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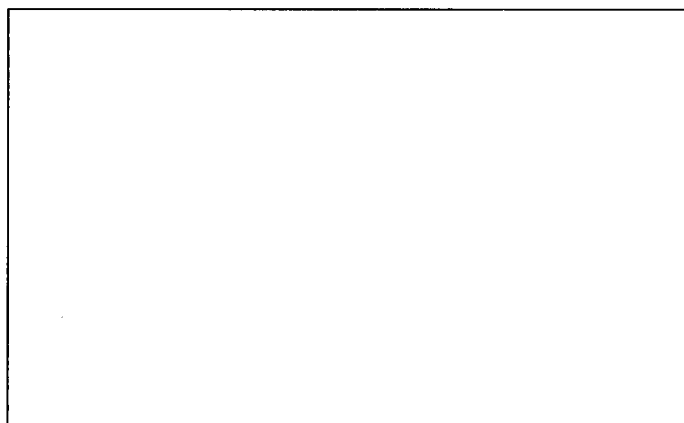
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LEONID BREZHNEV: THE MAN AND HIS POWER

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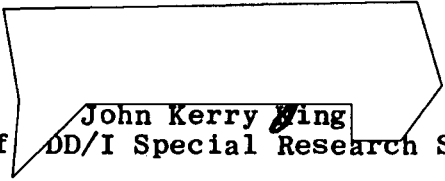
LEONID BREZHNEV: THE MAN AND HIS POWER

After the pyrotechnic Khrushchev, most anyone to become "number one" in the Soviet Union was likely to appear grey. Brezhnev, the careful, efficient and ruthless bureaucrat who succeeded him, is not completely lacking in imagination, color or style--but almost so.

This study seeks to understand Brezhnev's power, modus operandi, and prospects. It does so by viewing him from the perspectives of the power of the office he holds, of his methods of attaining and using that power, and of his personality.

The study concludes that Brezhnev does prevail among Soviet leaders and that he has made a strong impact on the direction and style of Soviet policy. Barring ill health, his position is not likely to be challenged, despite his general unpopularity and his lack of forceful leadership.

This study was prepared by the Special Research Staff and reviewed by analysts in the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of National Estimates, who offered no significant disagreement. An Annex, published separately, lays out the evidence on Brezhnev's methods in greater detail. The research analyst in charge was

Chief  John Kerry ~~Wing~~
DD/I Special Research Staff

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LEONID BREZHNEV: THE MAN AND HIS POWER

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SUMMARY

The General Secretary of the Soviet party Central Committee is the hub and the motive force of the policy-making Politburo. He guides its activities and arbitrates between and among its members, nominally his peers. He convenes the Politburo, determines the agenda and the participation of other party officials in its meetings, and even controls the release or publication of its resolutions. The role of the General Secretary in Politburo meetings is to preside and summarize the views expressed, to provide a consensus "ruling." Apparently the General Secretary's rulings are accepted in most matters, and issues come to a vote at such meetings only in those cases when a consensus is unobtainable. This authority gives the General Secretary decided advantages over his fellow policymakers.

The General Secretary also administers the Central Committee's executive Secretariat, which checks on the implementation of Politburo policy in all areas of Soviet life. He is particularly well placed to benefit from the Secretariat's primary function, the assignment of party personnel to every post of significance in the party and state apparatus. Of course, he delegates much of his authority to his subordinates, some of whom are Politburo members with power in their own right. However, the General Secretary apparently has the ultimate responsibility for the work of the Secretariat and its operational departments.

In addition to his responsibilities in party administration, the General Secretary sits at the apex of the defense structure. He serves ex officio as chairman of the Defense Council, a civilian-military consultative body which makes recommendations to the Politburo on major military problems. In wartime the chairman of the Defense Council probably would direct the country's military effort as Supreme Commander in Chief; in peacetime he apparently has important influence on the direction of defense policy. Together with the premier and the president, who are members of the council, the General Secretary lends significant authority to the council's recommendations, and it is likely

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that in most cases the Politburo would concur in them. Little is known of the chairman's role on the Defense Council, but the evidence suggests that the General Secretary, as chairman, guides its operation as fully as he does the activities of the Politburo and Secretariat.

Brezhnev has used the political advantages of the General Secretary's office to consolidate his power within the ruling oligarchy. Through judicious use of his right to rule on the assignment of party personnel, he has gradually placed proteges in key positions at the expense of his rivals, who have been mainly within the Secretariat. In the first months after Khrushchev's fall in late 1964, two senior secretaries--Politburo members Nikolay Podgornyy and Aleksandr Shelepin--had sufficient ambition and independent support to pose a threat to Brezhnev. Another senior secretary, Mikhail Suslov, had earned considerable prestige from his long service, since 1947, on the Secretariat, but he appeared to lack the ability and desire to become a contender for the top post. Podgornyy was especially well placed to challenge Brezhnev in the long run, supervising party organization in general and claiming the support of a junior secretary, Vitaliy Titov, in charge of the important Party Organs Department.

Brezhnev, whose political strength in the first few months of the new regime appeared somewhat weak, began maneuvering to consolidate his position. The transfer of Titov from the Party Organs Department in April 1965 to a secondary post in Kazakhstan was a major setback for Podgornyy and had all the marks of a Brezhnev-instigated ploy. In line with his demotion, Titov lost his post on the Secretariat at the subsequent Central Committee meeting in September. The weakened Podgornyy was transferred in December to the largely ceremonial post of president. At the same time, Shelepin lost his position as head of the party-state control apparatus but took up Podgornyy's secretarial responsibilities for party organization. Shelepin therefore remained in a good position to challenge Brezhnev. However, Ivan Kapitonov, an official with past ties to Brezhnev and Suslov, filled the vacancies created by Titov's removal and thus served as a counterweight to Shelepin.

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In April 1966, Brezhnev's associate Andrey Kirilenko became a member of the Secretariat, while Podgornyy's removal from it was confirmed and Shelepin was reassigned from party organizational affairs to the less sensitive field of consumer goods and light industry. The final blow to Shelepin's aspirations was his transfer about one year later from the Secretariat to head the trade unions, which already had been preceded by the removal of several of his closest supporters from key posts. Throughout the two years of maneuvering, Brezhnev revealed a preference for the gradual and indirect approach rather than for the confrontation tactic which Khrushchev generally had favored.

The changes in the Secretariat in the 1964-67 period thus resulted in a net gain for Brezhnev. Instead of having to contend with four other full members of the Politburo in that body, there were subsequently only two. Of course, he has no guarantee that either of the two--Kirilenko and Suslov--will not sometime try to oppose or even oust him. Perhaps recognizing this, Brezhnev in effect has encouraged a rivalry between the two by allowing each to deputize for him on a par. In general, however, he has leaned in favor of Kirilenko, who has begun to emerge as a "second in command" with responsibility for party organization. The only change on the Secretariat in the past two years has been the addition in April 1968 of Konstantin Katushev, a Kirilenko protege with Brezhnev's backing; a young party technocrat with virtually no experience in foreign affairs, Katushev assumed responsibility for supervising relations with ruling Communist parties--a job which could bring him in conflict with Suslov. There is evidence that Katushev's appointment did not sit well with some of the party leadership, and Brezhnev has seemed concerned to avoid any other appointments which might further upset the balance in the Secretariat.

Concurrent with his moves to dominate the Secretariat, Brezhnev has given attention to upstaging Premier Kosygin. The virtually equal billing which the two leaders received during the first months of the new regime gave way to prominence for Brezhnev at ceremonial functions and in party protocol in the spring of 1965. Six months later,

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at the September Central Committee plenum on economic reform measures, Brezhnev took part of the spotlight in what otherwise would have been Kosygin's show. Both leaders were scheduled to deliver reports to the 23d Party Congress in April 1966--Brezhnev the main account of the party's activities since the last congress, Kosygin a report on the 1966-70 economic plan. At the congress itself, Brezhnev's report received greater attention by the delegates and greater press treatment, and protocol honors consistently gave Brezhnev the edge over Kosygin, as well as other leaders. In the fall of 1966, relations between the two men appeared to worsen, and Brezhnev began to receive much greater prominence in the press. By December, small signs of a Brezhnev "cult" dramatized his preeminence over Kosygin and set the tone for the political imbalance that has prevailed between them since then.

Simultaneously, Brezhnev has angled for the support of the armed forces and security organizations. From the start he courted the military by defending their interests in investment policy and relying on professional advice on strategic-defense policy. This tactic has conflicted with a trend in the party leadership favoring relaxation of its defense-oriented posture and introduction of a cost-effectiveness approach to questions of force structure. As a result, Brezhnev has taken a middle course between the opposing pressures; he apparently has acquiesced in Premier Kosygin's proposal to open strategic arms talks with the US, but he also has approved courses of action--for example, the invasion of Czechoslovakia--which have had the effect of impeding Kosygin's initiative. Despite pressure from within the high command (presumably centering around the "missile generals" whose vested interest the initiative most threatens), Brezhnev has moved mostly with the current in the general direction of negotiation. He appeared to reach some kind of modus vivendi with the military in the spring of 1969, when the regime decided (after several years' debate) to abandon its traditional parade of armed might on May Day.

In contrast to his limited success in winning the military's full support, Brezhnev has steadily increased his already considerable influence in the security organizations. He has done so by granting them greater prestige

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and material support than they had under Khrushchev, as well as by eliminating the significant influence that Politburo member Shelepin exerted in them and in the party and state apparatus controlling them. Brezhnev's personal supervision of the police agencies was evident in the appointment of his client, Nikolay Shchelokov, to head the militia organization (MOOP, later renamed MVD) in the fall of 1966. The May 1967 appointment of Yuriy Andropov, a party secretary who had helped promote Brezhnev's drive for the international Communist conference, to head the Committee of State Security (KGB) also appeared to reflect Brezhnev's will. In both instances, the officials who were removed were allies of Shelepin. Brezhnev's influence was reflected also in the assignment of past associates to high KGB posts, primarily in the counterintelligence components which have flourished under Andropov's guidance.

In brief, the record shows Brezhnev to be a cautious but ambitious bureaucrat with generally conservative instincts. Undoubtedly mindful of the opposition Khrushchev aroused by his dynamism and aggressiveness, Brezhnev has presided over rather than tried to dominate the party oligarchy. He has come to stand for the generally status quo policies which the majority of the party leadership have supported. His "safe" behaviour has made him a poor target for any political rivals. It has also reinforced his reputation with the conservative party functionaries and military leaders whose interests had suffered under Khrushchev.

Prospects for Brezhnev's continued rule, despite his failure to provide forceful leadership, are thus good. The possibility that a rival might capitalize on a crisis situation or policy failure and attempt to upset the status quo always exists, but a more serious and immediate threat to Brezhnev's political future is his health. With a history of heart attacks, Brezhnev could find his career cut short at any time. Such an occurrence might set in motion a succession struggle with unforeseeable consequences in policy. However, the oligarchy might see its best interest in continuing the present policy lines by settling on one of Brezhnev's allies, such as Kirilenko. In any case, Brezhnev has succeeded in making a strong and perhaps lasting impact on the direction of Soviet policy.

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INTRODUCTION

The power of any individual Soviet leader, and specifically the Communist Party boss, must be defined primarily in terms of his relation to the ruling Politburo oligarchy. The dynamics of Soviet politics have had their source in the ebb and flow of power between the party boss and the Politburo. Lenin was the main motive force of the early Soviet regime, which took the form not of an oligarchy so much as a thinly disguised dictatorship of one man. Nevertheless, Lenin made a conscious effort to share his decision-making power with his closest colleagues, and the present regime points to the Leninist rule as a model of "collective leadership." In contrast to the concept of shared power, the mature Stalinist regime in practice denied the existence of any source of power outside the Leader. Stalin had reigned autocratically above the party itself and was not identified as the party's highest executive during most of his rule. Since Stalin's death, however, the oligarchic or "collective" leadership--the party Politburo--has held or shared all political power in tandem with the party boss.

The history of Khrushchev's rule, from 1953 to 1964, was one of a constant fluctuation of political power between him and the party Presidium, as the Politburo was known then. In essence, two opposing political forces or tendencies regulated the power flow. It was in the oligarchy's interest, on the one hand, to give the party leader sufficient authority to guard against a drifting or rigidifying policy and, on the other hand, to prevent the individual from acquiring too much power and becoming a danger to the group. On two major occasions, in 1957 and 1964, a majority of the oligarchy decided that Khrushchev had acquired too much power and was usurping their role as decision-makers. Khrushchev had the support of only a minority in the party Presidium for the political showdown in 1957 but defeated his opposition by appealing to the Central Committee, where his superior forces could legally overrule the oligarchy. After 1957, Khrushchev's power vis-a-vis the Presidium was generally greater than before but suffered from periodic overloading and short-circuiting, until in October 1964 the majority of the Presidium again had accumulated sufficient power to restrain him, this time permanently.

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With Khrushchev's ouster, the oligarchy succeeded in overcoming what it regarded as a dangerous buildup of political power under the control of one man. In fact, by specifically stipulating a separation of the posts of party boss and governmental premier, which Khrushchev had held jointly since 1957, the new collective leadership made it more difficult for any individual leader to acquire the power of a dictator. As a consequence, it has had to accept a certain amount of drift and rigidity in policy in place of the kind of forward movement that a potential or actual dictator could supply. In these circumstances, Brezhnev's position as party boss has inherent limitations, but he still has advantages over any other individual in the leadership in terms of potential for the accumulation of power.

THE REACHES OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE

Leonid Brezhnev undoubtedly holds the most powerful posts in the Soviet collective leadership. As General Secretary of the party Central Committee, he holds supreme prerogatives in three vital areas of responsibility. First, he directs the operation of the Politburo, which is the party's supreme policy and decision-making body. Second, he heads the Central Committee Secretariat, which through the staff of party functionaries known as the apparatus, supervises the execution of the Politburo's policy decisions. And third, the General Secretary is ex officio the chairman of the Defense Council, the supreme military-civilian body with responsibility for defense policy--the closest Soviet equivalent to the U.S. National Security Council. In addition, Brezhnev's position carries with it a number of lesser rights and responsibilities such as membership on the largely prestigious Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (Parliament). No other Soviet leader has so many levers of power in his grasp.

It is often difficult in actual practice to determine when Brezhnev is acting as Politburo leader and when he is functioning as chief of the Secretariat. The line between the two functions is exceedingly thin when

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the Politburo or Secretariat is not in formal session. Indeed, the distinction is often meaningless; the General Secretary's decisions today in implementing Politburo policy, taken together with numerous similar "administrative" actions, can perceptibly influence the formulation of policy tomorrow. In other words, Brezhnev controls the machinery for action and thus has the capability to act, directly or subtly, against a colleague or a policy.

The General Secretary must, nevertheless, serve as a leader and arbiter, not a dictator. Otherwise, he becomes vulnerable to criticism from political rivals. The primary source of potential opposition to the General Secretary is first of all the Secretariat itself. In fact, Brezhnev seems to have seen the gravest threat to his power so far in the person of a "senior secretary"--one of the members of the Secretariat who are also Politburo members and who deputize for the General Secretary in his absence. The Council of Ministers--Premier Kosygin's government bureaucracy in which Brezhnev holds no post--poses no direct threat to the power position of the General Secretary. Nevertheless, it represents an institutional obstacle to his ambitions, and Brezhnev has tried to make inroads there while blocking Kosygin's bids to enhance the premier's authority. He also has had to guard against the formation of alliances between the Premier and Brezhnev's fellow secretaries which could weaken or threaten his own authority as General Secretary. More serious potential instruments of power outside the party bureaucracy--which generally are under the control of the General Secretary but could be used against him by party rivals--are the security organs and the armed forces. All these institutional factors complicate the political equation and affect Brezhnev's power position.

Presiding Over the Policymaking Politburo

The mechanics of decision-making in the Soviet Union, and especially the workings of the Politburo, are veiled from public view. Nevertheless, certain aspects of

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its "collective" procedures have become known over the years. Ambassador Dobrynin has explained that the general practice in the Politburo is to seek a consensus or, failing that, to take votes on disputed issues. The role of the General Secretary, he said, is to preside and to summarize the views expressed. He added that the General Secretary's "rulings" usually are accepted.

Dobrynin's account is in line with the standard explanation of Politburo decision-making given Westerners since the late 1950s. The Soviet press, in a rare departure from its usual secrecy on such matters, had quoted Khrushchev in a May 1957 interview to the effect that at meetings of the Politburo (then called Presidium) its members try to arrive at a "single viewpoint" or, failing that, to resolve the question by a "simple majority vote."

The [redacted] defector [redacted] has provided more specific information on the institutional advantages which the General Secretary has over his Politburo "peers."* The General Secretary, according to [redacted] presides over the Politburo, with the assistance of one or two secretaries (clearly a reference to the "senior secretaries") who act in the General Secretary's absence. The General Secretary dominates the work of the Politburo, convening and chairing meetings and submitting the agenda for discussion. The General Secretary further has administrative

*Some of [redacted] information must be treated with caution, for he appears to extrapolate from the [redacted] model of the Soviet system whenever his actual knowledge is limited. However, much of what he says--particularly in a military context--coincides with what is known or suspected of Soviet practice from more solid intelligence.

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control over the operation of the Politburo primarily through the Central Committee's General Department, which functions mainly as a secretariat of the General Secretary and supervises the printing and distribution of Politburo documents. The General Secretary reportedly is the arbiter of all conflicts within the Politburo and, indeed, all other organs of which he is nominal or de facto chairman.

Brezhnev has not always abided by the strict interpretation of his position as a first among equals. Sometimes he has been observed protecting or building on the authority of the General Secretary as the highest leader of the entire party. His efforts to enhance the standing of the General Secretary tend, of course, to detract from the authority of other Politburo members. Recurrent warnings in the Soviet press against violations of collective procedures suggest that these efforts have not sat well with some of the other leaders. For example, a Pravda article on 20 July 1966 seemed to have Brezhnev specifically in mind in citing the fallibility of any individual "regardless of the party post he might be assigned to" and asserting that "the secretary of a party committee is no chief, he does not have the right to command--he is only the senior person in an organ of collective leadership, elected by the Communists." An article of such a sensitive political nature could only appear with the backing of one or more top-level leaders, whom the dictates of party etiquette if not political wisdom prevent from speaking out personally.*

*The article's importance was indicated by the fact that its author, F. Petrenko, was identified as a Central Committee functionary when he travelled to Bulgaria in May 1965 on a delegation led by Politburo member Suslov; his precise position and other connections with policymakers have not been revealed.

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Steering the Party Machine

Most of Brezhnev's political strength derives from his position as administrator of the party. All administrative functions in the party hierarchy ultimately are located in the post of the General Secretary. The General Secretary relies, of course, on his subordinates to supervise various aspects of party administration. This delegation of authority, however, does not appear to detract from his ultimate responsibility for all aspects of party life. In his capacity as party chief, the General Secretary directs the activities of the other secretaries and, through them or directly himself, supervises the Central Committee apparatus (which in turn provides close everyday guidance to all Soviet organizations in and out of the party).

Brezhnev's role as chief of the Secretariat gives him two important advantages over his colleagues in non-secretarial positions, as well as other secretaries. First, he is better placed to benefit from the Secretariat's right to control party organizational policy and, specifically, to propose candidates for assignment to virtually all important positions. His right (probably including a veto power) to approve each appointment, while other leaders consent to or propose candidates only within their area of competence, allows him to create a stronger core of support at all levels. Second, because the party pervades all aspects of Soviet life, Brezhnev can interfere in the administration of every other organization in the USSR--including the governmental (ministerial) bureaucracy, the state apparatus of councils and executive committees, the military and security forces, etc. When the Secretariat's interference in these organizations implies incompetence on their part, it tends to discredit their leading officials and the performance of the ultimately responsible individuals in the Politburo.

Just how forcefully and effectively Brezhnev can use his authority in the Secretariat to shape its composition and, in general, to assert his will is not entirely clear from the available evidence. His acquisition at the

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23d Congress of the title of General Secretary--created in Lenin's time but held only by Stalin--represented a gain in prestige, whatever the other purposes of the title's restoration. (The traditional term "Politburo" replaced "Presidium" for the party's policy-making body at the same time, reflecting the party leadership's stress on continuity with the policies of the Lenin and Stalin regimes.) In contrast to the previous title of First Secretary, the concept of General Secretary implies that the party boss is on a plane above the Secretariat, rather than the first in a line of its members. His actual authority with senior figures like Suslov and Kirilenko is, of course, of a different order than with junior members like Kulakov and Solomentsev. The latter hold the least status within the Secretariat, while the former, being Politburo members, come close to being Brezhnev's peers in executive as well as policy-making activities. Because the Politburo presumably must approve appointments at the Secretariat level, it would seem impolitic if not perilous for Brezhnev to attempt to install his own appointee without prior consultation and, if necessary, political compromise with his colleagues. Whatever the limitations on the General Secretary's jurisdiction within the Secretariat, however, the changes which have occurred in its composition since Khrushchev's ouster (see Annex) suggest that Brezhnev's wishes in staffing that body have prevailed.

Certain high-level personnel changes since the 23d Congress appear to have altered subtly the institutional weight of the Secretariat to the advantage of the Politburo but not clearly to the detriment of the General Secretary. Thus, three moves in 1967 involving setbacks for Shelepin (and an implied boost to Brezhnev's power) had the effect of cutting into the Secretariat's area of responsibility. In May, Party Secretary Andropov replaced Central Committee member Semichastnyy as KGB chief. Accordingly, at the June plenum Andropov was dropped from the Secretariat; at the same time, however, he became a Politburo candidate member. In late June, Politburo candidate member Grishin replaced the Moscow party boss, Central Committee member Yegorychev. As a result of these two actions, the KGB and the Moscow party organization in theory became accountable directly to the Politburo rather

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than to the Secretariat. Then, when Grishin was released as head of the Soviet trade unions in July, Politburo member Shelepin himself left the Secretariat to take the vacated post. This had the effect of a significant upgrading of the trade unions, giving them a say in formulating policy. Aside from power considerations, that is, the fact that by these moves Brezhnev succeeded in neutralizing the immediate threat Shelepin represented within the Secretariat, the impact of this shift in the Secretariat's authority on the position of the General Secretary would seem to be minimal in view of his preeminent position in the Politburo.

Directing the Defense Establishment

In the Soviet hierarchical set-up, the General Secretary traditionally has carried the function of leadership over the defense effort. In contrast to the collective procedures which prevail elsewhere, the need for ultimately concentrating all military authority in one man--the party boss--still is recognized in practice. In wartime this means his assuming responsibility for the total direction of the country and its armed forces as Supreme Commander in Chief. In peacetime it means his chairing the Defense Council--the supreme military-civilian consultative body attached to the Politburo.* The Defense Council is comprised of several Politburo members and high military officers, and its recommendations on defense policy presumably carry great weight with the Politburo, which has the responsibility for all final decisions in this as in every other area.

*Some confusion over the exact name, composition, and operation of the council, and even its very existence, has arisen as a result of the secrecy shrouding all things military in the Soviet Union. The Defense Council should not be confused, for example, with the military council that functions within the Ministry of Defense at the apex of a hierarchy of regional and service-oriented military councils.

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The accumulated evidence indicates that the General Secretary controls the Defense Council as fully as the Secretariat. Soviet Colonel Oleg Penkovskiy once reported that Khrushchev, as chairman, completely dominated the Supreme (or Main) Military Council, as the body sometimes has been known.* According to this report, Khrushchev even bypassed the Defense Minister in the consultative process, putting questions directly to council members (that is, those members, like the chief of staff, who were subordinate to the Defense Minister in the military hierarchy). Under the chairmanship of Khrushchev, the council reportedly was an operational and very flexible group "attached to" (but apparently higher than) the Ministry of Defense; in actuality it was entirely under Khrushchev. Meetings were both regular and ad hoc, sometimes without a quorum of the council's membership. A meeting of Khrushchev with the Defense Minister, his chief of staff, a couple of Politburo members, and several commanders of appropriate combat arms might, according to Penkovskiy, be considered a meeting of the council. In April 1962, the council reportedly heard Khrushchev speak about the major role that artillery and missile forces would play in the future and made several high-level personnel changes in the armed forces in line with the new emphasis in the strategic doctrine. Penkovskiy's report implied (and other evidence confirmed) that Khrushchev used the authority of the chairman of the military council to push his personal views on defense policy, overriding the opinions of the professional military advisers.

Brezhnev generally has the same authority in defense matters that Khrushchev once exercised, although he (unlike his predecessor) has not acquired the title

*Several sources, both before and after Khrushchev's ouster, have referred to it by this name, although a Soviet dictionary of abbreviations which appeared in 1963 listed the body under this title (under its Russian letters VVS) as defunct at the time of publication, and a secret Soviet party and government decree, dated July 1961 mentioned a Defense Council in the context of recommendations to be made on the most important questions of civil defense.

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of peacetime Supreme Commander in Chief.* However, the collective procedures of the post-Khrushchev regime have impinged on the chairmanship of the Defense Council, complicating the definition of its leadership. The October 1964 Central Committee plenum adopted a decision which "considered inexpedient in the future the combining of the duties of the First Secretary of the Central Committee and the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers in one person." This decision, separating the top party and government posts, contradicted the classic formulation of military leadership functions that appeared in Khrushchev's time in Marshal Sokolovskiy's book, Military Strategy (first and second editions):

The entire leadership of the country and of the Armed Forces in time of war will be implemented by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with the possible organization of a supreme organ of leadership of the country and the Armed Forces. This supreme organ of leadership can be given the same powers as the GKO (State Committee of Defense) in the period of the Great Patriotic War, and is headed by the First Secretary of the CC CPSU and the head of the government on whom the functions of the Supreme Commander in Chief of All Armed Forces can be placed. (Emphasis added.)

The Russian language, which gave the "whom" of the final clause in singular form, had left no doubt that the top functions of the party and government were united. As

*Khrushchev allowed himself identified with this title, despite the fact that his colleagues apparently opposed his public identification in that position and despite the fact that it was customary for the title to take effect only in wartime. Brezhnev evidently has not chosen to take the same political risk.

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a consequence of the October plenum ruling, however, the third (1967) edition of Sokolovskiy's book dropped the underlined clause entirely, without giving a substitute definition of the Supreme Commander in Chief.*

Collegiality notwithstanding, Brezhnev is chairman of the Defense Council, as he himself told [redacted] 1965, and this gives him an edge over Premier Kosygin and other Politburo members who sit on the council. As in the Secretariat, Brezhnev must take into consideration the fact that some members of the Defense Council are his theoretical equals on the Politburo. The council's exact composition is unknown, but by all accounts it includes Premier Kosygin. [redacted]

[redacted] other permanent members are Defense Minister Grechko, Warsaw Pact Commander Yakubovskiy, Chief of General Staff Zakharov, the chiefs of the General Staff's Main Operations and Intelligence directorates (Colonel Generals Povalyy and Ivashutin, respectively), and General Yepishev, chief of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy. The [redacted]

[redacted] whose list conflicted somewhat with the above, gave the following as the council's members: Brezhnev, Podgornyy, Kosygin, Grechko, Zakharov, Politburo candidate member Andropov (as KGB chief), and Deputy Premier Baybakov (as chairman of the State Planning Commission). [redacted] specialists like Ivashutin might provide outside expertise but do not participate in discussions beyond their competence.

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[redacted] the Central Committee decree stipulates that return to one-man rule is justified in a national emergency or crisis, but only then. Despite Sokolovskiy's bow to collective leadership, therefore, Brezhnev would seek to utilize this ruling to justify his taking on both party and government functions in wartime and the position of Supreme Commander in Chief of a unified command structure along the lines of the GKO.

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Brezhnev nevertheless appears in complete charge of the Defense Council, as in the Secretariat. [redacted]

[redacted] the General Secretary convenes the council and determines the topics to be discussed. Council meetings usually are held in a conference room next to the offices of the General Secretary in the Central Committee building. (The council would use the War Room at General Staff headquarters to discuss the War Plan, which is invalid unless signed by the General Secretary.) In a fast-moving military emergency, Brezhnev would call the council into session for consultation, time permitting. Although [redacted] has not said so, the Politburo might then discuss the council's recommendations--again, time permitting. But the General Secretary is empowered to act on his own in surprise attack situations where the time factor is all-important. In other words, he has his finger on the nuclear trigger at least for the purpose of retaliation. The Central Committee Department of Administrative Organs serves as a secretariat of the Defense Council.

Brezhnev's ultimate authority in defense matters is reflected in several other ways. For example, he supervises the Defense Ministry's Main Political Administration, which functions as a Central Committee department rather than a component of the military forces whose political reliability it ensures. Brezhnev probably is responsible also for approving senior military appointments. He has, of course, been publicly identified with military affairs, delivering a speech annually to the graduates of the military academy each July--at least until 1969, when no civilian leader spoke at the ceremony.

Other Prerogatives

The supreme position of the General Secretary has brought Brezhnev several other, primarily prestigious, titles and rights. These merely reflect rather than add to his position of authority and do not fall neatly into such categories as the functions of policy-maker, party administrator, and supreme commander. It certainly was by virtue of his position as party chief, for example,

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that Brezhnev was elected in December 1964 to replace Khrushchev as chairman of the Constitution Commission of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Brezhnev at the time was only a Supreme Soviet delegate and was not elected to the Supreme Soviet Presidium until October 1965.*

Brezhnev also is chairman of a Central Committee commission for drafting new kolkhoz statutes and calling for a congress of kolkhoz workers, which was formed apparently in late 1965 or early 1966 in accordance with the March 1965 Central Committee Plenum decisions on agricultural questions. Although Brezhnev emerged at the plenum as the regime's spokesman for agricultural policy, Politburo member Polyanskiy actually appears to have the primary responsibility in questions of agricultural organization and administration. In this light, Brezhnev's role on the commission may be strictly nominal. Meetings of the commission have been very infrequent, most recently on 25 March 1969 to hear and approve a report by Polyanskiy on the completed draft statutes. Brezhnev merely summed up the discussions at the meeting.

Brezhnev also has the right as party boss to interfere in the activities of any "public" organization--the trade unions, the Komsomol, the People's Control Committee, for example. In the Soviet system these organizations do not exist independently and serve to assist the party in implementing its policies. Brezhnev exercised his prerogative, for example, in intervening personally in Komsomol affairs after replacing the chief of the organization in June 1968.

*The commission to draft a new constitution has yet to make any perceptible progress, despite Brezhnev's promise to have it ready for the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in late 1967. His election to the Presidium ostensibly was for the purpose of legitimizing travel abroad on state matters and meetings with non-Communist statesmen.

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THE EXERCISE OF POWER: BREZHNEV'S STRUGGLE FOR DOMINANCE*

Brezhnev has been the model of an "organization man" in his first five years of rule. He has been able, through very careful and gradual maneuvering, to rise from a precarious position in October 1964 to dominance by April 1966. He directed his first efforts to improving his situation within the Secretariat, where he had rivals in the persons of Podgornyy and Shelepin. The latter had their own power bases and had been influential in party personnel assignments since the late 1950s. Brezhnev also moved to improve his status vis-a-vis Premier Kosygin, his counterpart in the government bureaucracy who appeared to rank fairly equally with the party boss in prestige and authority for the first few months. At the same time, he sought to ensure a firm grip on the security forces and the military. He pushed successfully for more direct control of the police, where he already had had significant influence. His efforts to gain the full support of the armed forces, on the other hand, yielded variable results. The military seemed solidly behind Brezhnev in the first period of the new regime, but a part of the high command later began to oppose or pressure him as the leadership took steps toward opening negotiations on strategic arms. Until early 1969 Brezhnev vacillated between the opposing civilian and military pressures but appeared generally to defend the interests of the military. With a party congress due sometime next year, however, he now seems anxious to play safe with the civilian majority of the party Central Committee who will be called on to reelect him General Secretary for another four years.

Consolidating His Power in the Secretariat

When Brezhnev inherited the top party administrative position in mid-October 1964 he acquired no more--in fact, less--power than Khrushchev himself wielded as party boss in the last months of his rule. The Party Secretariat under

*A fuller exposition of this section is published separately as an Annex.

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Brezhnev included several full members of the Politburo: Podgornyy (who had become "second in command" in charge of personnel assignments), the ideologist and foreign affairs specialist Suslov, and the industrial manager Kirilenko.* In addition, the young and ambitious Secretary and Deputy Premier Shelepin advanced to full membership on the Politburo at the first Central Committee plenum held after Khrushchev's ouster, in November. All of these strongmen on the Secretariat represented, to a greater or lesser degree, a potential threat to Brezhnev's power. However, Brezhnev probably felt that Kirilenko would give him support since they had worked closely together in the past, and Suslov had specialized in foreign Communist relations and appeared to be uninterested in engaging the party chief in extensive organizational jockeying. Thus, at the start, Brezhnev faced two serious rivals among the senior administrators within the party apparatus -- Podgornyy and Shelepin -- whose political weight made up for their disadvantage as formal subordinates of the General Secretary.

Brezhnev's uncertain position in the Secretariat was evident in the low level of his activity during the first six months of the new regime. The November 1964 Central Committee plenum approved several actions which served to increase the authority of "Second" Secretary Podgornyy; none clearly redounded to the benefit of Brezhnev, who played a minor role at the plenum. On trips abroad and at domestic functions Brezhnev shared the spotlight with Premier Kosygin. A few second-level personnel actions in late 1964 appeared to reflect Brezhnev's influence but were far from a show of strength.

At the March 1965 Central Committee plenum, however, Brezhnev began to show signs of assertiveness. He announced the regime's first major policy program -- a realistic

*Kirilenko was equivalent to a party secretary by virtue of his post as first deputy chairman of the Central Committee Bureau for the RSFSR, which prior to its abolition in April 1966 functioned within the Secretariat.

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approach to solving the critical agricultural problem through solid, guaranteed investments and greater reliance on material incentives. However, Brezhnev did not dominate the plenum completely; Podgornyy presided at its sessions, and the several organizational moves which it approved failed to add significantly, if at all, to the support Brezhnev could muster at the highest levels of the leadership.

After the March plenum Brezhnev began to work quietly behind the scenes at improving his position. He made use of his right to appoint party functionaries to the staff of the Secretariat, assuring a more responsive execution of his rule. The most important change Brezhnev made was the removal of Vitaliy Titov, a protege of Secretary Podgornyy, from the key post of head of the Central Committee department responsible for personnel assignments. Titov's transfer to the provinces as a secretary of the Kazakh party organization, which meant his eventual release also as a junior member of the central Secretariat, bore the signs of an "end run" by Brezhnev, who had apparently lacked the required Central Committee support for such a move at the March plenum. In any case, Titov's demotion was a major blow to Podgornyy and brought into question his authority as the senior secretary responsible for party organizational matters. A number of similar, although less important, changes in the Central Committee apparatus appeared detrimental to the positions of secretaries Podgornyy and Shelepin during the summer of 1965. These indications contradicted numerous reports which claimed that Shelepin was about to take over from a passive Brezhnev.

Brezhnev had considerably strengthened his primacy among the senior secretaries by September 1965. Changes announced at a Central Committee plenum that month were more definitely in his favor than those of six months earlier. He delivered a speech which served to undercut the impact of the report Premier Kosygin had given on a reorganization of industrial planning and management. A further gain in Brezhnev's drive to control the Secretariat was the December transfer of Secretary Podgornyy to the post of President, removing him from direct influence in personnel appointments. At the same time, Shelepin was released as a deputy premier and assigned to full-time work in the Secretariat. It appeared that Shelepin had taken over

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from Podgornyy as second in command of the Secretariat, and he thus continued to represent an important counterforce to Brezhnev. However, Shelepin lost out four months later in a reshuffle of secretarial responsibilities at the 23d Party Congress in April 1966, yielding his control of party organizational matters and concentrating on supervision of the consumer sector and light industry.

Brezhnev had run the show at the 23d Congress and apparently received a mandate for the next four years. Suslov had appeared to function during the congress as Brezhnev's second in command but his subsequent activities did not indicate a primary responsibility in party organizational matters. Kirilenko was the obvious candidate to pick up the cadres supervision Shelepin had relinquished, but his activities also were unrevealing in this regard. In fact, for a while it appeared that there was no recognized second in command. Later, however, Kirilenko began to emerge as the probable "second" secretary.

Brezhnev's attention, meanwhile, turned to the police and security forces, which were in the hands of men loyal to Shelepin. One of these men, militia chief Vadim Tikunov, had been instrumental in promoting an anti-crime campaign that led to the augmentation and centralization of his forces in August 1966. Tikunov was, therefore, the logical candidate to take over the militia under the new setup. However, after a two month delay which suggested high-level disagreement, a close associate of Brezhnev got the job, and Tikunov disappeared from public view. In May 1967, one of Shelepin's closest supporters, Vladimir Semichastnyy, was removed from the powerful post of KGB chairman. His replacement by a more independent party official from the Secretariat, Yuriy Andropov, was to Brezhnev's political advantage.

Brezhnev probably did not foresee that this gradual erosion of Shelepin's power would erupt soon in a challenge to his own position. Nevertheless, when the attack on Brezhnev's leadership came at the June 1967 Central Committee plenum, he availed himself of his full authority and turned the occasion into another victory over Shelepin and his

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dwindling supporters. At the plenum, the young Moscow City party boss, Nikolay Yegorychev, criticized the diplomatic approach which Brezhnev had used in the course of the Arab-Israeli clash earlier that month. Several reports suggested that he felt the Soviet Union should have adopted a tougher stance in the crisis. The majority of speakers at the plenum, however, apparently supported the Brezhnev line, and within days Yegorychev was dismissed to a minor ministerial post. His important Moscow party position went to a senior official, trade union chief Viktor Grishin. Finally, at the end of the chain of reassignments, Shelepin himself filled Grishin's relatively powerless trade union slot, leaving the Secretariat the following September.* Since then, Brezhnev has given every indication of satisfaction with Kirilenko as second in command. The only addition to the Secretariat has been Konstantin Katushev, a young Kirilenko protege who has supervised relations with ruling Communist parties. Katushev's addition to the Secretariat appeared to impinge primarily on Suslov's authority, and there have been indications in the press that some of the party leadership have resented the appointment.

Dealing with Premier Kosygin

Brezhnev has seen the need, after the first priority task of controlling the Secretariat, to set himself a notch above his theoretical coequal on the government side, Premier Kosygin. He made his first move in this direction in March 1965. This was indicated when the Soviet press gave his Central Committee plenum report great play while practically ignoring Kosygin's important speech to the central planning agency--a speech which revised guidelines for the

*Barring an unlikely change in Shelepin's fortunes in the next few months, he could conceivably be demoted even further to candidate member of the Politburo -- the traditional rank of the trade union boss -- at the next party congress.

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5-year economic plan originally drawn up with Khrushchevian priorities. Brezhnev took a lead in protocol standing at the same time, listed for the first time as head of a delegation which included Kosygin as a member.

Brezhnev became even more assertive in September 1965, after making inroads in the territory of secretaries Podgornyy and Shelepin. At a Central Committee plenum that month, Kosygin delivered the main report on important decisions to reform industrial planning and management, but Brezhnev shared the spotlight with a speech that staked out the party's claim in economic-administrative control.

The delicate balance between the party boss and the premier, with Brezhnev carrying slightly more weight, was maintained up to and during the 23d Party Congress in March-April 1966. Each leader delivered a major report to the congress, although Brezhnev's was discussed longer. While Kosygin received greater applause from the delegates at the beginning of the congress, Brezhnev received the highest protocol honors in the official record. At the conclusion of the congress, Brezhnev continued to have an edge over Kosygin in authority and prestige.

The apparent calm prevailing at the 23d Party Congress gave way to a series of squalls in the Brezhnev-Kosygin relationship, but the duumvirate remained generally on an even keel until November 1966. At that time, the press gave short shrift to Kosygin's activities in the Ukraine and no publicity at all to his speech in Donetsk on 1 November; however, it gave prominent coverage of Brezhnev's speech on the same day in Georgia. The same slighting treatment of Kosygin prevailed throughout November and December, while Brezhnev enjoyed greater publicity and even some personal adulation for his wartime services -- a revival of the proscribed "personality cult" on a minor scale. The incipient Brezhnev cult stopped after he received high state honors on his 60th birthday in mid-December, but from that point on he has had little trouble in maintaining his primacy over Kosygin.

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Controlling the Armed Forces and Security Agencies

An important factor in Brezhnev's coming to power and a necessary condition of his continued rule has been the support of the armed forces and security organizations. This support has been variable, especially from the military, due to the strong influence that Party Secretary Shelepin (and to a lesser extent Secretary Podgornyy) exerted in them for a while after the Khrushchev ouster. Brezhnev has tried, with some success, to improve his organizational footing in these organizations, meanwhile defending their interests on most issues within the Politburo. Some tension has existed between the party leadership and the military as a whole, but the elite of the armed forces -- the generally over-aged marshals and generals who nevertheless have Central Committee status -- probably feel safe with the conservative Brezhnev. It would seem unlikely, moreover, that any pretender to the top party post could turn the security forces against Brezhnev in the near future, so successful has he been in strengthening his grip on them.

The Restive Military

Brezhnev's relations with the military have been marked by ups and downs. At the start, Brezhnev appeared to make some gains by advocating a continued high priority for defense in budgetary debates and encouraging the acceptance of military expertise in strategic doctrinal matters. He scrapped Khrushchev's heavy emphasis on strategic rocket forces in favor of a more balanced policy that gave greater weight to conventional forces and a flexible response strategy. This reemphasis probably had the support of a majority of the military (and civilian) leadership.

Relations between Brezhnev and some of the military took a turn for the worse, however, after the death of Defense Minister Malinovskiy in late March 1967. Several reports suggested that at least some Politburo members backed the long-time armaments administrator, Secretary Dmitriy Ustinov, for the vacant post in order to bring a cost-conscious approach to questions of force structure.

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It is conceivable that Premier Kosygin, who just one month earlier had revealed an interest in opening negotiations with the US on strategic arms limitations, had persuaded Brezhnev to nominate Ustinov. After an awkward delay which suggested the appointment was contentious, First Deputy Minister of Defense Grechko was given the post. Grechko, a proponent of conventional warfare and weaponry, has close connections with the "Ukrainian clique" which Khrushchev had patronized -- primarily Podgornyy, Polyanskiy, and Kirilenko -- and for this reason was probably acceptable to Brezhnev. Despite an outcome favorable to the majority of the military, the aborted nomination of a civilian Defense Minister probably created some ill will between the party leadership and the high command.

Opposition from a part of the high command appeared to be the basis of the attack on Brezhnev's handling of the Arab-Israeli war which Moscow Party boss Yegorychev spearheaded at the June 1967 Central Committee plenum.* Conceivably, the reported nomination of a civilian Minister of Defense and Semichastnyy's removal as KGB chairman brought some military leaders together with young party militants, supported by junior members of the Politburo, against the "seniors" of the leadership -- Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgornyy -- and their status quo policies. In any case, Yegorychev's charges of unpreparedness would have appealed to some of the high command (presumably the minority group of "missile generals," who favor a stronger rocket force) since they suggested the inadequacy of measures taken by the civilian-dominated Defense Council.

Brezhnev continued his general support of the defense establishment during late 1967 and 1968, when the Czechoslovak democratization was the main concern of the political

*Yegorychev's speech reportedly contained statistics to prove that Moscow was inadequately defended against a missile attack.

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leadership. By August 1968, Premier Kosygin appeared almost alone among the Politburo members insisting on a political solution to the problem (only Suslov and Shelepin sided with Kosygin, by most accounts). Apparently Brezhnev, in his capacity as Defense Council chairman, had set the military wheels in motion early in the year. During the summer he did nothing to slow those wheels, and by August the invasion was virtually the only alternative to a Soviet political defeat.

Brezhnev's reliance on the military to achieve a foreign policy goal increased their prestige, at least as an instrument of power, and may have had the effect of pacifying somewhat the more clamorous of his high command critics. In late June Brezhnev apparently had agreed to support Kosygin's initiative -- aborted once in early 1967 -- on opening strategic arms talks. The regime's intention to participate in such talks was made public in an official government declaration in July, doubtless not without Brezhnev's acquiescence. Brezhnev's sanctioning of the invasion in August had the effect, of course, of impeding the initiative. Nevertheless, official reaffirmations of this intent paralleled the spring 1969 "normalization" of the political situation in Prague (achieved by Dubcek's downgrading after Grechko delivered the Politburo's ultimatum). A subsequent delay in arriving at a decision on the time and place for the talks probably has reflected opposition on the part of the Soviet "missile generals" and their political allies in decision-making circles, since any savings realized from cutbacks in strategic weaponry could be allotted to the conventional arms forces which Brezhnev and Grechko have favored.*

[redacted] that "the missile generals" tended to side with Brezhnev's political rivals in the hope of improving their own position with a change of the party leadership. They added that the high command -- but particularly the "missile generals" -- were pushing for the formation of a "Council of Marshals" which would have the power to make military decisions in an emergency without prior consent from the Politburo. All Politburo members were said to oppose such a council, which presumably would supplant Brezhnev's Defense Council.

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Brezhnev and the military reached some kind of modus vivendi in early 1969, although it might not have been to the liking of the high command. The party leadership, clearly in connection with the renewed interest in arms talks, adopted a decision to relax the strong defense posture of the Soviet Union by abandoning the tradition of parading its military might on May Day. The decision reportedly came after several years' delay and was in keeping with the repeated statements by Brezhnev that the Soviet regime has no need to rattle sabres. It may have been the subject of intensified debate in the spring of 1967, when the regime was hinting its interest in the arms talks and in a civilian Minister of Defense. The same purpose seemed to be behind Brezhnev's failure to address the graduating class of young officers in July, which made the annual ceremony a more strictly military affair. At the same time, there has been no reduction in Brezhnev's control of the armed forces through the Central Committee's Department of Administrative Organs, the KGB's military counterintelligence directorate, and the Defense Ministry's (actually Central Committee's) Main Political Administration.

The Obedient Police

In contrast to his fluctuating fortunes with the military, Brezhnev has succeeded in getting a firm grip on the two important police organizations -- the security and intelligence giant known as the KGB, and the uniformed police, or militia, of the MVD. He has carefully avoided any actions that would antagonize the professional corps of these "administrative organs," as the security and related agencies are known in Soviet usage. On the contrary, they have received greater prestige and material support than they had under Khrushchev. More importantly, shifts in the leading personnel have been to Brezhnev's political advantage and to the detriment of his chief rival for their support, Politburo member Shelepin.

Brezhnev's influence over the administrative organs waxed and Shelepin's waned when Deputy Premier Polyanskiy filled the vacancy of first deputy premier in September 1965.

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Polyanskiy, a political ally of Brezhnev whose responsibility on the Council of Ministers had been almost exclusively the administration of agricultural affairs, may have taken on an additional responsibility for overseeing governmental administration of security-related areas (transport, power sources, and the like) -- areas which Shelepin had administered as a deputy premier. In any case, Polyanskiy's influence was obvious in the December 1965 promotion of his political ally, Mikhail Yefremov, to deputy premier in place of Shelepin, who transferred to full-time work in the Party Secretariat. The circumstantial evidence strongly suggests a collusion between Polyanskiy, who benefitted from Shelepin's transfer, and Brezhnev, who "required" Shelepin's full-time presence on the Secretariat. Brezhnev's hand was more directly visible when in April 1966 Shelepin became responsible in the Secretariat for supervising consumer-good production and light industry alone, yielding any authority he may have had in the security field. The campaign against Shelepin's influence in this area culminated in the removal of Vadim Tikunov and Vladimir Semichastnyy, both close associates of Shelepin, from their leading posts in the militia and KGB respectively in August 1966 and May 1967.

Brezhnev probably has given his full backing to the increased emphasis on counterintelligence which has characterized the KGB's activities under its new chief, Politburo candidate member Yuriy Andropov. An indication of this new direction was the appointment, apparently in June 1967 -- that is, only one month after Andropov's takeover -- of experienced counterintelligence professional Semen Tsvigun as a second first deputy to Andropov.* Brezhnev's influence

*Tenuous evidence of a past working relationship with Brezhnev suggests that Tsvigun is another of his proteges. The other first deputy chairman, Nikolay Zakharov, remains active despite past association with former KGB boss Semichastnyy. Zakharov's political allegiances are unclear.

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was evident in the appointment, also in 1967, of Georgiy Tsinev to a leading KGB post, probably as chief of the Second Chief Directorate (for counterintelligence and counterespionage). According to [redacted], Brezhnev's close personal ties with Tsinev date back at least as early as the mid-1950s, when Tsinev served in military counterintelligence. Viktor Chebrikov, another presumed Brezhnev protege up from the party organization in Dnepropetrovsk, recently has been identified as deputy chairman of the KGB.*

Brezhnev's influence today in the Central Committee Department of Administrative Organs appears as strong as it was when his Ukrainian associate, Nikolay Mironov, was its chief. Mironov's first deputy, Nikolay Savinkin, became acting chief after Mironov's death in October 1964; his confirmation as chief in early 1968 seemed to indicate that Brezhnev was satisfied with Savinkin's performance. In addition, some very tenuous evidence suggests a connection between Brezhnev and Savinkin's replacement as first deputy chief, Nikolay Mal'shakov.

ASPECTS OF BREZHNEV'S PERSONALITY AND STYLE

Personality and political style have an important influence on the overall shape of Soviet policies as well as on the shifts in day-to-day tactics. Brezhnev has defended the interests of the Stalinist party functionaries and conventional military; Khrushchev did not, although he had the same options. Brezhnev has thus far avoided brinksmanship in international affairs; Khrushchev did not, although the same high risks were involved. Because an analysis of Brezhnev's influence on specific Soviet policies since 1964 is beyond the scope of this paper, the following considerations are intended merely to suggest the most distinctive characteristics of his personality and outlook.

*First identified as such in Izvestiya, 11 October 1969.

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His Conservative Instincts.

Brezhnev may have reached the top under Khrushchev's patronage, but the two men could not be much less alike. Khrushchev was naturally quick-witted, imaginative, bold, and ebullient, and these traits determined much of his behavior as a leader. He rose to prominence largely due to his abilities as a party trouble-shooter and an agitator for Stalin's policies, and after the dictator's death his passion for political argument and exhortation won him dividends in the ongoing power struggle. His willingness to tackle long-standing domestic problems attracted political support which may have been decisive in the defeat of his conservative opposition in the mid-1950s--the so-called antiparty group of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and other contemporaries from the Stalinist bureaucracy. Khrushchev's dynamism and growing self-importance later became a "tragic flaw," however, and his constant reorganizations of the state and party apparatus alienated important vested interests, particularly among the more conservative segments of the society.

Brezhnev, a model organization man with a conservative bent, in these circumstances was the most logical successor to Khrushchev. No other leader had Brezhnev's general array of power and prestige. Suslov, with quiet and conservative bureaucratic manner, would have been suited to succeed Khrushchev but lacked the desire and perhaps the power base. Podgornyy, the other senior secretary in Khrushchev's Secretariat, had built a sufficient base to assume the top job, had he not acquired the reputation of a champion of Khrushchev's more liberal programs. Thus, just as Khrushchev seemed suited to correct the failings of Stalin's policies, so Brezhnev appeared to be the right man to restore some order to the party and government bureaucracies and to Soviet policies in general after Khrushchev's "hare-brained schemes" had created a state of constant turmoil.

Brezhnev's early experience as a party official probably contributed, at least in part, to his basic conservatism. Brezhnev was appointed to his first executive positions in the government and party in 1937-38, when he was 30 years

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old. Hence, he benefited directly from the massive purge of those years, which probably coincided with the most formative period of his political development. Such an experience must have taught him to keep his powder dry--an attitude he has held ever since, judging from the circumstances of later comebacks. Brezhnev gradually climbed the ladder of the party hierarchy, not as Stalin's protege but as Khrushchev's client, attaining national prominence only in 1950.

Setbacks which Brezhnev suffered at the national level may have reinforced the "safe" behavior which the circumstances of his early career suggest was the predominant trait of the rising Stalinist apparatchik. A first humiliation was his removal in 1953, on the occasion of Stalin's death, from the Central Committee Secretariat and the "enlarged" Politburo after only six months' tenure. An apparent factor was Khrushchev's inability to protect him in the face of opposition from the majority of older members of the Politburo, whom Stalin probably had intended to replace with the younger officials added to the body in 1952. Brezhnev's second major setback, probably more damaging to his prestige and confidence, was his "kick upstairs" to the presidency in 1960. He had already made his earlier comeback to the Secretariat and Politburo in 1956, so his transfer had all the appearances of a move to semi-retirement. His careful execution of duties and avoidance of strong commitments on policy matters may have eased the way for his return to the Secretariat when Frol Kozlov's incapacitating stroke opened the question of Khrushchev's succession in 1963.*

*Illustrative of Brezhnev's unwillingness to commit himself on specific issues -- and probably to avoid a direct show of opposition to Khrushchev's policies and programs -- is the fact that he is not known to have spoken at any Central Committee plenum between the 20th Party Congress--that is, from the time of his election to the Secretariat and Politburo in 1956--and his return from the presidency in June 1963. He did, however, speak at the party congresses.

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Despite its adverse effect on his power position at that time, Brezhnev's appointment as president did give him an opportunity to travel widely abroad and to deal with non-communist foreign statesmen--an opportunity often denied to leading party officials. Although this has not altered his basically conservative outlook, it appears to have broadened his understanding of things non-Soviet. Perhaps, also, it has contributed to an appreciation of the responsibilities inherent in the great-power status of the Soviet Union. Brezhnev told [] for example, that there could be no forgiving mistakes which led to a new war. Continuing in a philosophical and apparently non-argumentative vein, he added that it was not a matter of any great importance to the Soviet Union what political and social systems other countries had, but the important thing was what foreign policies they pursued. While the purpose of these remarks is open to question, Brezhnev's personal inclination in foreign policy has been to use all possible political and diplomatic means to resolve conflicts, and, above all, to avoid military actions which might entail a direct confrontation with the US. On the other hand, when political means have been exhausted he might not shy from a military solution, especially if there were little or no risk of a US counter move.

His Non-Intellectual Method

Brezhnev has displayed a rather Russian directness and emotionalism that add up to a projection of charm or boorishness, depending on the point of view of his audience. Especially in public, Brezhnev can appear deeply moved, even to tears, by the solemnity of the occasion, as when he personally gave his arm to support the widow of Yuriy Gagarin at the cosmonaut's funeral. The Soviet [] who claimed to have worked as [] in the Ukraine, has characterized Brezhnev as stupid, dull, and narrow-minded, apparently on the basis of a similar emotional display in 1945. [] described a meeting of party officials at that time which was to discuss "serious problems" of rebuilding the ruins of postwar Ukraine and at which Brezhnev allegedly attached utmost importance to the "minor problem" of what to do with the illegitimate children whose mothers were Soviet citizens and whose fathers were German soldiers.

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Brezhnev's "human side," genuine or not, apparently can be a political asset. For example, Brezhnev brusquely received [redacted] after the latter had had rough talks with Kosygin and Podgornyy. Without making a friendly gesture, Brezhnev launched into conversation with a demand to know what [redacted] had to say about [redacted]. [redacted] allegedly replied that he would not account to anyone, including Brezhnev, and appealed for a "man-to-man" talk. At that point Brezhnev changed his manner completely, and in the best Russian tradition he embraced [redacted] and began a relaxed and friendly talk.

[redacted]

Brezhnev can be much more abrasive when dealing with politically independent and sophisticated foreigners, especially from "imperialist" countries. [redacted] who has had an opportunity to judge the behavior of Soviet leaders on more than one occasion, complained in late August 1968 that Brezhnev was choleric and less easy-going than Kosygin. [redacted], pointing to Khrushchev's flamboyant outbursts which quickly subsided, felt that if Brezhnev were to flare up it would be for a long time, and the damage to relations might be permanent. British Prime Minister Wilson, during his February 1966 visit to Moscow, evidently found Brezhnev bombastic and callow. Reportedly, Brezhnev boasted of the size and strength of the Soviet economy and somewhat grandly allowed that the Soviet Union could afford to make a few trade concessions to a relatively small country like the United Kingdom. This sort of behavior may have been behind the impression of an unthinking man and a boor which Brezhnev made on members of French President de Gaulle's delegation in Moscow in mid-1966.

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[REDACTED]

With foreign Communists, Brezhnev drops virtually all pretense of dialogue. In addition, he spins out his "ideas" in no apparent logical sequence. His advice to a visiting [REDACTED] for example, was punctuated by non sequiturs and sudden shifts in thought. In these discussions, Brezhnev gives the impression of relying primarily on the force of his authority, achieving his purposes indirectly through suggestion, rather than directly by persuasion. The fundamental weakness in this reliance on authority of position rather than the force of ideas is revealed especially sharply in crisis situations. In the immediate aftermath of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, for example, when it had become clear that the Soviets in Prague had failed to install a new government, Brezhnev gave the impression of folding under the tension that had been building since before the military action. He apparently lacked the political skill to achieve his purposes in the "negotiations" with Dubcek and other Czechoslovak leaders held captive in Moscow after the invasion. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] insisting that the Czechoslovak leaders sign the final communique, Brezhnev reportedly said "I have had enough of this. Sign the document, I am hungry."

Brezhnev has displayed a high opinion of his handling of difficult political situations. This was shown, for example, in the account of a foreign communist delegation which in July 1967 heard Brezhnev's own version of the important role he played during the height of the Arab-Israeli fighting. Boasting rather than complaining, Brezhnev said he was exhausted by the crisis, during which he did not sleep for three days. Brezhnev seemed especially taken by the close attention of President Johnson, mentioning several times the close contact that Washington had maintained with Moscow. (It is not clear who in the collective leadership actually has the ultimate responsibility for receiving and responding to incoming and outgoing messages on the hot line, the terminal of which is located by Kosygin's office. Brezhnev may have exaggerated his role on this score,

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by implying that he himself had been on the receiving end of "calls" from the President.) He also claimed to have performed the almost impossible job of explaining Moscow's position to all the Arab state leaders and outlining Soviet policy personally to the Soviet ambassadors in the Arab states, who had overreached their authority and promised more than they should have. Brezhnev added, apparently not without pleasure, that handling all these details personally was enough to overcome any one man.

His Pursuit of Bureaucratic Conformity

Perhaps aware of his intellectual limitations, Brezhnev has carried out his responsibilities in a relatively cautious manner. Unlike the aggressive Khrushchev, he has given the impression--perhaps out of necessity--of working contentedly within the confines of collective leadership. He has willingly granted a hearing to the opinion of his colleagues and specialists when it does not conflict with his overall outlook. He has endorsed, for example, the limited application of sociological methods which progressives within the party have advocated in place of traditional ideological dogma as the basis of foreign and domestic propaganda. But he has not supported and presumably never would sanction its use as a tool of objective inquiry into the basic propositions underlying such holy concepts as party supremacy in politics, socialist realism in art, or proletarian internationalism in communist relations.

Brezhnev set out early in his regime to dampen dissent both within the party rank and file and among the Soviet populace in general. He has shown an abiding concern to eliminate disunity and establish "order" as defined by the functionaries in the party apparatus and the security police. "Democratic centralism"--in essence, rule from above, where all wisdom resides--became the watchword in Brezhnev's statements and in the practice of party officials. As a result, party policy became somewhat more consistent but less vital; sharp discrepancies and failings were fewer, but forward movement was nil.

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Brezhnev became especially insistent on conformity after the 23d Party Congress. He reacted quickly, for example, to criticism from Moscow party chief Yegorychev at the June 1967 Central Committee plenum, and the immediate disciplinary action taken against the critic served to warn others that he could and would take stern action to protect his position. In his 29 March 1968 speech to the Moscow party organization, Brezhnev reiterated his demand for "iron discipline" in extremely strong terms. He went so far as to threaten a purge: "While the party trusts its cadres, it will, as always, hold everyone accountable . . . and sternly prosecute all cases of violation of party and state discipline, regardless of position held or past services." Brezhnev added that whoever believed that iron discipline lost its significance after the "period of direct revolutionary action" was mistaken. Perhaps because of this insistence on solidarity, Brezhnev has been careful not to stray too far from the consensus of his Politburo colleagues, as his gingerly approach to the Czechoslovak problem demonstrated.

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PROGNOSIS

The accumulated evidence on Brezhnev's political advantages, successful maneuvering, and cautious behaviour suggests that prospects for his continued rule are good. In addition, the major foreign policy problems of the past year which could have affected Brezhnev adversely with an unfavorable outcome--"normalization" of the domestic situation in Czechoslovakia and the holding of the international Communist conference--have been resolved relatively favorably from the Soviet viewpoint. At home, public dislike of Brezhnev was dramatically evident in the late January 1969 apparent assassination attempt by a Soviet military man; nevertheless, the incident and the lack of popularity it symbolized should have no significant effect on Brezhnev's actual power position, since the majority of the Politburo have supported his status quo policies. Moreover, the very few personnel changes affecting Central Committee members since the last party congress in 1966 have favored Brezhnev's associates, primarily at the expense of officials with ties to Politburo member Shelepin; the chances are very good, therefore, that the new Central Committee to be elected at the 24th Party Congress, due sometime next year, will give Brezhnev approximately the same political support he now has.

Despite a lack of indications of widespread opposition to Brezhnev's leadership at the top levels of the party, there are a couple of factors to be taken into account in any projection of his career or the future shape of the Soviet leadership: Brezhnev's health, and a possible challenge from a minority faction within the Politburo.

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the oligarchy might rather attempt to continue with a minimum of upset and settle on one of Brezhnev's allies--for example, "Second" Secretary Kirilenko--for the vacancy.

Growing dissatisfaction within the party over the leadership's essentially defensive or passive status quo policies could conceivably serve to spur factional struggle against Brezhnev, as was the case briefly in June 1967 regarding Soviet actions in the Middle East. Such a development might occur unexpectedly in connection with a dramatic failure in foreign policy or domestic happening that is seized as a pretext for a change in leadership toward a more forceful or active policy. Such a tactic could easily backfire, however, since Brezhnev could claim with some justification to have used restraint in pursuing a consensus policy. On balance, therefore, a bid to supplant Brezhnev on policy grounds does not appear likely.

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