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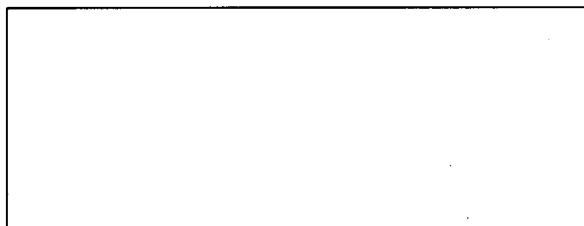
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Report

The Politburo and Soviet Decision-Making

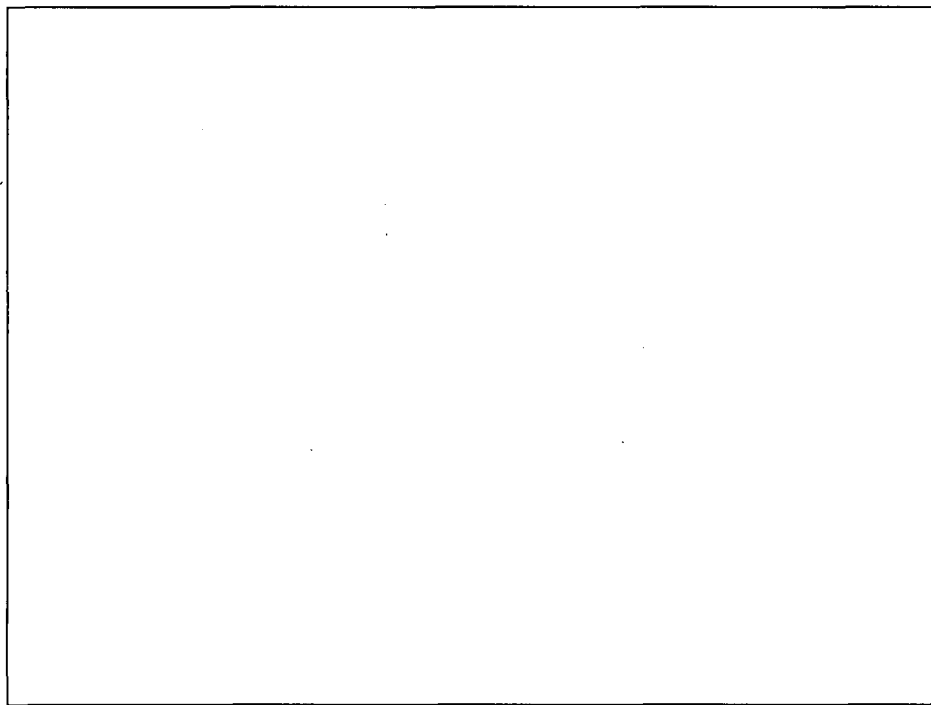


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THE POLITBURO AND SOVIET DECISION-MAKING

MEMORANDUM TO RECIPIENTS

This study, the first in depth on the Politburo's organization and modus operandi, seeks to dispel some of the aura of mystery which has traditionally shrouded Kremlin decision-making. [redacted]

[redacted] this study examines the processes of the Politburo: the function of its internal parts, the cycle of its operations, and the support of its auxiliary agencies.

The picture which emerges is of decision-makers who are neither infallible giants nor glorified clerks, but hard-driving, able politicians whose ambitions and diverse responsibilities tend to create cross purposes: in short, human actors within a high-tensioned, but strong and flexible, political system. The study also concludes that General Secretary Brezhnev, as the focal point of the decision-making machinery, wields sufficient authority to play the central role in deciding and expediting important Politburo business, but not to override his fellow oligarchs on policy issues; that the Politburo's structure and procedures actually encourage its members to lobby on behalf of their own institutional vested interests and private ambitions; and that even though there continues to be a strong tendency to refer even secondary matters to the Politburo for resolution, specialists from subordinate agencies are now playing a growing role in support of Politburo decision-making, especially in the spheres of military policy and defense production.

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This study has met general agreement among Soviet specialists within the Central Intelligence Agency. Comments on the study are welcome and should be addressed to its author, Mr. Albert L. Salter, of this Staff.

[redacted]

Hal Ford
Chief, DD/I Special Research Staff

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THE POLITBURO AND SOVIET DECISION-MAKING

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THE POLITBURO AND SOVIET DECISION-MAKING

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THE POLITBURO AND SOVIET DECISION-MAKING

PRINCIPAL OBSERVATIONS

The Soviet decision-making process reflects both significant continuity and change in the system and style of rule created by Lenin a half-century ago. Supreme decisions over Party, government, and society still reside in the Communist Party (CPSU) -- and, within this supposed leading element of the proletariat, in that small elite known as the Politburo of the Party's Central Committee.

At the same time, policy decision-making is now much more complex and, in certain important details, much more diffuse. Moreover, the salient feature of Politburo evolution since Stalin has been a trend, albeit with zigs and zags, toward an increasingly stable political balance. During the upheavals of Stalin's era the Politburo was in the main an enforcer of the dictator's will, rather than a genuine policy-making body. After Stalin's death, the members of this elite body began to make significant contributions to decisions, but after Khrushchev's consolidation of power, and especially during his last few years in office, leadership stability and orderly processes suffered from his heavy-handed dominance. By contrast, the present regime has sought to maintain the dominance of the Politburo oligarchs as a collective, with the result that power has become somewhat more deeply and evenly balanced within the leadership.

Even so, and despite outward obeisance to "collective" leadership, General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev actually presides over the Politburo's operation and

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directs the activities of its members. Available evidence clearly indicates that the Party boss has the right, as de facto chairman, to decide when the Politburo shall meet, which if any outsiders shall attend its sessions, and what questions shall be discussed. Through the Central Committee's General Department, he also circulates the proposals and draft decisions which he and his colleagues have initiated, and at the Politburo sessions which review and approve them he sums up discussion, expresses the consensus, and rules on policy issues.

While the General Secretary provides focus and direction to the Politburo's decision-making operations, the allocation of responsibilities to other Politburo members often results in a situation where they serve, in effect, as representatives of the various vested interests in Soviet society. One vivid example is First Deputy Premier Dmitriy Polyanskiy, who supervises Soviet agriculture for the Politburo and who consistently has fought for the interests of the agricultural bureaucracy in his political activity; another, trade union boss Aleksandr Shelepin, has fairly consistently championed the cause of the Soviet consumer. But, compared with somewhat similar practice in the bureaucracies of other great powers, the opposing interests of institutional pluralism are markedly sharpened, in the Poliburo case, by intense and continuing personal rivalry. We know that in some instances -- Shelepin and others -- this often results in the pushing of vested institutional interests as alternatives to policies which Brezhnev has endorsed since ousting Khrushchev.

The actual process of decision-making in the Politburo suggests systematic and rather efficient procedures. The central event in this process is the weekly Politburo session. Evidence indicates that in simplified outline, a typical week might begin with Brezhnev's receiving and

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reviewing various memoranda and proposals on Monday for possible inclusion in that week's agenda; on Tuesday Brezhnev and the rest of the central Party Secretariat would meet to agree on the agenda; on Wednesday Premier Aleksey Kosygin would convene the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, and this government body would discuss and prepare possible contributions to the Politburo agenda items, coordinating within the Council and with the Party Secretariat; finally, after last-minute preparation of their positions, the Politburo leaders would meet on Thursday at 3 p.m., or at some other time at Brezhnev's discretion, to hear presentations and adopt decisions on the agenda topics. From Friday to Sunday the individual leaders would go about implementing these decisions and drawing up proposals for the next Politburo session.

Adherence to certain customs and rules of order at Politburo sessions evidently prevents debate from developing into a free-for-all. In contrast to the practice in Khrushchev's time, when the First Secretary apparently tried to reduce his colleagues' constraints on him by overloading the Politburo meetings with a multitude of trivial items, the custom in recent years has been to consider only a few items at each session. Accordingly, if a member expresses viewpoints which raise new aspects of a problem, he is generally asked to submit them in writing for detailed consideration at a later session. Brezhnev has privately claimed that most Politburo members listen to the presentation of most agenda items without speaking, and this may be true, although there is evidence that senior Politburo members, at least, feel little constraint in raising objections to important presentations or rulings with which they disagree. A significant degree of initiative appears to rest with Brezhnev in presenting an issue and expressing a consensus, and we know that colleagues occasionally pass him private notes during Politburo meetings to try

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to influence his rulings. Most of the time, those rulings apparently are accepted; occasionally there are significant disagreements, and votes are then taken. The net effect of these procedures appears to be that enough authority is concentrated in the presiding officer's hands to move most Politburo business fairly expeditiously, though not enough to allow Brezhnev to override the wishes of a Politburo majority on an important matter.

While Politburo sessions probably are reserved for the most important issues of broad policy, much of the time of the policy-makers between sessions is devoted to coordination of secondary or lesser questions which demand resolution. The tendency in the Soviet decision-making system to refer many matters to the top which might logically be decided at a lower level places severe demands, in fact, on the Politburo leaders' time. This tradition of coordination of secondary issues at the highest level can be considered a weakness of the system. Nevertheless, definite procedures for expediting the process have been developed. The responsibility for coordinating the opinions of Politburo members on the larger issues lies with the member of the Party Secretariat who supervises the policy area involved in the decision. Together with the appropriate Central Committee department, the Party secretary reaches agreement with the Politburo member or members who are directly responsible for the field in question, and when substantive disagreements have been reconciled he forwards the coordinated version to the General Secretary, whose signature validates the decision. Delays in this process sometimes occur when a Politburo member decides to withhold his assent on an issue; Premier Kosygin, in particular, has occasionally insisted on his prerogative to delay coordination pending extended consideration of a proposal. Although from a practical political standpoint Brezhnev may not deliberately override the opinion of an important Politburo grouping on an issue, as Party boss he has the authority and responsibility to resolve the majority of contentious issues.

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To facilitate their task of policy- and decision-making, the Politburo members explore specific tasks and problem areas in committee, forming various councils and commissions on permanent or ad hoc bases. The secret Soviet Defense Council is by far the most important of the permanent Politburo subcommittees: it includes three Politburo members, Brezhnev (as council chairman), "President" Nikolay Podgorny, and Premier Kosygin; other members include Politburo alternate Dmitriy Ustinov (who oversees defense-industrial production and the space program from the Party Secretariat), Minister of Defense Andrey Grechko, and possibly chief of the General Staff Viktor Kulikov. The Defense Council prepares and forwards recommendations on the most important issues of military policy for approval by the Politburo. This council probably exerts an especially strong influence in the sphere of military technology, where many Politburo members probably are not well equipped to judge highly technical issues. It also seems to be involved in the appointment of high-level military officers, as was the case with the nomination of Kulikov to the top General Staff post last year. But however great its influence, the Defense Council is clearly subordinate to the Politburo on the most important policy questions.

Other Politburo subcommittees have included commissions on industry, agriculture, the national-economic plan, and domestic trade. Each commission, whether permanent or ad hoc, appears to function with full Politburo authority in its assigned area. A Politburo member conducts the commission at his own convenience in matters of participation, agenda, and so on. First deputy premiers Kirill Mazurov and Dmitriy Polyanskiy have chaired commissions on industry and agriculture, respectively, while senior Party secretary Andrey Kirilenko has chaired commissions on the economic plan and on domestic trade. Such commissions, in contrast to the Defense Council,

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the Defense Council. [redacted]

But the most important and direct supporting role in the Politburo decision-making system probably belongs to the Central Committee apparatus. This executive staff of the Party Secretariat not only formulates recommendations on policy issues within the competence of its approximately 20 departments, but also coordinates and channels much of the input of other agencies such as the Foreign Ministry and the KGB. The apparatus does not always function smoothly, for we know that departments compete among themselves for Politburo attention or are caught up in the rivalries between Politburo leaders.

The Central Committee apparatus also serves Politburo leaders as a primary source of the staff aides who assist each leader in formulating policy statements, memoranda, information briefs, and the like. In addition, Central Committee consultants provide specific expertise, and draft contributions on request for the use of the policy-makers. Several Central Committee departments also make use of consultants, many of whom hold full-time positions in academic research institutes. Such groups of consultants apparently serve, therefore, as a link between the Politburo and outside institutions such as the KGB and the academic institutes.

The most influential of the policy-supporting research institutes of the Academy of Sciences are the Institute of World Economics and International Relations (WEIR) and the Institute for the USA. These and other

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academic institutes offer classified position papers or research studies and oral briefings to individual Politburo members on specified topics of interest to the policy-makers, and apparently compete vigorously for the ear of Politburo leaders. WEIR reportedly has prepared studies on such subjects as the implications of entering into SALT, the Czechoslovak situation prior to the Warsaw Pact intervention of 1968, and the strategic threat from China; whereas the Institute for the USA was asked to brief Premier Kosygin in 1969 on conflict between "guns and butter factions" in the US, and on the assessment by US experts of the same conflict in the Soviet Union.

While there is no firm evidence by which to measure the impact of institute findings on actual Politburo decisions, it appears to be true that the academic institutes provide the decision-makers with policy alternatives based on differing methodologies and perspectives. Together with the input of other auxiliary agencies, their contributions to the Politburo's formulation of policies reflect the increasing participation of an ever broader base of experts in the decision-making process in the past decade. It seems likely that this trend will continue during the next decade as well.

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THE POLITBURO AND SOVIET DECISION-MAKING

I. POLITBURO STRUCTURE

In theory the CPSU Politburo is a collegial body without a chairman and without any organizational structure. This is an obviously unworkable setup, and in practice this central Soviet decision-making body is organized into three basic parts: a de facto chairman; its members; and a small executive staff. Clearly, the effectiveness of the Politburo as a policy-making body depends, in considerable part, on the inherent flexibility of this structure and its personalities.

A. The General Secretary's Role

1. The Embarrassing Need for a Chairman

An agreement to maintain an oligarchic sharing of power has been a fact of political life in the Politburo since Khrushchev's overthrow in 1964, so that the oligarchs have been continually embarrassed by the practical necessity to have someone take charge and steer the decision-making process, in order to get anything done. As a compromise,

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General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev has been allowed to run the Politburo's policy-making machinery but denied the corresponding titles.

It is, therefore, considered bad form in Soviet Party etiquette to identify the General Secretary as chairman of the Politburo. To do so could enhance his prestige and power at the expense of his nominal peers in the collective leadership. Sensitivity to such personal power ramifications probably also explains the infrequency of public references to the Politburo's being "headed by" Brezhnev. These very rare violations of the collectivity taboo generally have been committed by Brezhnev's known political clients, such as Kazakh Party boss Dinmukhamed Kunayev, who is a Politburo member. Other Politburo members probably have resented such statements as indirect Brezhnev attempts at self-aggrandizement. Registering the general sensitivity on this issue, a Party historical journal in August 1969 cited Lenin's writing that "there is no such" person as a Politburo chairman.

Nevertheless, Brezhnev as General Secretary is de facto chairman of the Politburo. His decisive role in presiding over the policy-making body is indicated in a partial listing of the General Secretary's prerogatives, including his right:

- 1) to convene and chair Politburo sessions,
- 2) to draw up the agenda of Politburo meetings,
- 3) to sum up and rule on issues under Politburo consideration,
- 4) to circulate, and by implication to withhold, various documents, proposals, etc., that are within Politburo purview, and

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- 5) to decide the extent of participation at Politburo sessions, enlarging or restricting the discussion, even to the exclusion of Politburo alternates.*

Brezhnev himself gave [redacted] additional details on his Politburo role during [redacted] talks in [redacted] 1970. According to Brezhnev, members must forward to him in writing three days in advance any problems they wish to have discussed, and Brezhnev selects topics from the written submissions; no subject may be raised in the meeting that has not been submitted in writing.

CONFIDENTIAL



General Secretary
Leonid BREZHNEV

1971

2. The Right to Deputize

[redacted] suggest that any of the three senior Central Committee secretaries -- that is, Mikhail Suslov, Andrey Kirilenko, or Fedor Kulakov, who are members of both the Politburo and the

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Central Committee Secretariat -- can be deputized to direct the Politburo's work during the General Secretary's absence from Moscow.*

[redacted]

[redacted] Kirilenko convened the Politburo during the absence from Moscow of both Brezhnev and Suslov; in fact, about half of the Politburo members were on vacation at the time. It was apparently at this meeting that the Politburo either decided or finally ratified the transfer of RSFSR Premier Gennadiy Voronov, a Politburo member, to the much less important post of chairman of the USSR People's Control Committee. If the basic decision was actually made at this meeting, it raises the possibility that the Politburo can decide delicate matters, affecting even the power relationship within the Politburo itself, in the absence of the General Secretary or a number of its voting members. It seems more likely, however, that the vote of the other members was taken in absentia by long-distance telephone or that the action had been predetermined; Brezhnev himself might earlier have placed the question of Voronov's transfer on the agenda.

In addition, it appears that besides the senior Central Committee secretaries, two other senior Politburo members -- the Premier and the "President" -- may also have the right to conduct Politburo meetings when circumstances necessitate.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

3. The General Department: Secret Politburo Secretariat

At any given time, whether it is Brezhnev himself or some deputizing colleague who is operating the Politburo's decision-making machinery, the man in charge relies on the Central Committee's General Department for executive support. Reporting formally to the General Secretary, the Department serves as a private secretariat to the Politburo in such matters as handling correspondence and other paper work. A kind of clearinghouse for proposals and decisions, it receives, registers, coordinates, amends, publishes, releases for dissemination, and stores Politburo documents.*

Between Politburo meetings, it is thus the General Department that conducts informal telephone votes by Politburo members on innumerable secondary matters and shepherds

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memoranda on subjects large and small from one Politburo member's office to another. At the same time, this department has charge of all the mechanics of preparing and holding Politburo meetings; its responsibilities include circulating the agenda of planned Politburo sessions and alerting leaders to their required presence at these and other official functions. [redacted]

[redacted] Politburo leaders acknowledge such requests from General Department officials as directives from the Party boss. [redacted]

[redacted] In sum, the General Department moves the policy-making assembly line.

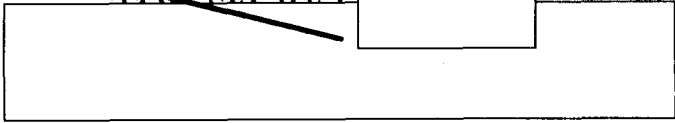
B. The Division of Functions

1. The Sources of Politburo Conflicts of Interest

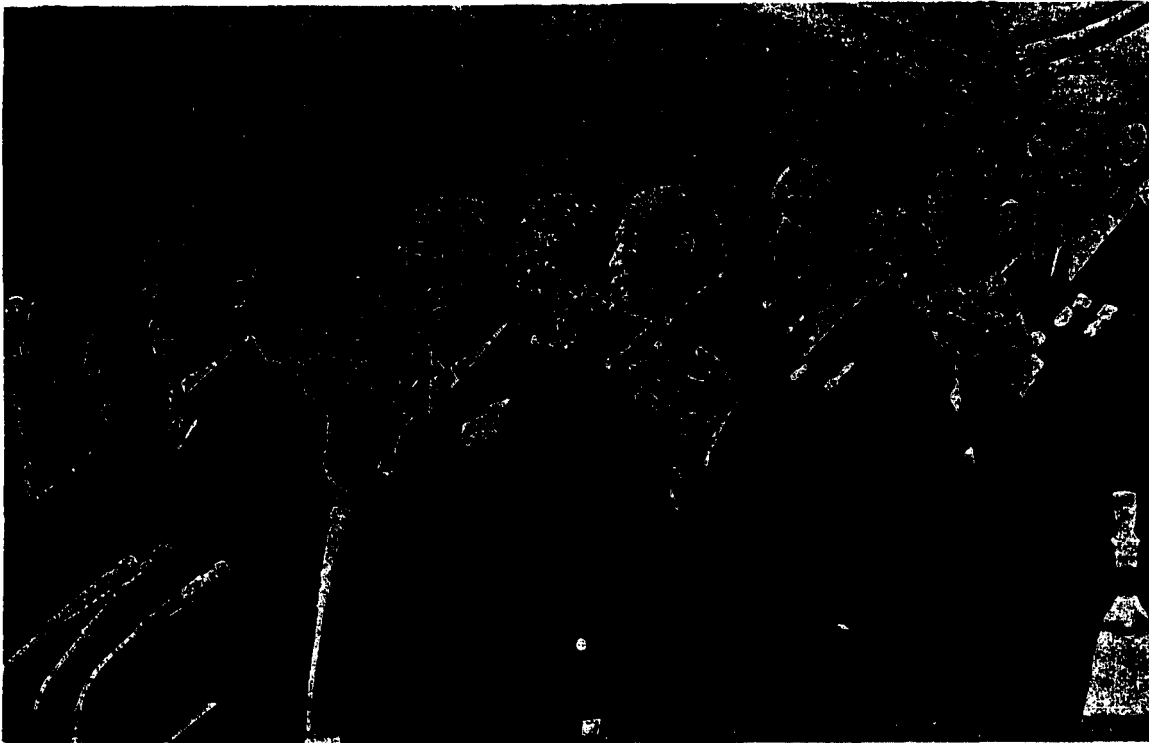
The realities of the Politburo power structure ensure that certain Politburo leaders who hold particularly important posts in the Party or state apparatus are "more equal" than others who are their nominal peers. Some positions -- for example, the posts of Party General Secretary, senior Party secretary for organizational matters, government Premier, and first deputy premier -- are so important that they virtually guarantee a place among the voting members of the Politburo. Because they are vital to the administration of the Party and the state, these positions and their incumbents represent an irreducible core of the decision-making machinery. Persons who have gained these key posts, therefore, have a greater measure of influence and authority than their fellow Politburo members in less important posts.

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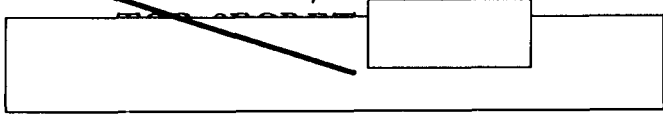
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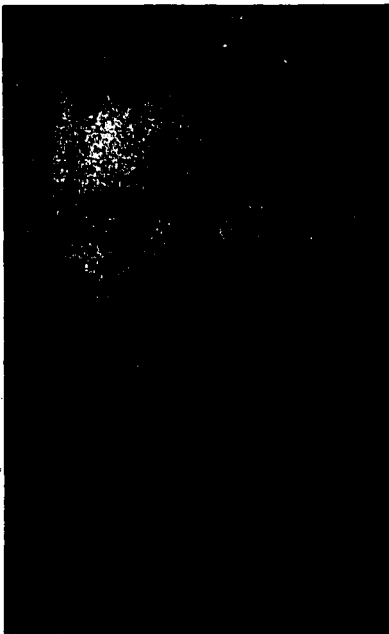


Soviet leaders return applause of delegates to 24th Party Congress, which opened in March 1971. Front row, l. to r., key Politburo members PODGORNYY, BREZHNEV, KOSYGIN, SUSLOV. Behind Brezhnev, SHCHERBITSKIY whispers in ear of KULAKOV; both junior leaders became Politburo members at the congress.



As these disparities in power would suggest, the agreement of the Brezhnev-Kosygin leadership to maintain "collectivity" by no means signifies an absence of political rivalries and conflicts. An individual leader obviously will take advantage of each opportunity that arises to advance his bureaucratic power and sometimes will go out of his way to defend his position against encroachments. At the same time, [redacted] suggest the existence of a general commitment to keep bureaucratic conflict to a minimum, and of alarm when this understanding appears to be violated.

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1970

Nikolay PODGORNYY,
Soviet "President"
(titular chief of state).

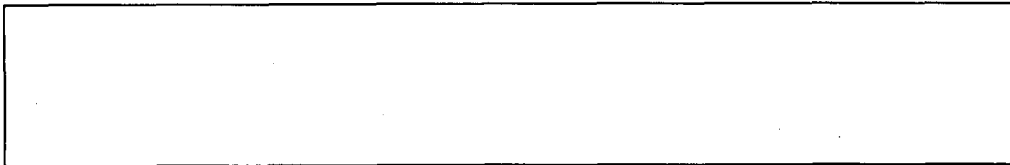


1969

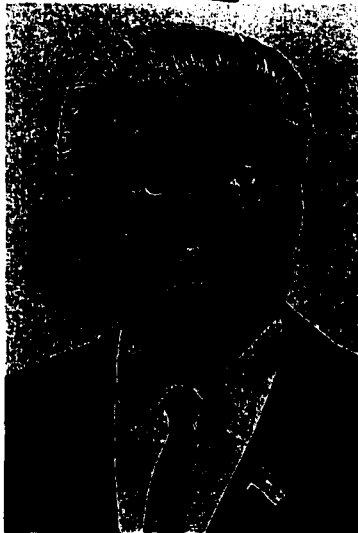
Premier Aleksey KOSYGIN.

[redacted] Brezhnev and President Podgornyy thus displayed their pique over Kosygin's having traveled to the Ukraine and having spoken [redacted] at meetings of Party activists about Party tasks. [redacted]

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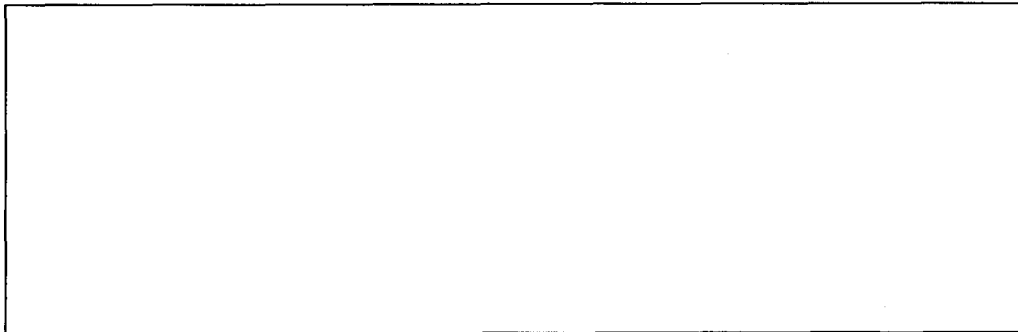
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1968

Ukrainian Premier
Vladimir SHCHERBITSKIY.

The potential for bureaucratic conflict between Party and state officials exists, of course, at several levels within the Politburo. The fact that the Party official's job is to check on and correct the performance of the government administrator makes likely a certain amount of recrimination and conflict along functional lines -- for example, between Ukrainian Party boss Petr Shelest and Ukrainian Premier Vladimir Shcherbitskiy, who are both Politburo members. Frictions are also observed between Party and government officials in competing areas, such as between the Party secretary who



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oversees heavy-industrial production and the first deputy premier who administers the agricultural sector.*

Similar conflicts can occur within the Party or state hierarchies, creating an alliance between opposite numbers on some issues. Among the senior secretaries, for example, Kirilenko's responsibility for supervising heavy industry and construction brought him last year into conflict with Kulakov, who oversees agriculture from the secretariat.

[redacted]

[redacted] Kirilenko [redacted]

[redacted] was categorically opposed to diverting trucks from industrial sectors to assist in the harvest.

1971

Petr SHELEST Ukrainian Party First Secretary.

[redacted]

*For an example of this type of competition, see CAESAR XXXIX, "Andrey Kirilenko and the Soviet Political Succession," March 1971, [redacted]

[redacted] p. 28.

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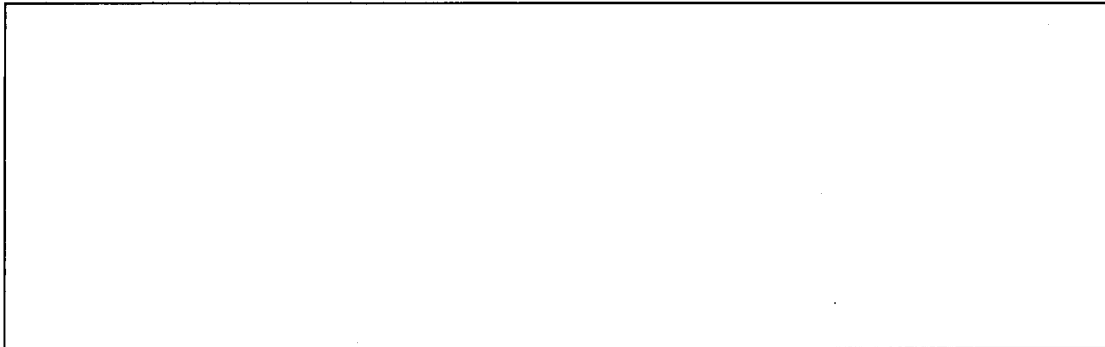
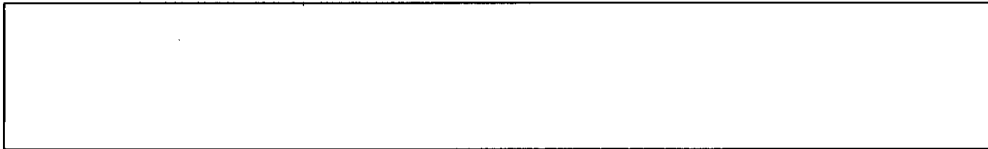


1970
Party Secretary
Andrey KIRILENKO.

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1965
Party Secretary
Fedor KULAKOV.



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2. Politburo Spokesmen for Domestic Lobbies

Against this background of conflict inherent in the structure of the Politburo, it is perhaps not surprising that [redacted] have shown certain groups lobbying through "representatives" in the Politburo. Such "representation" on the part of a Politburo leader usually conforms to his assigned responsibilities; that is, he becomes biased from association with particular vested interests.

Polyanskiy and Agriculture

First Deputy Premier Polyanskiy, for example, is an active and ambitious promoter of the interests of the agricultural bureaucracy.

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1970

First Deputy Premier
Dmitriy POLYANSKIY.

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[redacted]

[redacted] It is apparent that the opposition which Polyanskiy was fighting came from vested interests opposed to the ministerial agricultural bureaucracy. No doubt such "representation" has gained Polyanskiy valuable support within the Central Committee from the so-called agricultural lobby.

Shelepin and Consumer Goods

By contrast, trade union boss Aleksandr Shelepin apparently has advocated the consumer's cause from time to time during his tenure as a Politburo member, without hope for support from any comparable separate bureaucratic group in the Central Committee.

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1970

Aleksandr SHELEPIN,
Chairman of All-Union
Central Council of Trade
Unions.

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[redacted]

Shelepin's advocacy of the consumer's cause appears to have brought him into conflict on occasion with the heavy-industrial lobby. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Shelepin's speech was notable for its emphasis on the theme that heavy-industrialists had a responsibility to increase the production of consumer goods -- a theme which Brezhnev picked up in July 1970 in requesting support for his own program for agriculture.

[redacted] it seems clear that Shelepin's "representation" of the consumer's interests in the Politburo

[redacted]

PARTY POLITBURO AND SECRETARIAT April 1972*

NAME	AGE	TOTAL YEARS TENURE (Approx.)		PRESENT POSITION (Date of Appointment)	GENERAL POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES ¹	
		As Member	As Alternate		DOMESTIC	FOREIGN
1. I. I. Brezhnev	65	14	2	General Secretary (Oct 64)	General Supervision, Defense, Security	General Supervision, Communist Party, London, US, Europe
2. N. V. Podgornyy	69	12	5	Chair, USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium (Dec 64)	Legislative Agencies, Local Economy, Defense	General State Relations, Socialist Bloc
3. A. N. Kozlov	66	12	0	USSR Premier (Oct 64)	Economic Administration & Finance, Defense	General Foreign Relations and Trade
4. M. A. Suslov	69	12	0	Party Secretary (Mar 67)	Industry, Light Industry	International Communism (including China)
5. A. P. Kravchenko	65	10	4	Party Secretary (Apr 66)	Party Organization, Industrial Management	Communist Bloc Economy, Latin America
6. A. Ya. Fel'd	73	6	0	Chair, Party Control Committee (Apr 66)	Party Discipline	Surveillance, Communist Relations
7. K. I. Maslennikov	58	7	8	USSR First Deputy Premier (Mar 65)	Industrial Administration, Science, Education	Economic Aid Programs
8. D. S. Polyanskiy	54	12	2	USSR First Deputy Premier (Oct 65)	Agricultural Administration	(Unknown)
9. P. Ye. Steletskiy	64	7	1	Ukrainian Party Secretary (Jul 63)	Ukrainian Party Supervision	(Unknown)
10. G. I. Voronov	61	10	1	Chair, USSR People's Control Committee (Jul 71)	Economic Discipline	(Unknown)
11. A. N. Shelepin	53	7	0	Chair, Central Council of Trade Unions (Jul 67)	Labor and Consumer Affairs	(Unknown)
12. V. A. Gribin	57	1	10	Moscow First Secretary (Jun 67)	Moscow Party Supervision	(Unknown)
13. D. A. Yegorov	60	1	5	Kazakh First Secretary (Dec 64)**	Kazakh Party Supervision	(Unknown)
14. K. V. Sklyarshchik	54	1	7	Ukrainian Premier (Oct 65)**	Ukrainian Economic Administration	(Unknown)
15. F. D. Kulikov	54	1	0	Party Secretary (Sep 65)	Agriculture	(Unknown)
1. Yu. V. Andropov	57	—	5	Chair, KGB (Mar 67)	Security, Intelligence	—
2. P. A. Ustinov	63	—	8	Party Secretary (Mar 65)	Defense Industry and Space	Military Aid
3. P. A. Barenko	54	—	8	Party Secretary (Oct 61)	Propaganda, Culture, Party Induction	—
4. S. B. Korobov	54	—	10	Uzbek First Secretary (Mar 59)	Uzbek Party Supervision	—
5. P. M. Akhmedov	54	—	6	Belorussian First Secretary (Mar 65)	Belorussian Party Supervision	—
6. V. P. Akhmedov	54	—	14	Georgian First Secretary (Jun 57)	Georgian Party Supervision	—
7. M. S. Solomentsev	58	—	4	RSSSR Premier (Nov 71)	RSSSR Economic Administration & Finance	—
1. I. V. Kapitonov	57	—	—	Party Secretary (Dec 65)	Party Staffing	Communist Bloc Liaison
2. K. E. Kozlov	44	—	—	Party Secretary (Apr 68)	—	Relations With Non-Ruling Communist Parties
3. B. N. Ponomarev	67	—	—	Party Secretary (Oct 61)	—	—

* Arranged in order as read by Brezhnev to 24th Party Congress in April 1971, except where indicated otherwise.
 ** Excludes a previous stint in this position.
 † Only approximate—does not show overlapping of duties among several leaders.

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differs in kind from Polyanskiy's patently bureaucratic lobbying for a clearly marked and powerful elite interest group. Some of Shelepin's positions can be traced to his functions and responsibilities, which have involved supervision or actual administration in the consumer sector for a number of years. It appears likely, in any case, that his main motive in adopting such a position was to appeal to a broad audience not identified with any one wing of the bureaucracy, so as to undercut the clear stand which Brezhnev took from the start of his rule in defense of heavy-industrial and military interests.

3. Foreign-Policy Responsibilities

There are clearly many Politburo differences of opinion over foreign affairs, although it is characteristic of the present Politburo system that in the foreign-policy area, in contrast to the domestic-policy field, opposing Soviet vested interests find less of a toehold for clear-cut "representation" by individual Politburo members. This appears to be so because the Politburo allocation of responsibilities in this area does not itself automatically create the kind of general, unceasing bureaucratic conflict and lobbying that has been observed throughout the Politburo on the domestic side. Thus, while all Politburo members have important full-time domestic assignments, only a few have primary responsibilities in the foreign field. Generally speaking, therefore, for most Politburo members policy-making in foreign affairs appears to involve relatively more collective decision-making in the forum of Politburo sessions, and less functional sparring in routine coordination between meetings.

Certain features of the assignment of Party and state functions may nevertheless give rise to divergencies in approaching foreign issues. Brezhnev, Kirilenko, and

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Suslov, for example, all have had responsibilities for conducting liaison with foreign Communist parties, but the particular attention which the first two leaders have given to the ruling parties has sometimes put them in opposition to their colleague, whose primary responsibility is to supervise relations with non-ruling parties. In 1968, for instance, Suslov's concern for the adverse consequences which a Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia would have on the international Communist movement as a whole was apparently a factor that led him to oppose the invasion decision which Brezhnev and Kirilenko supported. For his part, Premier Kosygin's overall responsibility for administering the economy evidently has made him especially sensitive to the potential economic advantages of East-West detente for the Soviet Union, despite

1970

Party Secretary
Mikhail SUSLOV.

the occasional resistance of certain of his colleagues who have less direct concern for economic performance but greater responsibility for ideological purity and vigilance.

Given the press of business on such a small body as the Politburo, it must be presumed that on many issues, particularly with respect to foreign problems unfamiliar to them, its members accede to much of the policy advice and opinions of those among them who have experience with particular Communist parties or areas and countries of the world. Premier Kosygin, for example, has had especially close dealings with India, Pakistan, and other South Asian countries; Kirilenko has had a special concern for Chile and other Latin American countries; Polyanskiy has developed

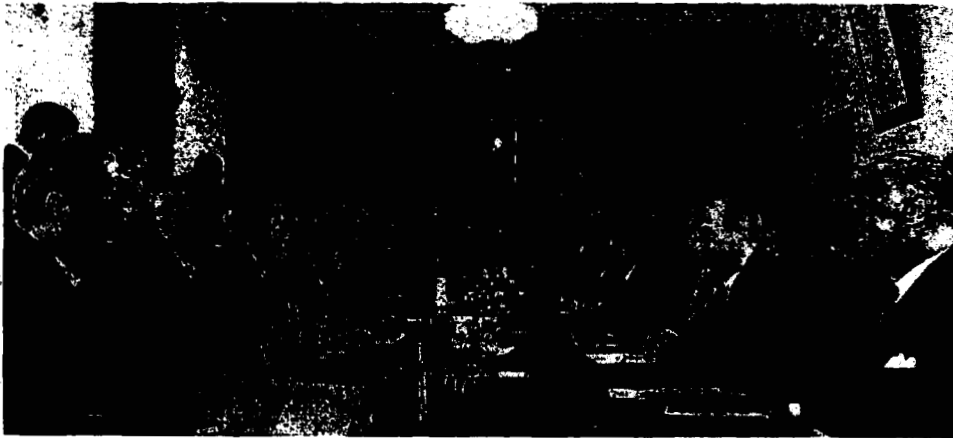
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special knowledge of certain African countries; and so forth. The total evidence nonetheless does not reveal a pattern of clearly defined responsibilities for individual countries throughout the Politburo; there appears to be considerable interchange among the leaders in contacts with specific foreign countries.

During the past year, General Secretary Brezhnev has meanwhile assumed a more prominent role in the conduct of state relations, which traditionally has been the concern of the Soviet "President" and Premier rather than of the Party boss. At the same time, the regime's "troika"

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Politburo Members BREZHNEV, PODGORNYY, and KOSYGIN, with Party Secretary Boris Ponomarev, meet in Kremlin conference room with Egyptian delegation, July 1970.

of Brezhnev, Podgornyy, and Kosygin seems to have been slightly upgraded in the foreign field with respect to the other Politburo members. Thus, according to the obviously incomplete account of a "recent" change in the division of labor among the three rulers [redacted]

-19-

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[redacted] Brezhnev now claims to have primary responsibility for foreign relations with Western Europe and the United States; Podgorny is particularly concerned with Southeast Asia; and Kosygin with the Near East, Scanadania, and Canada. Although this alleged new arrangement gives Brezhnev greater prestige and indicates a heightened emphasis on diplomacy, it does not appear to reflect any basic changes in the process of decision-making.

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II. POLITBURO MODUS OPERANDI

Despite Soviet secrecy, the inner workings of the Politburo are not entirely impenetrable to all-source examination of its operating procedures. [redacted] materials [redacted] provide insight into the scheduling of Politburo meetings, policy coordination between Politburo sessions, the way proposals and memoranda are originated and considered, and the range of domestic and foreign policy decisions which the Politburo covers. As a result, it is possible to draw some conclusions on the sources of policy initiative and influence, and on Politburo effectiveness in operations.

A. The Cycle of Decision-Making Meetings

The regular scheduling of meetings and other activities of the top Party and government agencies is geared, as much as practicable, to total support of weekly Politburo sessions. The schedule routinely calls for the Secretariat to meet every Tuesday, for the Council of Ministers (its Presidium, that is) to meet every Wednesday, and for the Politburo to meet every Thursday. (The average length of regular Thursday Politburo sessions is about four hours, but in some instances -- particularly during crisis periods -- the meetings last much longer.) The preparation of the agenda for Politburo sessions apparently also fits into this general pattern of scheduling. As

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General Secretary BREZHNEV with several members of the Politburo and Secretariat. Clockwise from left foreground are Politburo members SHELEPIN and GRISHIN; Party Secretaries KATUSHEV, KAPITONOV, and PONOMAREV; and Politburo members KULAKOV, PEL'SHE, KIRILENKO, and VORONOV.

mentioned elsewhere [redacted], Politburo members reportedly must submit proposed items for the agenda to Brezhnev three days in advance -- which means, normally, on Mondays.

In simplified outline, then, the typical weekly cycle begins on Monday, with Brezhnev receiving and reviewing various memoranda and drafts for possible inclusion in the agenda for the Politburo session. On Tuesday

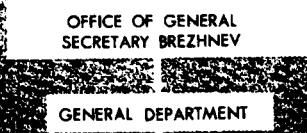
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WEEKLY CYCLE OF SOVIET DECISION-MAKING MEETINGS

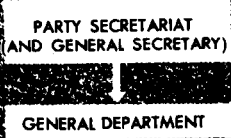
Information Flow

MONDAY



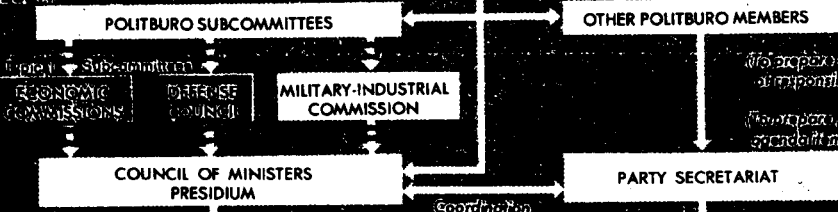
(To receive memos and proposals for Thursday Politburo session and set tentative Politburo agenda)
(To channel Politburo session documents)

TUESDAY



(To draw up day order for Politburo agenda)
(To channel documents)

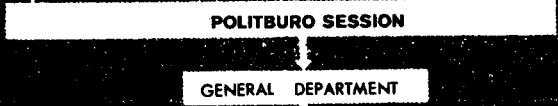
WEDNESDAY



(To prepare subcommittee delegations and reports)
(To prepare Politburo agenda items)

(To prepare subcommittee delegations and reports)
(To prepare Politburo agenda items)

THURSDAY



(To receive presentations on agenda items and to adopt decisions)
(To channel documents)

FRIDAY



(To coordinate decisions and generate new memos and proposals for Politburo consideration)

SATURDAY



(To channel documents)

SUNDAY

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[redacted]

Brezhnev and the rest of the Party Secretariat discuss and adopt a Politburo agenda to be circulated to the Politburo leaders and other concerned officials through the General Department. By Wednesday the Presidium of the Council of Ministers is able to discuss those questions which are on the agenda for the scheduled Politburo session and to draw up contributions, coordinating within the Council of Ministers at lower levels and with the Secretariat. In addition, any subordinate commissions or councils with a say on any agenda item might meet on Wednesday, perhaps prior to and in preparation for the Presidium meeting. Finally, on Thursday morning the Politburo leaders prepare to present their proposals and contributions at the actual Politburo session, which would begin at 3 p.m. From Friday to Sunday the individual leaders apparently set wheels in motion on the adopted decisions, and plan further proposals for delivery to Brezhnev by Monday for the next week's session. Despite many exceptions and disruptions in this typical design (such as receptions, conferences, travel, etc., not to mention unexpected developments and crises), such a pattern reveals systematic and rather efficient decision-making procedures.

Of course, Brezhnev has the right to call the Politburo into session at any time, on the shortest notice, should an occasion warrant this. The Politburo has met much more frequently than once a week when a crisis has developed, as was the case, for example, in the months before the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968. For these irregularly scheduled sessions, Brezhnev usually takes advantage of his pre-eminent position in summoning the other leaders to the Central Committee building, where his office is located, rather than convening the session in the Kremlin building where the regularly scheduled Thursday meetings are held. In addition, the Politburo occasionally moves as a group to the leadership rest area of Zavidovo to conduct meetings in relative isolation. Such moves usually reflect discussions

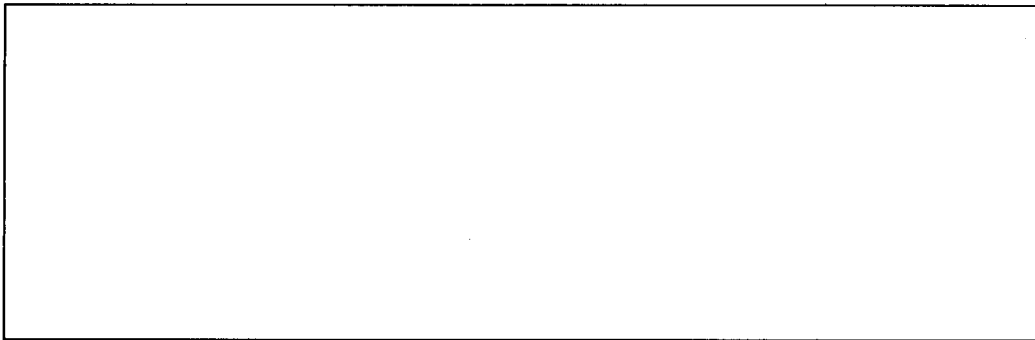
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on particularly sensitive or important subjects. For example, most Politburo leaders spent two days, presumably in meetings, in Zavidovo in mid-December 1970, following a long Politburo session on 19 December. [redacted]

[redacted] the activity probably involved the upheaval in the Polish leadership, which came to a head at precisely that time and culminated in Gierek's replacement of Gomulka as Party boss.

Attendance at Politburo meetings apparently is mandatory for members who have no other pressing engagements that would excuse them from attending.* Of course, General Department Chief Konstantin Chernenko or one of his deputies would be present as Politburo secretary to record the proceedings. Politburo alternates and members of the Party Secretariat apparently are invited as a matter of course to attend regular sessions; however, Brezhnev can exclude them in special cases, and in any case they have no binding vote on decisions. Other participants may attend at the invitation of Brezhnev (or, in his absence, on the request of the senior secretary in charge) in order to provide their expertise. Such outsiders, who normally are the elite of the most important Party and government agencies, probably are present only for the discussion of topics in their immediate area of competence.



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The scope of topics which the Politburo considers in session can be gauged only roughly on the basis of limited evidence, but apparently it covers a broad range of issues -- from crucial to fairly trivial. In this connection, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin remarked in 1965 that under the Soviet system of decision-making the pressure on the leadership was extreme because so many problems were referred to the top; by way of example he said that he had once seen the agenda of a Presidium (Politburo) meeting that contained approximately 50 items. Dobrynin's remark would seem to apply primarily to the situation which had prevailed under Khrushchev, who had apparently sought to reduce his colleagues' ability to restrain him by overloading Politburo sessions with consideration of a great number of lesser questions.

In any case [redacted] materials suggest that at least since the 23d Party congress in April 1966, when the Party Presidium was renamed the Politburo, session agenda have been briefer and devoted to more significant problems.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Whatever the scope of the agenda at Politburo meetings, the reported statements of several Soviet officials, including Brezhnev himself, suggest that most sessions are now fairly strictly ordered and conducted so as to avoid digressions or disruptions. Brezhnev, of course, plays the leading role in Politburo sessions. Ambassador Dobrynin stated in February 1969, for example, that the General Secretary presides at Politburo meetings and has the function of summarizing the views expressed. The general practice, he added, is to seek a consensus on the issue under discussion, and the General Secretary's "rulings" usually are accepted, although formal votes are taken occasionally in sessions when there are disagreements. Brezhnev himself elaborated on these procedures [redacted] [redacted] in [redacted] 1970, stating that most Politburo members do not speak but merely listen at

[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]

Politburo sessions; further, that if in the course of the session a new problem should arise, then if at all possible, discussion and decision are postponed to the next meeting, and the Politburo member who raised the problem is asked to present it in writing beforehand. This custom is apparently intended, again, to limit the number of agenda items considered at each Politburo meeting in order to ensure adequate preparation and consideration of each item.

[redacted]

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Although [redacted] examples tend to confirm the existence of a certain discipline and order in Politburo sessions, apparently with the aim of expediting the presentation of proposals and adoption of consensus decisions, these rules of procedure clearly are not intended to stifle debate in that forum. The more senior and powerful members, especially, probably feel little constraint in speaking out during sessions. [redacted]

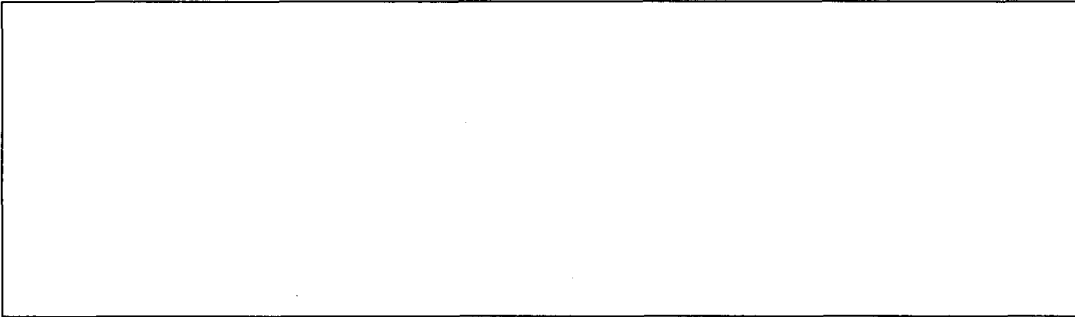
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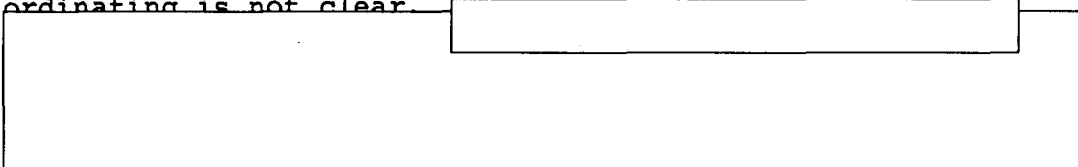
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B. Coordination Outside Politburo Meetings

Politburo sessions may well be reserved for the most important issues of broad policy, but a large proportion of the time of Kremlin decision-makers is devoted to other questions which demand resolution between sessions. The main method used daily to register the opinions of Politburo members on urgent questions is the so-called "vote." The normal practice calls for the General Department to send draft decisions, decrees, proposals, etc., by courier to the Politburo members and to request their "vote" on them. On simpler matters the department may telephone the Politburo member's office and inform the leader or his staff verbally of the issue to be voted on. In any case, the policy-maker is expected to express himself either "for" or "against" the issue, making comments to explain a negative position or suggesting changes in the decision's text.

In Kremlin usage, the line between voting and coordinating is not clear.



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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1. The Range of Issues Coordinated

It is possible that when a decision does not involve broad policy considerations, a "vote" is taken among several Politburo members in line with their assigned areas of responsibility. An example in support of such a hypothesis would be the November 1971 decision on granting military aid to Somalia, which a General Staff officer said had been voted on by [REDACTED] the three Politburo members who are Defense Council members: Brezhnev, Podgorny, and Kosygin.*

On the other hand, sometimes a full vote has been taken on seemingly trivial questions. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Issues which we know have been raised for resolution outside Politburo meetings include such diverse topics as Brezhnev's report to the June 1969 International Communist Conference, instructions to Soviet ambassadors and delegates abroad, a proposed stop by Kosygin in Kabul on returning from India, a proposal on "Arab trade," the composition of various Soviet delegations to foreign conferences and summit meetings, the protocol arrangements for meeting East German leader Honecker, a proposed Mazurov reception of a UAR foreign trade official, the official recall of Podgornyy as a Supreme Soviet delegate from his elected constituency after his appointment as President, publication of obituaries on high Soviet officials, the erection of a monument for deceased Romanian leader Georgiu-Dej, the awarding of Orders of Lenin to Soviet cities and oblasts, and aspects of economic administration -- specifically, decisions on milk, timber, livestock breeding, and harvesting.

In almost every one of these instances the Politburo member or members voted favorably [redacted] which would suggest that the majority of such between-sessions decisions, because they usually are of secondary importance, pass through the coordination process with a minimum of trouble. Nevertheless, the apparent felt need to secure Politburo approval for many matters which might logically be decided at a lower level can be considered a weakness in the Soviet decision-making system, because it places severe demands on the policy-makers' time. This tradition apparently reflects not only a general reluctance to delegate authority, but also mutual suspicions among the Politburo oligarchs, which impel them to insure against possible future recriminations from their colleagues by securing the widest possible assumption of responsibility for decisions large and small.

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2. The Political Pressures to Reach Agreement

[redacted]

[redacted] the leaders not only usually try where possible to avoid friction, but may sometimes reverse themselves when it becomes clear that they are in a minority on an issue. The avoidance of political isolation is apparently an important consideration in coordination.

[redacted]

In fact, on less than vital issues many Politburo members often seem primarily concerned to vote whichever way the majority of their colleagues are voting, and not to appear as one who makes superfluous difficulties on routine matters.

[redacted]

[redacted]

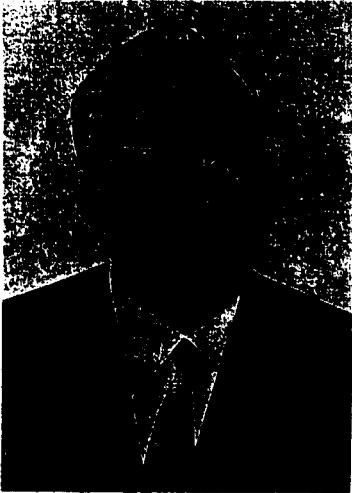
3. Sources of Coordination Problems

On the other hand, the evidence also has revealed occasional difficulties in the coordination process as a result of policy frictions or collisions of vested interests.

[Redacted]

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CONFIDENTIAL



1987

Gennadiy VORONOV,
Chairman of People's
Control Committee.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted] The inference [redacted]
is that the leaders who have their political base in various geographical areas often cause some delay in coordinating important proposals and other documents affecting that base, at least until they have given close attention to the matter.

4. Cases of Outright Obstruction

Still more rarely [redacted] materials contain indications of more serious resistance or outright opposition of Politburo members to certain proposals which have been put forward for coordination. [redacted]

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5. Brezhnev's Role in Resolving Differences

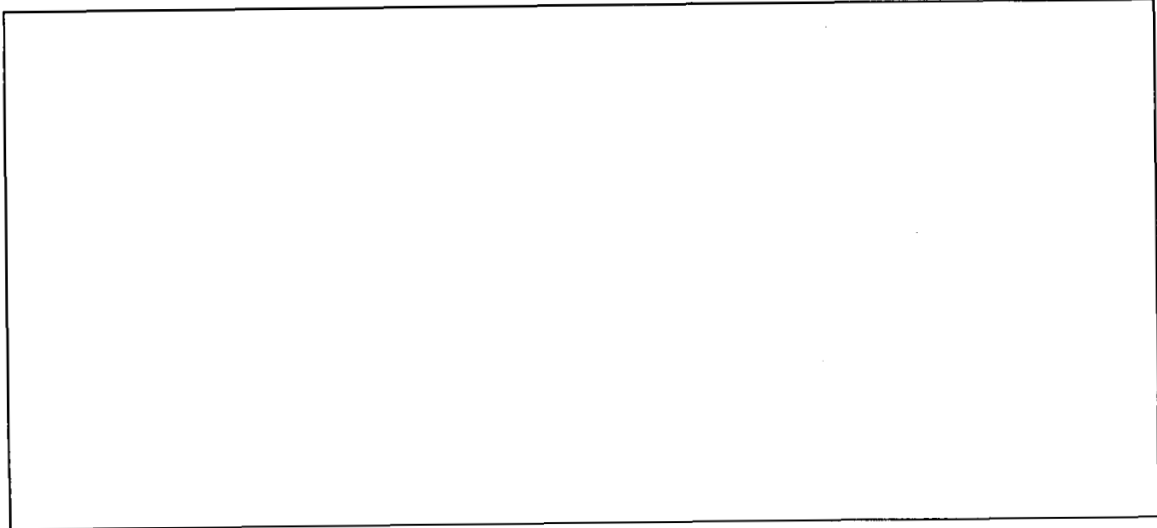
Except for unusual cases, such as [redacted] one in which Kosygin apparently had major reservations, the procedure for resolving differences which Politburo members have expressed in [redacted] coordinating on issues between Politburo sessions seems to be fairly clear. Brezhnev, as General Secretary, has the authority and responsibility to make the final determination on most if not all decisions. [redacted]

comments which have been made on a draft proposal are collated and incorporated into the decision within the Secretariat, normally by the Party secretary who has jurisdiction in the area or by one of his subordinates. From there, the revised draft is submitted finally to Brezhnev for his signature.

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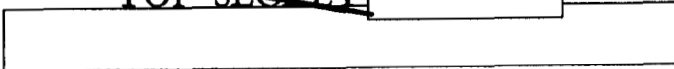


C. The Flow of Memoranda and Proposals Within the Politburo

The total evidence [redacted] points to a considerable and constant flow of information and proposals within and around the Politburo. It indicates that virtually any member of the Politburo or Secretariat can initiate a policy proposal. However, it also suggests a pattern of procedures that centers on Brezhnev -- not surprisingly, in view of his position as General Secretary and de facto chairman of the Politburo. [redacted]

[redacted] Brezhnev usually receives a copy of Politburo memoranda, reports, etc., whatever the restrictions on distribution. Moreover, they indicate that standing procedures call for Brezhnev to release documents before they are voted on by Politburo leaders. Further, they reveal that a document which has been circulated and coordinated among Politburo members goes back to Brezhnev, who signs and thereby validates the decision.

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1. A Sampling of Politburo Memoranda

[redacted] several examples [redacted] show top leaders initiating memoranda addressed to the Politburo or, what is essentially the same thing, to the Central Committee.

[redacted]

-- [redacted] a Kosygin memorandum on economic matters was [redacted] circulated on Brezhnev's instructions to Politburo members [redacted]

[redacted]

-- [redacted] Andropov in his new position as KGB chief revealed that a memorandum, which was written by his deputy Sergey Bannikov, had been read at the Politburo and had received high praise; [redacted]

[redacted]

-- the Bannikov memorandum was discussed about a week after the Arab-Israeli conflict ended and a week before Brezhnev reported on the situation to a Central Committee plenum -- strongly suggest that the subject here was

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



1971

Yuriy ANDROPOV,
Chairman of Committee
for State Security (K.G.B.)
& Politburo alternate.

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[redacted]

Soviet involvement in the Middle East, conceivably focusing on intelligence gaps or failures.

[redacted]

In none of these examples does the memorandum appear to present a major program. Rather, they suggest the advancement of important but somewhat narrow parts of policy programs.

By contrast, however, a Brezhnev memorandum of May 1970 "On the Situation in Agriculture" set forth for Politburo consideration a major investment program which apparently upset previously approved guidelines for the 1971-1975 national-economic plan. [redacted]

[redacted]

It might be speculated, moreover, that Brezhnev made an attempt to arrange matters in such a way that at least his agricultural critic Voronov would not have time to review the memorandum properly. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted]

2. Brezhnev's Powers to Authorize and Validate Proposals

[redacted]
[redacted] Brezhnev's permission usually is sought or required to circulate a leader's proposal for Politburo coordination.

[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

3. Premier Kosygin's Independence

Despite [redacted] extensive Brezhnev powers regarding Politburo proposals, there is some evidence that Premier Kosygin's authority gives him a certain measure of independence from the General Secretary, beyond the acknowledged substantive competence that all Politburo leaders have in their area of responsibility, and that this leads to occasionally crossed wires.

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

A more serious conflict apparently occurred [redacted]
[redacted] when Brezhnev complained to Foreign
Minister Gromyko about a failure to follow his suggestion
in coordinating a document [redacted]

[redacted] Kosygin had allowed the British
delegation to release the first version of the communique
without striking out a phrase objectionable to Brezhnev,
although the phrase was being removed from the version
to be published in the Soviet press.

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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III. POLICY-SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

A number of high-level institutions, both within and just below the Politburo, are directly involved in the decision-making process. At the Politburo level, various permanent and ad hoc bodies operate under the direct chairmanship of a Politburo member in fulfilling policy tasks on behalf of the policy-makers. The Defense Council, which plays a key role in formulating decisions in the military sphere, is the most important of these Politburo "subcommittees" and serves as the main channel through which Defense Ministry views reach the Politburo. Below the Politburo and subordinate to either the Party Secretariat or the government Council of Ministers, several Party and government agencies offer policy support on a direct and regular basis. The most important of these Politburo auxiliary agencies are the secret governmental Military-Industrial Commission and the Party Central Committee apparatus, while the latter is supported in turn by the intelligence and policy input of the Foreign Ministry, the KGB, and various academic research institutes. The efficiency of Politburo operations and policies depends very largely on the kind and amount of support which these institutions provide.

A. Politburo Subcommittees

It is clear [redacted] that individual members do much of the Politburo's preliminary work themselves, relying primarily on their own personal staffs. Occasionally, however, specific tasks or problem areas are explored more formally in committee, usually in ad hoc commissions which are formed for this purpose. The assignment of a Politburo member to direct such subcommittees usually is due to his having regular bureaucratic responsibilities

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in the given area. In addition, there are certain permanent bodies which represent exceptions to this somewhat haphazard staffing procedure, and which function as de facto Politburo subcommittees whatever their formal position in the regime's setup. In addition to the Defense Council, these include a Commission on Industry, (probably) a Commission on Agriculture, and a few others [redacted]

1. The Defense Council

The secret Defense Council (Sovet oborony) evidently exists as a state entity linking the Party and government hierarchies. The limits of its independent powers in the sphere of defense are not fully clear, but it appears to be ultimately subordinate to the entire Politburo on the most important military policy issues. Its top-heavy membership, including the leadership troika of Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgorny, reinforces its de facto status as a Politburo subcommittee.

Probable Council Membership

Evidence [redacted] indicates overwhelmingly that Brezhnev chairs the council. Other members of the Defense Council, besides the troika, are Politburo alternate Dmitriy Ustinov, Minister of Defense Andrey Grechko and possibly Chief of the General Staff Viktor Kulikov. Ustinov's responsibility in the Party Secretariat for overseeing the armaments industry and space program makes him, in effect, Brezhnev's deputy for defense

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1970
Dmitriy USTINOV, Party Secretary and Politburo alternate.

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industry. The fact that Ustinov is only a Politburo alternate may, however, reduce his role in Defense Council deliberations to an advisory capacity. The same holds true, of course, for the two military representatives, who have no Politburo status at all. Thus, although formally all Defense Council members may participate on an equal basis in their deliberations and resolutions, in practice the greater political authority of the three Politburo members probably makes their views decisive, particularly in the case of Brezhnev as chairman. In addition to these contributing members, the chief of the Chief Operations Directorate of the General Staff appears to function as a secretary of the Defense Council, handling procedural matters such as arranging for the convening of the Council, keeping minutes of its sessions, etc., but probably not having a say in its deliberations.

Other important government officials take part from time to time in the work of the Defense Council, offering special expertise on particular issues when requested on an ad hoc basis. Those who have been reported or observed in a Defense Council supportive role, possibly as associate members of the council, include the Warsaw Pact commander, the Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces, the KGB Chairman (who since 1967 has been Yuriy Andropov, a Politburo alternate), and, on defense-industrial questions, the chairmen of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) and the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK), both of whom are USSR deputy premiers but have no Politburo status. Any of these officials, of course, can draw on the assistance of specialists within their own bureaucracies in providing information to the Defense Council. The presence of non-members at Defense Council sessions is restricted to those items of the agenda which fall within their area of expertise, in keeping with the tight rein of security and compartmentation in this area.

The Defense Council does not appear to have its own staff as such, relying instead on expert inputs

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[redacted]

from various government agencies and groups as required.

[redacted] the General Staff of the Ministry of Defense has a central role in presenting position papers on military requirements to the council. The General Staff receives recommendations on questions of doctrine, strategy, and force requirements from military research groups or institutes within the Defense Ministry; the General Staff reportedly has some responsibility in this area for presenting position papers before the council. In regard to development and procurement of military hardware, the Defense Minister allegedly has authority to place requirements for weapons systems, new technology, and troops, giving his recommendations (apparently not binding) on quantities of troops and weapons needed and on performance characteristics desired. [redacted] it is presumed that the recommendations on military hardware requirements are forwarded to what he labeled the council's "economic component" (an apparent reference to the Military-Industrial Commission [redacted] for final coordination before formal council approval. The council reportedly consults also with senior officials within the USSR Academy of Sciences in formulating recommendations for Politburo review.

Support for the Politburo

The Defense Council's activities, [redacted] [redacted] suggest that it makes important contributions to the formulation of Politburo positions on military issues. [redacted] [redacted] just a few hours before a scheduled Politburo session, the council met [redacted] [redacted] it seems clear that in this case the

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Defense Council was called on to forward advice and recommendations to the Politburo in support of Soviet foreign policy objectives in Eastern Europe, and specifically in Czechoslovakia. The Defense Council, of course, would not have rewritten the broad outlines of the Politburo's foreign policy, which Brezhnev had spelled out a month earlier at a closed Central Committee plenum. Nevertheless, those outlines probably were somewhat vague for a variety of reasons, including differences of opinion within the Politburo at the time as to how hard to pressure the Czechoslovaks. Conceivably, therefore, the rampant growth of "democratization" in Prague and concomitant deterioration of the Soviet political position created the need, as Brezhnev saw it, for more specific guidelines, including military plans.

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Defense Council members (l. to r.) PODGORNYY, Marshal GRECHKO, BREZHNEV, KOSYGIN, at May Day parade, 1968.

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Independent Council Decisions

In addition to such preparatory work for the Politburo, [redacted] the Defense Council may also have the right to make certain military-political decisions independently of the Politburo, especially on questions that fall within well-defined Politburo policy guidelines. [redacted] the council defines the general principles of military doctrine after discussion and consideration of political, economic, and military factors, including strategy, weapons development, and technology. The council's decisions on military doctrine [redacted] are final and binding on all Party and government agencies. [redacted] the council takes part in all major military-political decisions, particularly during crisis periods.

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[Redacted]

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Other evidence, nevertheless, has indicated that on the most important policy questions, the Defense Council has a role more clearly subordinate to Politburo decision-making.

[Redacted]

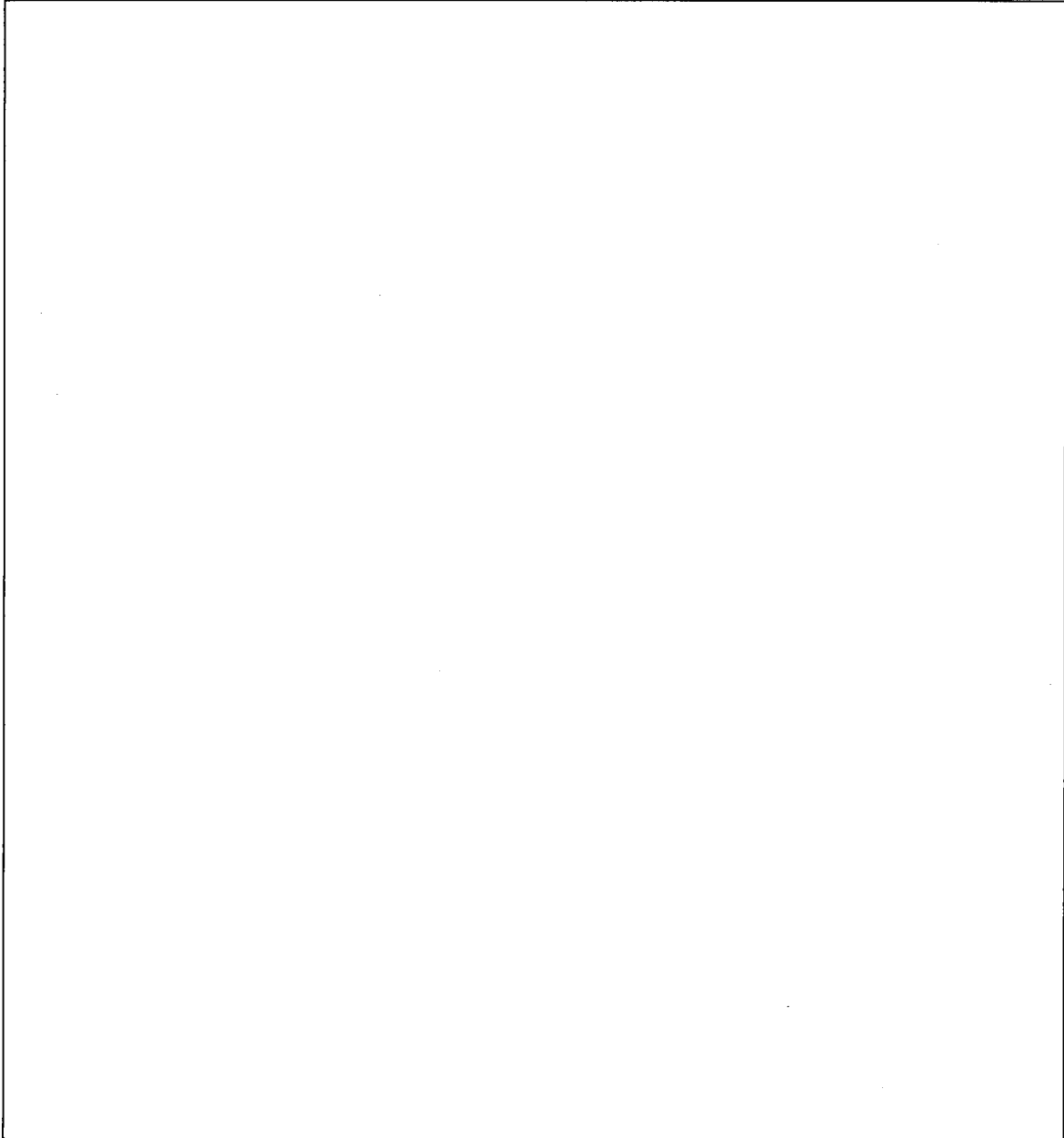
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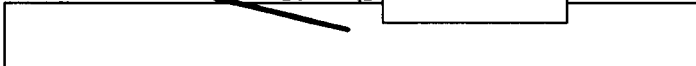
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2. Politburo Commissions

Information on additional Politburo subcommittees permits certain tenuous conclusions on their scope and method of operation. None of them seems as important as the Defense Council, although each presumably functions with a similar mandate from the Politburo. The evidence indicates that the Politburo member who is tasked with a policy problem conducts the commission at his convenience and apparently with full authorization in matters of participation, agenda, etc.

Commissions have been observed in several major policy areas, including industry, agriculture, the national-economic plan, and domestic trade. The industrial and

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agricultural commissions are quite possibly permanent and have been chaired, respectively, by Mazurov and Polyanskiy, who are Premier Kosygin's first deputies. [redacted]

[redacted]

a. The Commission on Industry

An industrial commission [redacted] was formed under Kosygin's aegis [redacted] before the Premier presented a major program of reform in economic planning and industrial management for approval by a Central Committee plenum. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

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1970

First Deputy Premier
Kirill MAZUROV.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

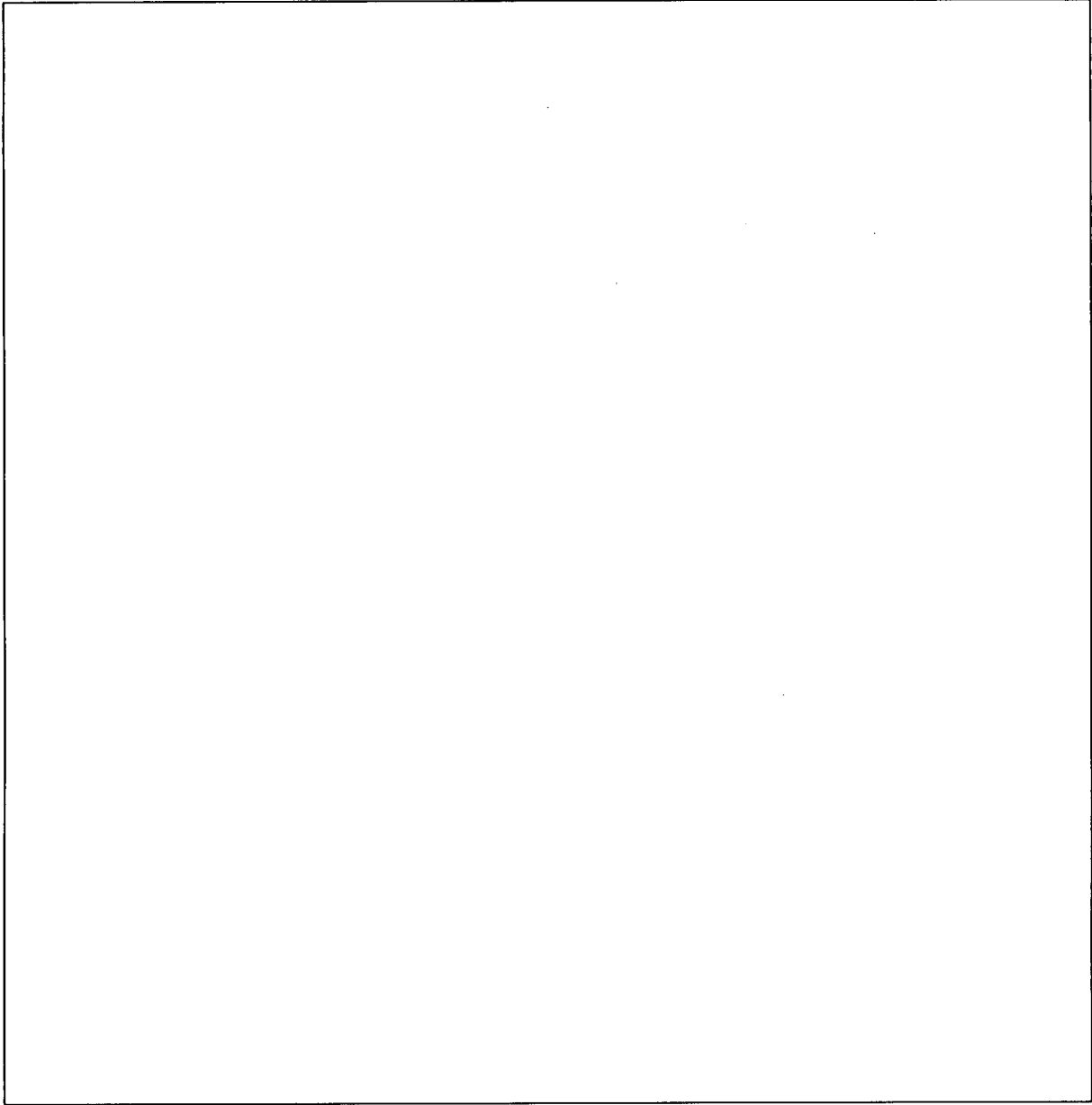
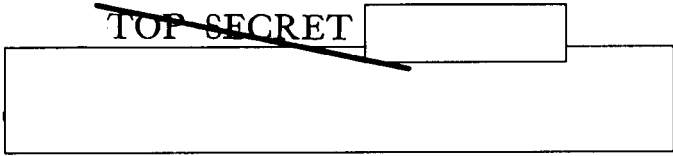
b. The Agricultural Commission

Many of Polyanskiy's activities in support of agricultural policy- and decision-making [redacted] over the years [redacted] appear to be associated with a commission on agriculture. [redacted]

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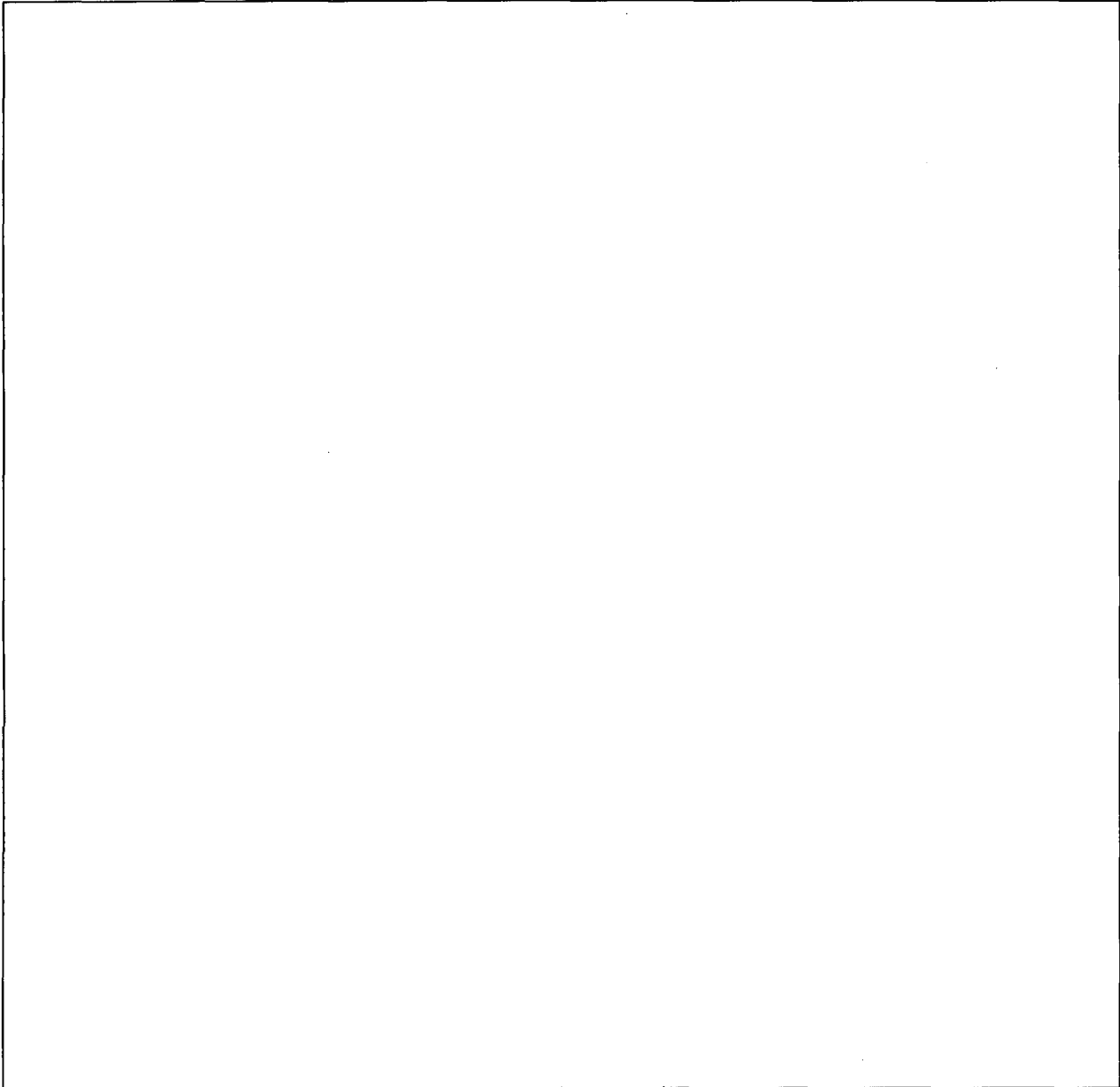


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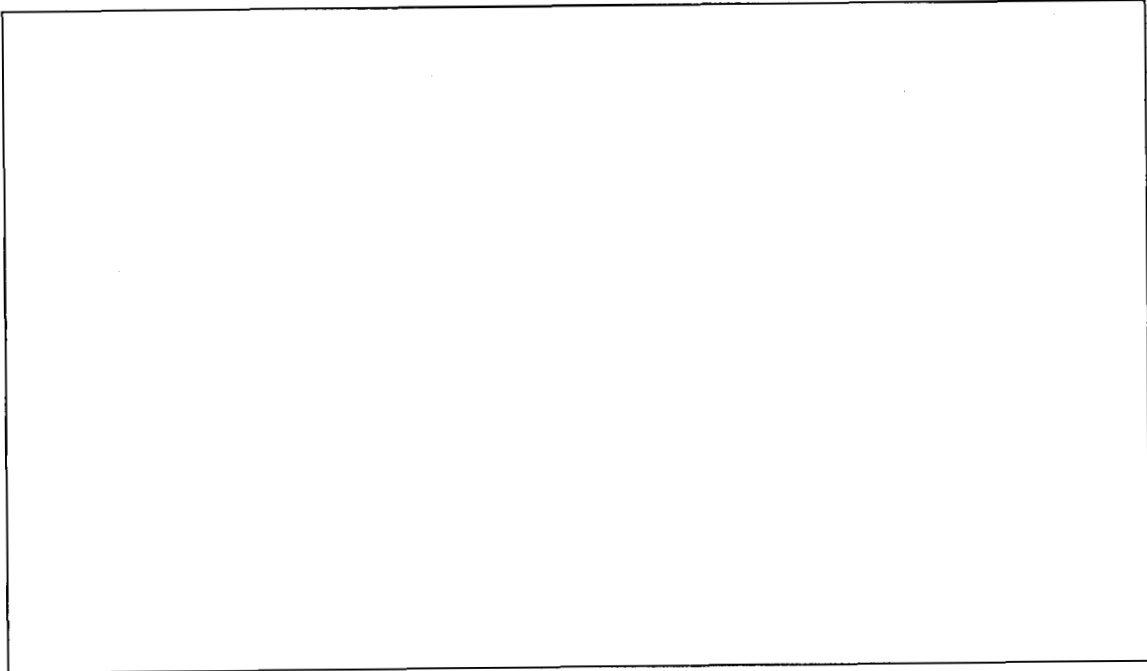
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B. Auxiliary Agencies

Several agencies are just one step below the Politburo commissions in providing direct support to the policy-makers. On the government side, perhaps the most important in the decision-making process is the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK) under the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers. Like the Ministry of Defense, the VPK operates essentially as an adjunct of the Defense Council but is not headed by a Politburo member. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Committee for State Security (KGB) are similarly important institutions which support the Politburo in policy-making, but they are excluded from detailed consideration here.* On the



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Party side, the Central Committee apparatus plays a key role, giving support in its own right and coordinating the contributions of other policy-supporting institutions. Research institutes of the Academy of Sciences also contribute, although generally indirectly through the apparatus, to the decision-making process.

1. The Military-Industrial Commission

The Military-Industrial Commission (VPK), the very existence of which is a state secret, is a high-level coordinating staff attached to the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers.* The VPK, with USSR Deputy Premier Leonid Smirnov as its chairman, is nominally subordinate to Premier Kosygin. However, in practice Smirnov reports directly to the Party Secretariat, specifically to Politburo alternate Ustinov, and thus indirectly to General Secretary Brezhnev, on the most important matters of decision-making in the sphere of defense-related research, development, and production. In effect, it apparently functions more as a Defense Council adjunct than as a staff of the Council of Ministers, except in routine matters.

CONFIDENTIAL



1965

Leonid SMIRNOV, USSR Deputy Premier and Chairman of the Military-Industrial Commission.

**This Presidium is the highest-level, regularly functioning deliberative body in the Soviet government. It (footnote continued on page 60)*

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[redacted] materials [redacted] shed
some light on its otherwise obscure organizational structure and activities. They reveal that the commission has a permanent staff of defense-production experts, under the leadership of Smirnov and his three deputies, Georgiy Titov (first deputy), Georgiy Pashkov, and Leonid Gorshkov. These officials work directly with defense plant directors and engineers, as well as with the leadership of the eight ministries which administer all defense-related production.

[redacted] possibly the entire staff of the VPK are specialists on detached duty from these ministries, with the exception of Smirnov, his deputies, and their immediate office help.

*(footnote continued from page 59)
consists of the Premier, his two first deputies and several deputies, plus reportedly a small number of other members of the Council, such as the Minister of Finance. The Chairmen of the most important Presidium commissions are deputy premiers and thus are involved in all questions of government administration. In addition to the secret VPK, the Presidium contains at least two publicly identified Council of Ministers Commissions chaired by deputy premiers: for Foreign Economic Questions (chairman Vladimir Novikov), and for CEMA Affairs (chairman Mikhail Lesechko).*

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Investment Decisions

Beyond its primary responsibility for the smooth functioning of the defense-production sector, the VPK evidently has a say in formulating decisions on investment in military and space programs, as well as on other technical matters which relate to defense policy.

[redacted]

The VPK may indeed have only limited authority to initiate and approve decisions itself; rather, the commission probably serves primarily as a coordinator of decisions for the various government agencies which are involved in matters of defense. [redacted]

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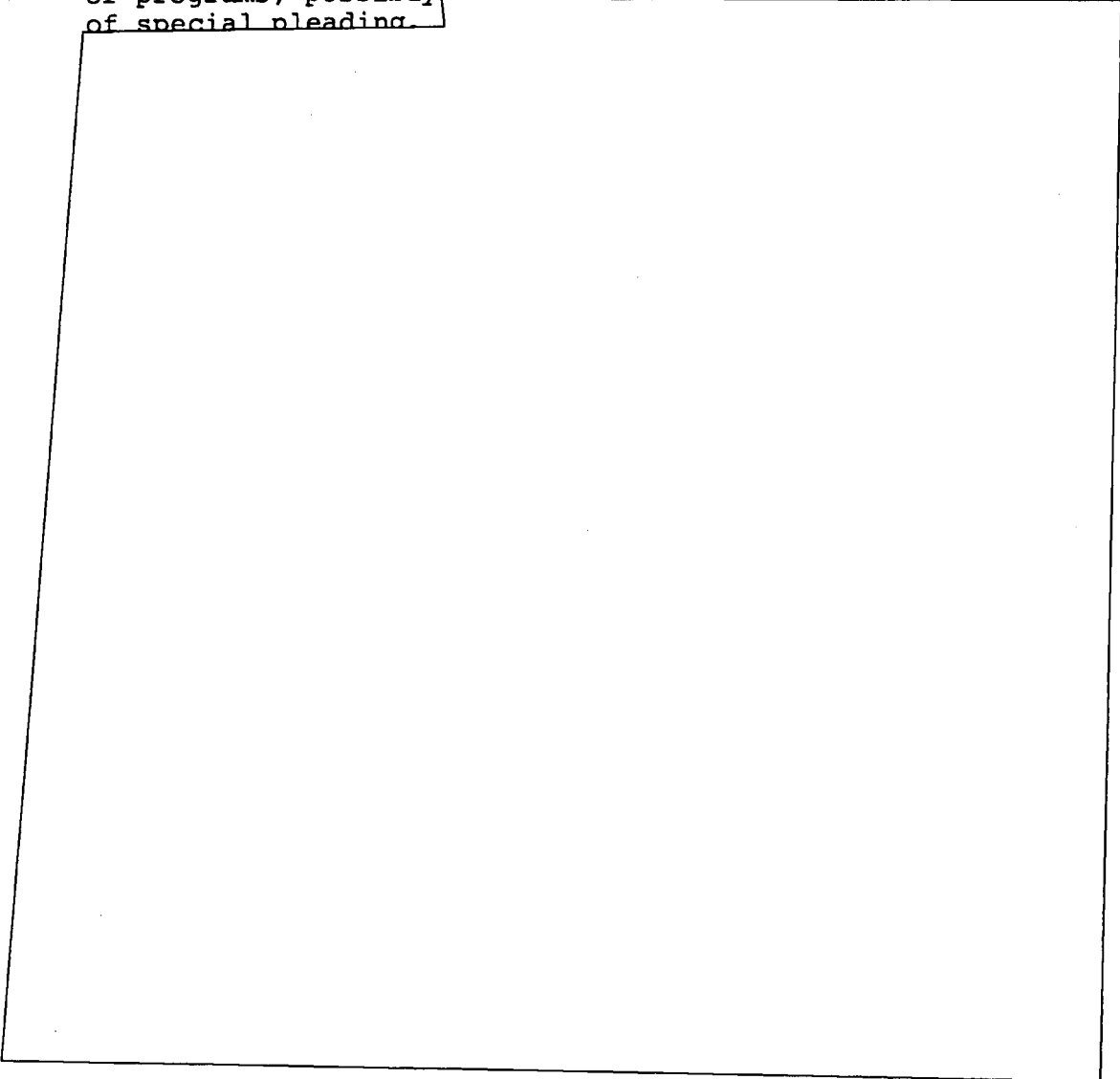
Requirements for Estimates

The VPK seems to levy requirements for intelligence estimates in apparent support of defense-production plans

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or programs, possibly on its own initiative for the purpose
of special pleading.



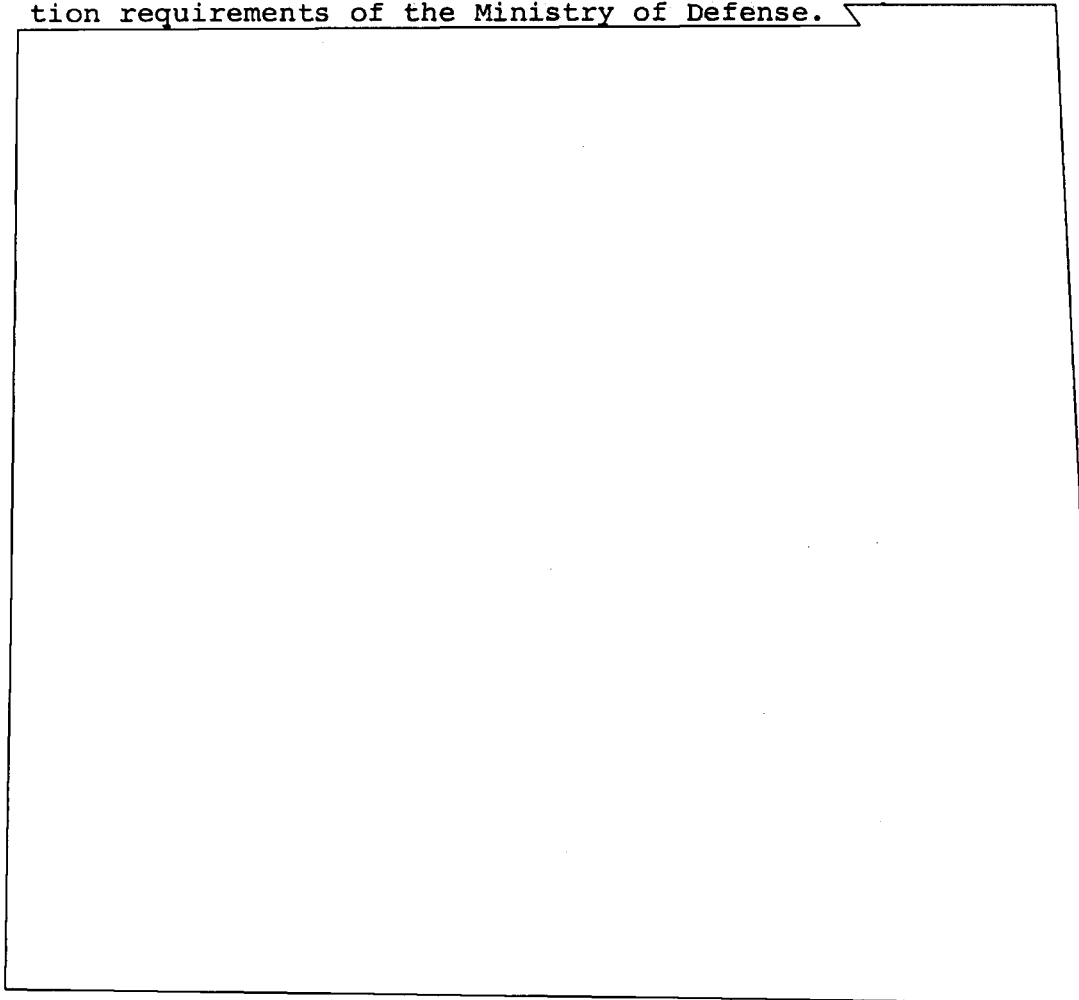
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The VPK Relationship With Grechko

One aspect of the VPK's authority as a possible adjunct of the Soviet Defense Council is its apparent responsibility for implementing and controlling production requirements of the Ministry of Defense.



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[redacted]

The VPK and Command and Control

The VPK, by virtue of its pre-eminent role in overseeing the production of military technology, is associated with military command and control systems. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

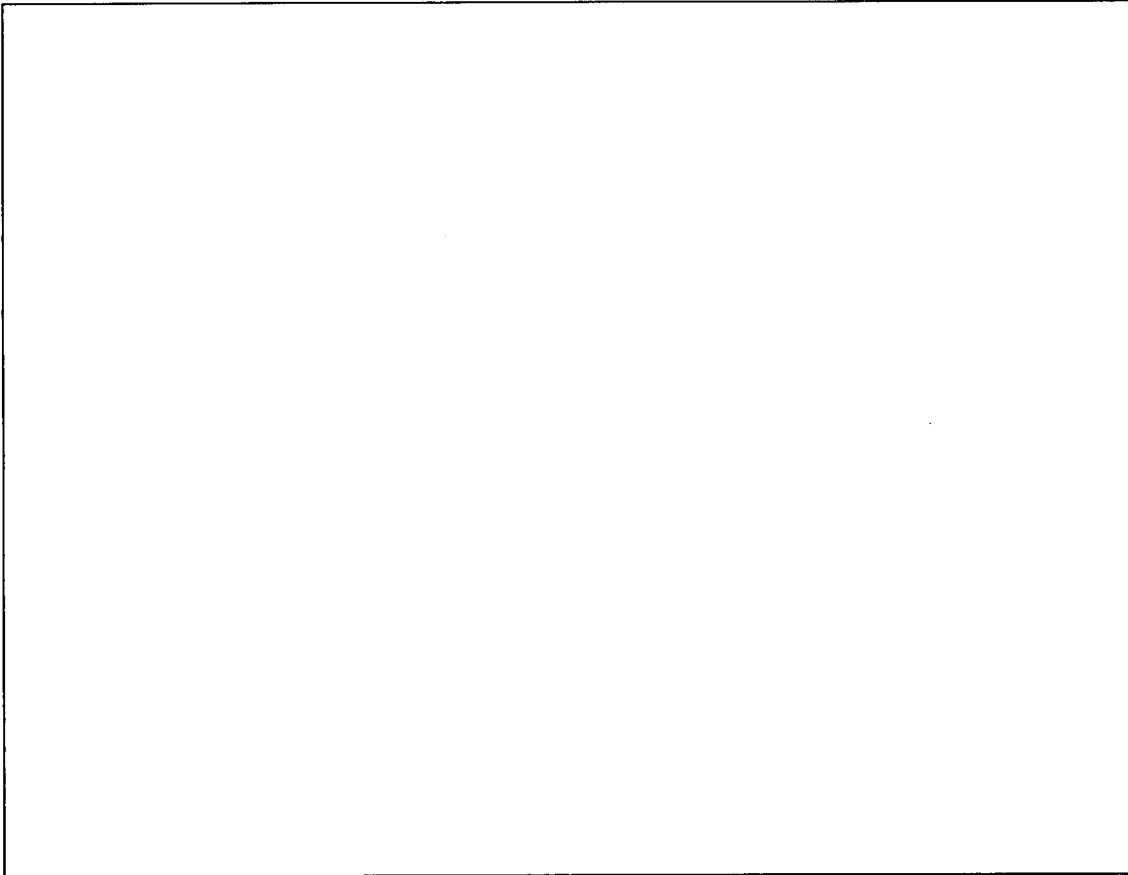
***"Command and control" would include, notably, the communications equipment, computers for data processing, electronic display boards, etc., that serve as a basis for military operational decisions.*

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[redacted]

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[redacted]



2. The Central Committee Apparatus

The Central Committee apparatus is known to play an important role in channeling or coordinating inputs to Politburo policies from other support agencies. However, the reporting from informed sources on the specific

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[redacted]

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machinery for this is quite often confused or contradictory. For example, Yuriy Arbatov, director of the Institute for the USA, reported in 1969 that the three primary contributors to most foreign policy debates -- which he identified as "the scientists" (apparently meaning institute officials like himself), "the military," and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs -- often present their positions to the policy-makers directly and independently, without prior coordination. He complained that this led to poor argumentation and presentation at the highest levels. In seeming contradiction, Arbatov two years later explained (in the context of preparation of Soviet positions on the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks -- SALT) that a number of different bureaucratic groups in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Academy of Sciences, and the Ministry of Defense contributed to SALT, and that a Central Committee staff coordinated these groups. The final positions, he said, were then decided by the Politburo.*

Departmental Functions

Without doubt, many of the approximately 20 departments of the Central Committee apparatus play a considerable role in coordinating the inputs of the auxiliary agencies on most high-level policy problems, although the existence of a single staff for this general purpose is dubious. Anatoliy Gromyko, a member of Arbatov's institute and son of the Foreign Minister, has stated that

**It is conceivable, however, that such a coordinating body in the Central Committee apparatus was later established specifically for the SALT problem.*

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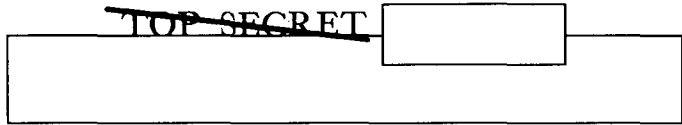
[redacted]

the functions of staff support and policy coordination are carried out either formally by ad hoc groups which the Politburo and Secretariat create, or informally as part of "ongoing coordinating activities" of the Central Committee headquarters staff. He explicitly denied, however, that there was a permanent coordinating staff that would enjoy the leverage and over-all prerogatives of the US National Security Council staff which Dr. Kissinger heads. Gromyko's reported statement fits closely the observed pattern of activity of the Politburo commissions as described earlier, but it appears to be a simplification of the actual role of the central Party apparatus.

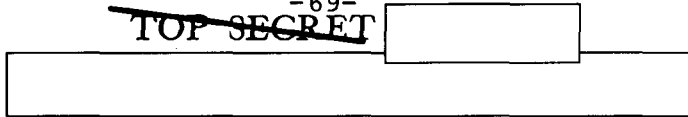
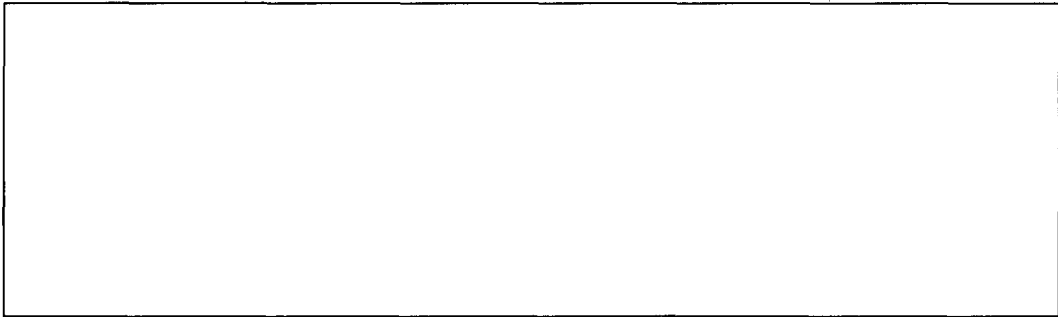
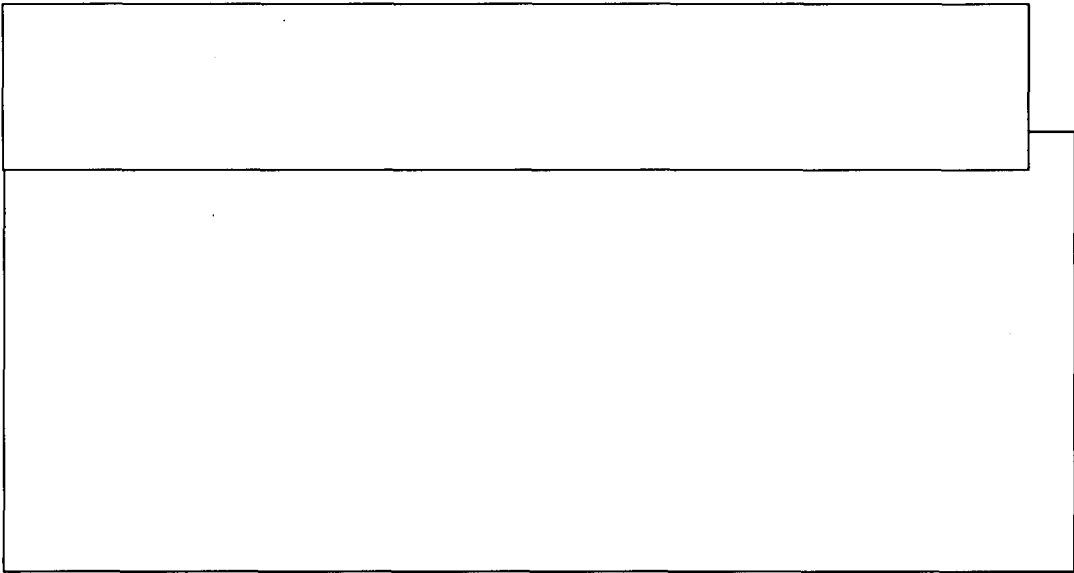
The coordination process in which Central Committee departments become involved is a complicated one. [redacted] [redacted] has stressed that it is standard practice for all "interested" apparatchiks from the Central Committee, and sometimes from related organizations, to take part in the most important Politburo-level decisions.* Alluding to the existence of a "fair number" of patterns for decision-making, [redacted] described a hypothetical case in which information from various sources might point to a need to formulate a change of attitude toward a Polish political figure. The "interested" components would then be the Polish Sector of the Central Committee's "Foreign" (that is, Bloc) Department, the Foreign Ministry's Fourth European Countries Division (for Poland and Czechoslovakia), and possibly some department of the state security apparatus (KGB). According to this source, the Soviet position would be prepared first within one of these components, then gradually more senior officials would be enlisted in drafting opinions, and the related

[redacted]

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departments consulted as the need arose. A preliminary decision would then be made in the Polish Sector and submitted to the Bloc Department chief for examination. After review by the department chief and the appropriate junior Party secretary, the matter would reach the Politburo level; the responsible Politburo member, and sometimes the entire Politburo, would convene all "interested" persons, and a final decision would be made.



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Staff Aides and Consultants

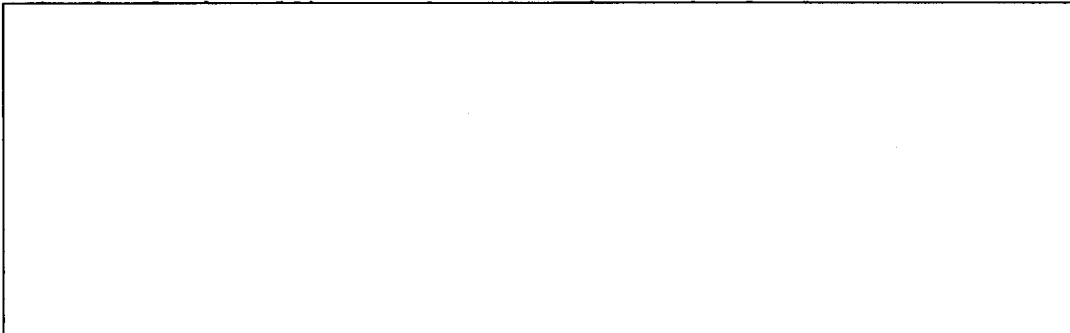
The Central Committee apparatus also serves as a source of specialists who work on the personal staff of individual Politburo leaders.* The staff aides carry the title of "Assistant" to the leader they serve. In addition, Politburo leaders can draw on the specialized knowledge of "Consultants" who are attached to various Central Committee departments. Both the assistants and the consultants exert a considerable influence in formulating policy positions for their busy and often less well-versed bosses.

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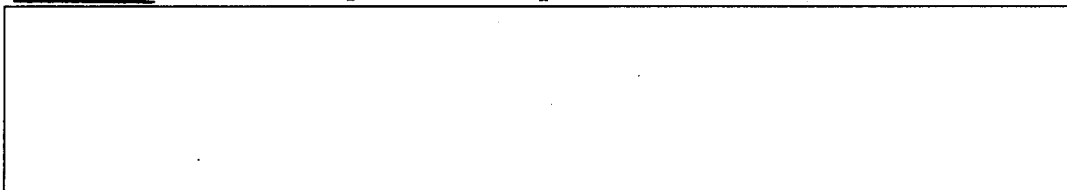
**All such specialists are considered here as a category of Central Committee functionaries, irrespective of their formal position in the Party or state apparatus, because they have identical functions in assisting their bosses.*

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Central Committee consultant groups, which exist in several departments, may provide the mechanism by which ostensibly non-official "academicians" offer information and advice to the Party policy-makers. How this mechanism might work in, say, the area of foreign policy which the Bloc Department supervises can be seen in the contacts and activities of Aleksandr Bovin, whom the Soviet press identified in late 1969 as leader of a Consultant Group of an unspecified Central Committee department. Although Bovin's departmental subordination has not been spelled out, all the evidence strongly suggests a Bloc Department affiliation. His link to the academic world is reflected in the fact that he is a member of the editorial board of the journal USA: Economics, Politics, Ideology, which is published by the Institute for the USA.



In view of Bovin's presence on the editorial board of the Arbatov institute's journal, therefore, it can be speculated that the Bovin group in the Bloc Department provides a link which connects the Central Committee apparatus

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Conflict Among Brezhnev's Aides

An unconfirmed but plausible report on the drafting of Brezhnev's Lenin Day speech in 1970 suggested that staff aides and consultants, by dint of their intellect and specialized knowledge, occasionally can exert an important influence on their bosses and modify the outlines of Soviet policies.

**Besides its relationship with Arbatov's Institute for the USA, the Bloc Department presumably would control, for example, the Institute of the Far East (on China) and the Institute of Economics of the World Socialist System (on CEMA member countries). There is no ready explanation for the interest, if not responsibility, which Andropov and the Bloc Department have exhibited regarding Soviet relations with the US, unless perhaps it has to do with the similarity of approach to Bloc countries and to the US, which is based more on traditional geo-political and military-strategic factors than on the ideological considerations that play such an important role in the International Department's dealings with other foreign countries and Communist parties.*

***These would include notably the Institute of the International Workers' Movement, the Institute of World Economics and International Relations, and the institutes for Africa and Latin America.*

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According to this account, this speech had been written by a "large group" [redacted]

A few days before he delivered the speech on 21 April, Brezhnev reportedly received a critical comment on the draft from [redacted] his assistants, [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] These [redacted] apparatchiks -- who are known from other sources to be strongly conservative Brezhnev associates of long standing -- are said to have accused the speech writers of revisionism, apparently because of the draft's favorable attitude toward detente and its failure to justify Stalinist policies. In response to a Brezhnev request for a reply to the criticism, the drafters allegedly charged [redacted] with attacks on the Party's general line, and in the event the speech remained basically unchanged.

This reported incident of disarray among the General Secretary's closest advisors would seem to indicate that his foreign-policy assistants are both more moderate in the Soviet context and more influential in general than his domestic-affairs counselors. [redacted]

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3. Academic Institutes

The number of institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences which give policy support to the Politburo has steadily increased during the past 10-15 years. The most influential of these institutes today, at least in the sphere of foreign policy, are the Institute of World Economics and International Relations (WEIR), which Nikolay Inozemtsev directs, and Yuriy Arbatov's Institute for the USA. Like several similar policy-support institutes of the Academy, these two appear to have drawn on Central Committee personnel for the core of their staff. In effect, they appear to be fulfilling functions which earlier had been located within the Central Committee but which were broken out in order to take advantage of the relative freedom that scholars have to mingle with professionals in their fields outside the Soviet Union and to gain access to influential political circles in foreign countries. The institutes are in a position thus to organize and centralize the largely overt collection and evaluation of information from a number of open sources and to pass their analyses to the Politburo, either directly or through the central Party apparatus.

A large body of reporting indicates that institute officials regularly brief individual members of the Politburo -- usually Kosygin or Brezhnev are mentioned -- and offer position papers or research studies on specific topics of interest to the policy-makers. The total evidence

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[redacted]

suggests that only a few institute officials, probably at the director level, serve as permanent consultants to the Politburo, while the majority of them are summoned only occasionally, if at all. [redacted]

[redacted]

Institute studies focus, naturally enough, on major problems having a direct bearing on Soviet policy. Several examples of the subjects of such studies are available [redacted]

[redacted] topics
[redacted] include SALT, Czechoslovakia, and China. [redacted]
[redacted] the SALT paper had outlined first the Soviet objectives, then [redacted] understanding of the US objectives [redacted] [redacted] followed [redacted] with a discussion of the probable effects of various Soviet alternatives, the first two being to enter and not to enter into the negotiations.

Yuriy Arbatov and his Institute for the USA seem to play a role similar to WEIR's, although Arbatov may try to place more emphasis on face-to-face briefings of individual top leaders. Arbatov himself reportedly stated that in early June 1969 he had been asked to brief Kosygin on two topics: first, on current and future conflict in the US between the "guns and butter factions" over resource allocations -- that is, pressures in the US for defense expenditures as opposed to civilian expenditures -- and second, on how US experts assess the same conflict in the Soviet Union.

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Rivalry Between Institutes

A number of reports indicate a fairly serious rivalry between WEIR and the Institute for the USA on strategic and foreign-policy issues, specifically in regard to the US, and this is reflected in their differing approaches to analysis. Undoubtedly, the background and personalities of their present directors have given the two institutes their unique stamp. WEIR, under the influence of the economist and former Pravda editor Inozemtsev, places its major emphasis on a theoretical approach and on model building. The Institute for the USA, on the other hand, working under the close supervision of polemicist Arbatov, apparently bases its analyses on a more empirical approach. Members of Arbatov's institute have made numerous disparaging remarks about Western "think-tanks" and their use of game theory, cybernetics, etc., in political-strategic analysis and have indicated a pragmatic preference for "logic." Kulish himself reportedly affirmed the existence of competition between WEIR and Arbatov's institute for influence and attention, and at one point even asserted that the Institute for the USA and other regional institutes in the Academy of Sciences were "satellites" of WEIR. Indeed, in creating the Arbatov institute in late 1967, the Politburo could very well have intended it to be an alternative source of information to them, with the focus on short-term considerations, while expecting the Inozemtsev institute to provide a longer or broader perspective on policy issues.

Competition probably exists between a number of other institutes that the Politburo draws on for expertise. For example, the Institute of Economics and Organization of Industrial Production, under the directorship of Abel Aganbegyan, would appear to be a competitor of WEIR in some areas. In 1970 Aganbegyan's institute recruited WEIR's deputy director Stanislav Men'shikov to head a new section dealing with econometric models of capitalist

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[redacted]

countries and focusing on the US. At the same time, however, WEIR reportedly had become very active in economic forecasting through computer modeling on the US economy;

[redacted]

A similar proliferation of effort seems to have occurred in the sphere of CEMA relations, which were the responsibility of the Institute of Economics of the World Socialist System for a number of years. Former Central Committee Bloc Department official Oleg Bogomolov has been director of this institute since April 1969. In early 1971, however, a CEMA specialist [redacted] reported the establishment of a new International Institute of Economic Problems of the World Socialist System.

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POSTSCRIPT

The Soviet regime has evolved more or less continuously towards participatory bureaucracy over the past two decades. True, today's Politburo may not be much different from its past and future counterparts in certain features -- for example, regarding the existence of a de facto chairman in the person of the Party boss, the assignment of Politburo members to specific policy-making areas and to councils and ad hoc commissions, and the subordination of all Party and state agencies to Politburo rule. However, several distinctive aspects of the Politburo's modus operandi have undergone significant change over the years, and its effectiveness has been affected as a result. The future should bring further evolution.

In the Stalin era, which was marked by continual political upheaval and uncertainty, Politburo members almost completely lacked policy initiative, serving mainly as enforcers of the dictates of one person: Stalin. A modern Soviet Party textbook, discussing the fact that Stalin convened the Central Committee only twice during 1947-1952, expressed the problem of the Politburo's role at that time in exquisite understatement: "The Politburo also did not function normally for a long time. Many important questions, including those which concerned the fate of several members of the Central Committee and even of the Politburo, were decided if not by one person, then by a narrow circle of persons."

The position of the ruling elite improved somewhat under Khrushchev, so that its members began to make significant contributions to the formulation of policy. However, leadership suffered from the heavy-handed intrusions of the Party boss in all areas of activity, from the dilution of his colleagues' effectiveness in a flood of trivia, and from bitter political infighting which

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accompanied Khrushchev's constant demoting and shifting of personnel in the Party leadership.

By contrast, the present Politburo has become stable in both its composition and its operating procedures as a result of continuing evolution of the system. As we have seen, the Politburo in recent years has adhered to orderly decision-making processes, reserving sessions for serious consideration of the most important issues of broad policy. In addition to ensuring full coordination among Politburo members on issues between sessions, the regime increasingly has provided for the participation in decision-making of an ever widening circle of specialists from various support agencies. Perhaps just as importantly, no Politburo member has been removed from the ruling elite in the past six years -- a reflection of the growing difficulty in altering the balance of power in the leadership, should someone like Brezhnev have a mind to try this.

Thus a heightened degree of orderliness and expansion of the circle of advisors has been both facilitated and made necessary by the continued sharing of power. At the same time, much of this increase in the stability and effectiveness of the policy-making system can be attributed also to the regime's greater experience in coming to grips with complex problems. Finally, the present policy mechanism probably reflects, in part, the personalities of the top leaders themselves. Brezhnev and Kosygin, for example, seem temperamentally content with the relatively ordered bureaucratic procedures of "collective" leadership. Should the over-all power balance remain essentially unchanged and Brezhnev either continue in charge for another five-ten years or be succeeded by someone of a similar bent -- for example, by his heir-apparent Kirilenko -- the outlook would be for relatively minor refinements in the present system, as well as for a probable continuation of the present trend toward widening the circle of policy support. On

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the other hand, should a sudden shift in the power balance result in the advent of a less conformist and more ambitious leader, such as Shelepin perhaps might be, some major changes -- as yet unpredictable -- could occur in both the composition of the Politburo and its present fairly stable pattern of operations.

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