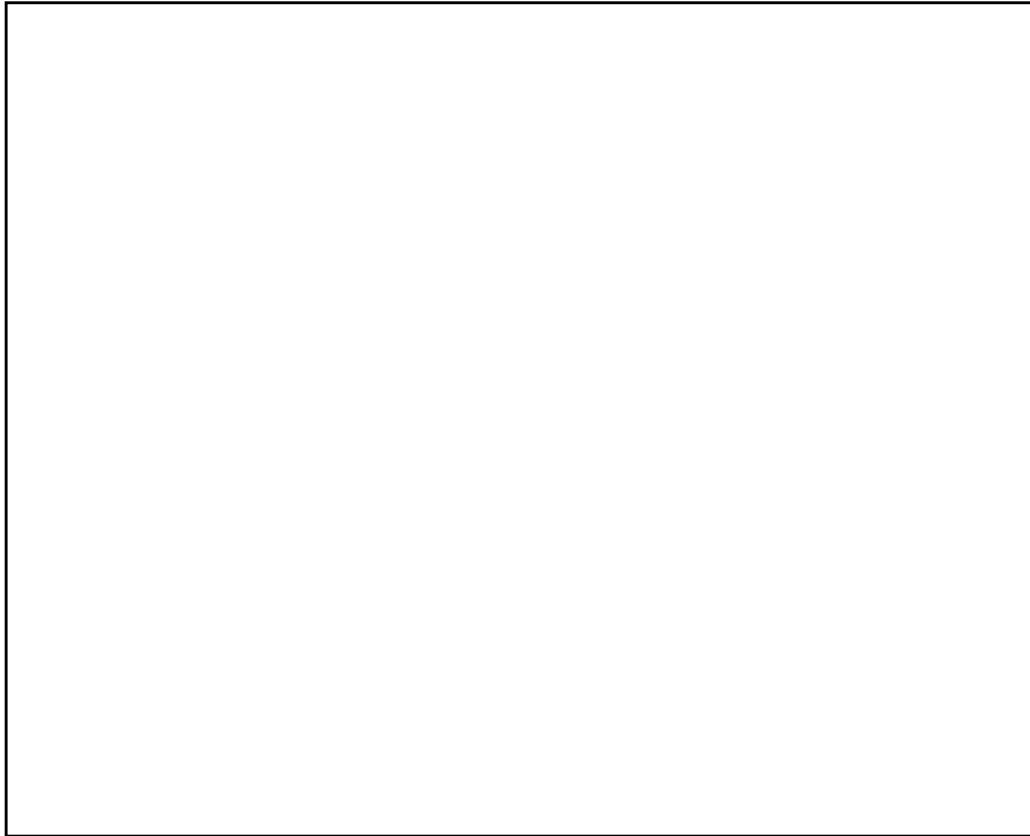
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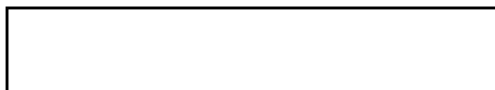


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8. While collectivity remains the norm, this does not mean that it is never challenged. There is good evidence that Shelepin, in the first year after Khrushchev's fall, made a challenge and was beaten back. At the 24th Party Congress last year, Brezhnev significantly improved his strength by adding to the Politburo four new members who were in various degrees his personal supporters. But the majority desire for stability and balance has been strong enough to preserve Shelepin's seat even after his setback and, last year, to keep Voronov from being pushed off the Politburo after a rival group, probably including Brezhnev, deprived him of his government post.



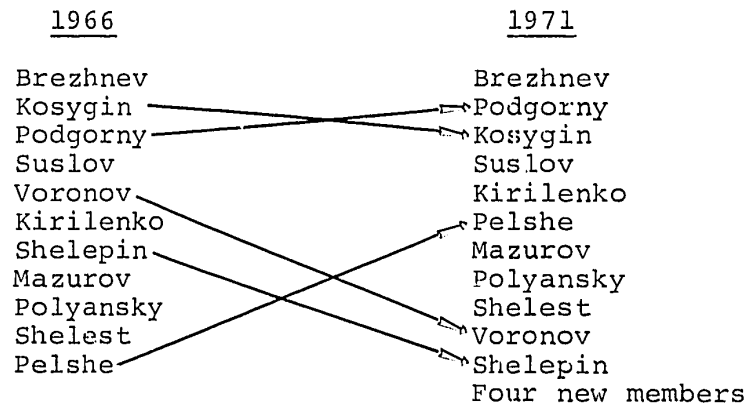
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9. Over the past 12 months, Brezhnev has been slowly forging ahead. This is probably due to a recognition by his colleagues of the need for a leader who can resolve issues, as well as to his success in bringing his proteges into the Politburo. Particularly in the field of foreign affairs, he has succeeded in staking out a personal role by taking charge of relations with West Germany and France. At the summit, he will want to sharpen this image in the ceremonial portions of the visit, impress the President with his pre-eminence, and identify himself publicly with a successful outcome. But his strength does not appear to be so great that he would be able, if he wished, to parlay the summit proceedings into a political drive that would give him the powers which Khrushchev enjoyed in his heyday.

The Standing of the Politburo Members

10. While the composition of the Politburo has been unusually stable in the past eight years, there has been considerable change in the ranking of some of the members. The order in which Brezhnev read off the names of members of the newly "elected" politburo at the close of the 23rd and 24th party congresses provides the best indication of the relative standing within the leadership and how it has changed in the period between the congresses.



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11. Brezhnev, Podgorny, and Kosygin comprise a senior troika which bears the main responsibility for carrying out party and state policy, particularly in the realm of foreign affairs. Their public prestige far outweighs that of the other members of the politburo. Despite certain rivalries between them, they have managed on the whole to work effectively together. Relations between Brezhnev and Kosygin were quite strained in the early days of the regime, when their individual power and responsibilities were still unsettled, but their relations seem to have improved since Brezhnev's pre-eminence became clearly established.

12. Since President Podgorny lost his power base as a party secretary in 1965, he has firmly tied himself to Brezhnev's political star. Podgorny is one of the coterie around Brezhnev made up of Ukrainian officials or Russians who, like their mentor, got their start in party work in the Ukraine. Brezhnev and Podgorny appear to be close and warm personal friends.

13. There is considerable friction, on the other hand, between Podgorny and Kosygin, which is aggravated by the overlap in their responsibil-

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14. Close behind the troika are the two senior party secretaries under Brezhnev, Suslov and Kirilenko. Kirilenko, another member of Brezhnev's Ukrainian group, has been one of his closest allies and has increasingly assumed the functions of his second-in-command on the secretariat. He still is outranked by Suslov, however, and thus has not yet been able



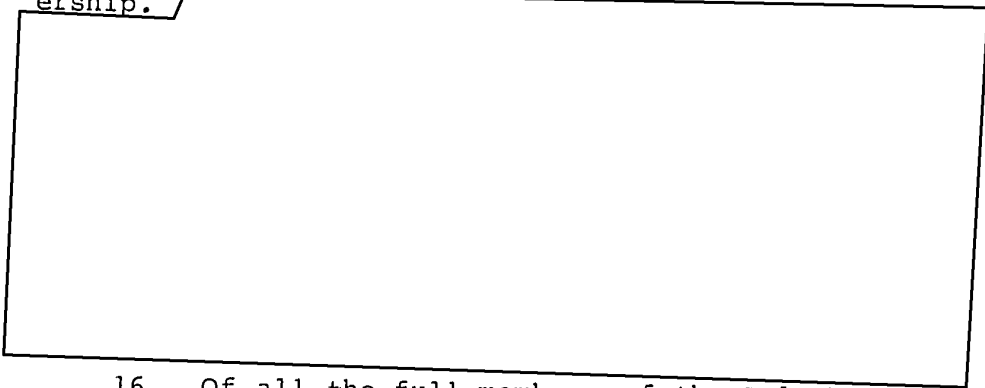
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to gain public recognition as Brezhnev's heir-apparent. In keeping with his aspirations, Kirilenko attempts to maintain good relations with all his colleagues and, on occasion, is not above criticizing other members of the Ukrainian group.

15. Suslov, the influential party theoretician and veteran of over 20 years of continuous service on the party secretariat, acts as a counterweight not only to Kirilenko but to Brezhnev as well. He is the only remaining member of the secretariat who was not hand-picked by Brezhnev and, as one of the most highly respected "independents" on the politburo, has been a key force in maintaining collective leadership.



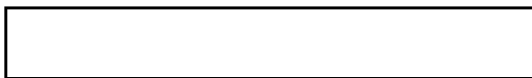
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16. Of all the full members of the Politburo, Shelepin and Voronov have lost the most ground in political standing in recent years. Voronov, who appears to be relatively moderate in policy matters




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17. Mazurov and Polyansky, Kosygin's two leading deputies, are close in ranking and belong



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to rival political and regional groups. These factors tend to create the same balance of power in the government that exists between Kirilenko and Suslov in the party secretariat and contribute to the stability, even immobility, in the leadership ranks. Polyansky has been a close supporter of Brezhnev and is a member of the Ukrainian group by virtue of nationality and early career. Mazurov, on the other hand, represents a rival regional organization, the Belorussian Republic party machine, and seems to be cast in the Kosygin mold.

18. Shelest, the Ukrainian party boss, ranks just below these two. He was once considered a member of Brezhnev's Ukrainian group, but in recent years policy and political differences have soured Shelest's relationship with the party boss. He is a fairly outspoken conservative who was an early proponent of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and has voiced doubts about the USSR's rapprochement with West Germany. The four new members of the Politburo elected at the 24th Party Congress bring up the end of the batting order. Two of them, the Ukrainian Premier Shcherbitsky and Kazakh party boss Kunayev, are proteges of Brezhnev. The other two, party secretary Kulakov and Moscow party chief Grishin, appear to have ties with Brezhnev's allies. Shelest and Shcherbitsky both work in Kiev, and there are signs of rivalry between them, with Brezhnev trying to build up the latter as a counterweight to the former.

The Style of Soviet Policy Making

19. The high premium attached to collectivity and the remarkable stability in Politburo membership have had their effects on the way Soviet policy is made. In contrast to the Khrushchev and Stalin eras, policy changes now come slowly and incrementally. Radical proposals are not encouraged, and abrupt shifts can be entertained only in the face of major crises. Their method of working helps the Soviet leaders to avoid big errors and imparts a fair degree of steadiness to the execution of policy. A consequence of rule by committee is an occasional slowness

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of response and a flatness of style that has given this leadership a reputation for mediocrity and lack of imagination. The collective is not incapable, however, of responding flexibly to opportunities, as the USSR's exploitation of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 and its aftermath shows.

20. One aspect of this method of governing may have particular significance for the summit. The concurrence of all, or nearly all, of the Politburo members is sought in every decision, and these men also see themselves, in part, as the representatives of various interest groups. Thus a complex set of simultaneous decisions, some closely related and others not, is likely to confront them with special difficulties. They have doubtless hammered out a Soviet position on some of the issues likely to appear on the agenda, taking account of divergent views in the process. On other issues, they may have agreed to do no more than hear what the US has to say. If, in the process of summit negotiations, they are urged to accommodate US views on one question in return for a US concession on another, the merits of such a proposal may strike individuals quite differently. It is likely, for example, that Kosygin will set the greatest store by increased US-Soviet trade, that Suslov will be particularly wary about increased personal contacts, that Shelest will be highly cautious about the terms of an arms control agreement, and that Polyansky may attach a high priority to agricultural imports. Thus the current structure of the Soviet leadership, and the modes of decision-making which it has developed, will hamper it in any effort to make multiple adjustments in a speedy fashion across a range of several issues.

The Dissident Movement

21. What the Western observer now describes as dissidence has its roots in Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin's crimes. It took on a new, semi-clandestine form in the mid-1960s when the present leaders began to reverse Khrushchev's tolerant,



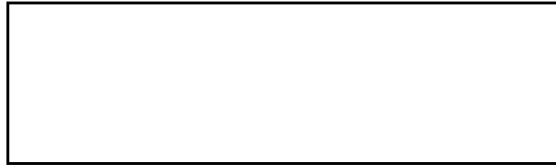
albeit ziz-zag, policy toward criticism and protest. The most important event in this reversal was the case of the writers Daniel and Sinyavsky in 1966. After their trial and conviction, the dissidents, who had up to then focused mainly on artistic and intellectual freedom, broadened their concerns to include a wide range of human and civil rights. As a political force, however, they remain weak, confined to portions of the cultural and scientific professions and isolated almost completely from the working class.


22. With a few minor exceptions, the dissidents are neither anti-Communist nor pro-American. They are opposed only to what they regard as perversions of the basic tenets of Leninism, begun by Stalin and continued by his successors. Their ultimate goal is a return to the true faith, but there is no evidence that they propose to use violence or revolution to achieve this end. Indeed, by Western standards Soviet dissidents are either unable or unwilling to organize a "mass" demonstration. Past demonstrations have involved only a very few individuals and have lasted from a few seconds to several minutes before being quickly dispersed by the KGB, which seems to know about plans for such activities well in advance.

23. Among the dissidents, the Jews are a unique group. While they are interested in the general aims of the democratic movement and are an important part of it, the primary goal of many of them is not reform, but emigration. They have been encouraged and emboldened by Israel's success in the 1967 war and are more audacious than other groups in their protests against regime policies. They have, for example, staged at least one sit-in at the Central Committee building in Moscow. In this type of action, they rely on the publicity which their protests generate in the West to provide a measure of protection.

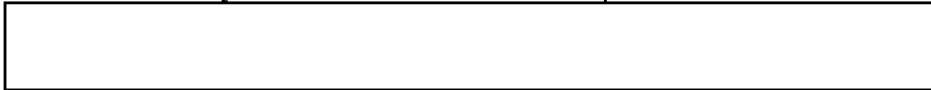
24. The dissidents have never used the occasion of an important state event to stage a demonstration. However, given the audacity of the Soviet Jews, it

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is possible that they might try to present a petition to the US Embassy or the President during his forthcoming visit. The KGB would know of such plans and could be expected to thwart them. 

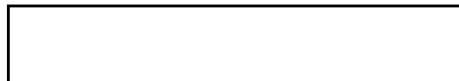
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If some manifestation should nevertheless occur, the Soviet leaders--proud of their control mechanisms and highly sensitive to displays of domestic opposition--would be deeply embarrassed.

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Soviet Leadership

