

THE PRESIDENT - SEEN
MAY 20 1970

9552

CONFIDENTIAL

INFORMATION

MAY 5 1970

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: The Kremlin Scene

(Signed) HK

NSA review completed.

For the last several weeks there has been unusual interest and speculation about the situation within the top Soviet leadership. You are probably aware of many of the rumors and the more sensational reports.

The consensus inside the government, and concurred in by some leading scholars, seems to be that there has, in fact, been trouble in the leadership, but that the resolution, if only temporary, has been in Brezhnev's favor.

State Dept. review completed.

His image is sharper--as the result of intensive nation-wide television exposure; his confidence is apparently reflected in his wide-ranging speeches covering all important internal and external topics. And several second level personnel changes,

25X1

What is not clear, however, is the source of the trouble. One view is that it has been Brezhnev's doing: the result of the pointed attacks he launched last December against the government's management of the economy. This theory is documented mainly from material drawn from open sources.

25X1

on the defensive until fortuitous illnesses in the politburo, plus a possible opportunistic switch by Shelepin, shifted the balance in Brezhnev's favor and actually enabled him to score some temporary gains. Others feel Shelepin was beaten in a straightforward power struggle.

MORI/CDF per C03317343

Whatever the dispute over scenarios, there is hard evidence of three politburo meetings between 24-27 March. About this time the violent press campaign on the economic failures abated, and Brezhnev emerged

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

from his shell with his television speeches. Some observers believe that Brezhnev was only able to win the day by considerable compromise on his economic campaign--that is, by softening the harsh, purge-like atmosphere he was generating.

The question remains whether Brezhnev's gain has been at the expense of collective leadership in general, or only because of the weakening of some of the stronger, more senior members of the politburo (Kosygin and Suslov). Many observers believe that Kosygin will retire--honorably--and that this is part of the political play in Moscow.

Signs of Disarray

Though there is agreement that the "crisis" has been resolved for now, there are still some strange anomalies in Soviet behavior.

-- For example, Malik's contradictory statements on a Geneva conference are still puzzling.

-- A similar incident occurred in the Middle East. The Soviet press attache in Amman was quoted (accurately, it is claimed) making outrageous new pronouncements on Soviet support for the liquidation of Israel. The next day he repudiated his remarks. Another Soviet diplomat, in Baghdad, made a somewhat similar comment recently.

A monumental mistake was uncovered in the 50,000 word Lenin Theses; it turned out that a long quotation of "social factors of force" attributed to Lenin was actually from the Austrian Social Democrat Otto Bauer, whom Lenin had roundly attacked as a "renegade". This was discovered by the East Germans, and then widely publicized by the Chinese.

-- Finally, there was an amusing lapse by Andrei Kirilenko, a senior politburo member and a long-time associate of Brezhnev, dating back to the Ukraine and presumably one of the more powerful leaders. He made a speech in Yerevan on April 14, two days before the opening of SALT, which contained the following blooper:

"Preliminary talks were held in Helsinki on reducing strategic nuclear weapons. These talks (SALT) will continue in Vienna in May."

Apparently Kirilenko's speech writers dusted off an old text from last fall and central censorship either didn't see it, or know the facts, or bother to correct a senior leader.

All o No Objection to Declassification in Part 2010/05/13 : LOC-HAK-178-5-21-6