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REVIEW OF SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Domestic Politics

The USSR's new draft constitution, published on June 4, represents a significant victory for General Secretary Brezhnev, who had been the only leader publicly identified with the project. The draft embodies steps evidently sought by Brezhnev to enhance the leverage of the central Party apparatus--by expanding the powers of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet at the expense of the Council of Ministers, and by tightening central authority over powerful regional interests. The abrupt removal of Soviet President Podgorny from the Politburo on May 24 at a Central Committee plenum strongly suggests that Brezhnev will assume the chairmanship of the Presidium concurrently with his party post, quite possibly as early as next week's meeting of the Supreme Soviet. Additional shifts in the leadership can be expected in the next few months as Brezhnev tries to enhance his power at the expense of other senior rivals--particularly chief ideologue M. A. Suslov, who is the senior member of the Politburo in terms of service.

Brezhnev's constitution, the USSR's first since 1936 and the subject of intense internal debate since the mid-1960s, features several significant changes in institutional relations. In elaborating on relations between the central authorities and the republics, the new constitution places

This review is based on analysis and research work completed by CIA's Directorate of Intelligence through June 7, 1977. Questions relating to any part of the review and suggestions for making it more useful may be directed to [redacted], Office of Regional and Political Analysis, [redacted]

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heavy emphasis on integration and control from Moscow. At the same time the powers of the new Supreme Soviet leadership are to be beefed up. The document allows Supreme Soviet deputies to address inquiries to government organizations or officials, which will assist Brezhnev in monitoring the activities of the Council of Ministers. The apparent transfer of the people's control committees to the aegis of the Supreme Soviet Presidium will also give Brezhnev--assuming he takes over Presidium leadership--new tools to use in his ongoing struggle to force ministerial compliance with party instructions. This strengthening of the Supreme Soviet at the expense of Premier Kosygin's Council of Ministers enhances the credibility of new rumors that Kosygin may retire by this fall.

The Clash With Podgorny

According to [redacted] Brezhnev reiterated last year the need for constitutional reform that would further centralize power in Moscow, but encountered opposition from Podgorny. As the highest ranking Ukrainian in the leadership, Podgorny may have been under pressure from some Ukrainian officials to represent their interests in Politburo debates. Suslov [redacted] warned Podgorny not to engage in a test of strength with Brezhnev on this issue and reminded Podgorny that he no longer had the confidence of the party apparatus.

Podgorny, who has become increasingly conservative on a variety of issues over the years and has carefully kept his distance from Brezhnev on key policy matters, persisted; he apparently challenged the general secretary on the subject of constitutional reform and lost.

There is evidence of increasing strain between Brezhnev and Podgorny in the weeks before Podgorny's fall. For example, shortly before Podgorny's trip to Africa in March, Brezhnev [redacted] told several Soviet officials that "we are sending another Idi Amin to Idi Amin-land. And Idi Amin is always Idi Amin, playing the fool." In addition, Brezhnev and Podgorny had a highly unusual argument during the Soviet-Finnish talks in Moscow on May 17, a week before Podgorny's fall. According to [redacted] Podgorny interrupted Brezhnev's remarks to the Finns, drew Brezhnev's attention to a document, and insisted that he state what it contained. The two men then argued in whispered tones and Brezhnev became visibly angry.

[REDACTED]

These incidents support the assumption that a clash and a showdown took place at a Politburo meeting on May 23, the day before the Central Committee plenum formally removed Podgorny from the leadership. The Soviet president has since been treated as if he no longer exists; his picture can no longer be purchased, his name no longer appears in print. Podgorny failed to appear at a meeting of the Presidium on May 27 and he was absent from the ceremonies for Bulgarian party-state leader Zhivkov on May 30.

Podgorny's removal from the presidency of the Supreme Soviet is thus likely when it meets next week. The clearest indication that Brezhnev will eventually assume the position of chief of state is the new constitution's provision for a First Deputy Chairman to the Presidium to assist with those protocol duties that would be an additional strain on the party leader. Last week, in fact, Zhivkov referred in Moscow to Brezhnev as the "first party and state leader of the USSR," and both Pravda and Izvestia printed his remarks without alteration. Zhivkov used a similar formula in greeting Brezhnev at his 70th birthday celebration last December. (Every Soviet bloc state except Poland and Hungary has placed the party-state reins in one pair of hands.)

Although there is no evidence that differences over foreign policy played a major part in Podgorny's removal, the Politburo meeting on the eve of his ouster presumably received a report from Foreign Minister Gromyko on his talks in Geneva with Secretary Vance. Podgorny, who has had reservations about detente, may have objected to the very modest conciliatory Soviet gestures made in Geneva so soon after the acrimonious exchanges between Gromyko and Vance in Moscow just two months earlier.

A Soviet Central Committee employee remarked [REDACTED] several days ago that Podgorny had claimed in the past that too many concessions were being made to the West, particularly to the US, citing SALT as an example. It is noteworthy that Podgorny, for example, was publicly somewhat unenthusiastic about the Vladivostok summit in 1974, stressing the limited nature of detente and entering a demurrer on the question of the future prospects of cooperation with the capitalist world. In introducing these cautionary notes, he contended that "it would be intolerably nearsighted to fail to take into account" the various negative aspects of the international situation, which seemed to be evidence of internal controversy. (In their election-

[redacted]

cering speeches for the Supreme Soviet that year, then politburo members Podgorny and Shelepin were more cautious in their support of detente than either Brezhnev or Kosygin.)

Other Personnel Moves

In addition to dispatching one of the more conservative members of the Politburo as well as introducing a new constitution in the USSR's 60th anniversary year, several personnel moves have apparently enhanced Brezhnev's power. A former Brezhnev assistant, K. V. Rusakov, has been elected a central committee secretary responsible for relations with bloc countries, replacing Konstantin Katushev. Katushev, according to [redacted] was vulnerable because of unspecified "mistakes" he had made.

Several days after the plenum, the USSR also announced that Yevgeny Tyazhelnikov would become head of the central committee's propaganda department, thus occupying a post that had been vacant since 1970 in what appeared to be a Brezhnev-sponsored personnel change. Tyazhelnikov has been lavish in his praise of Brezhnev for the past several years, particularly at last year's 25th party congress. Tyazhelnikov's promotion suggests that a major logjam on personnel selections has been broken and that more announcements will be made in the near term.

The failure to remove Defense Minister Ustinov from the secretariat meanwhile remains a significant anomaly suggestive of continuing leadership differences over how much authority to give his successor as party supervisor of defense industry, Ya. P. Ryabov. Ustinov continues to hold full-time party and government posts, which is not customary in the USSR, and has managed to survive plenums in October and May, when key personnel shifts were made. It is possible that Brezhnev has sought Ustinov's retention in the Secretariat for support on SALT matters during a period of sensitive negotiations with the US.

The Anti-US Offensive

In the wake of Podgorny's ouster, the Soviets have taken to the propaganda offensive in their relations with the US, presumably to counter the notion that the sacking of a hardliner will make the Kremlin easier to deal with.

On May 26, Izvestia carried the most detailed personal criticism of President Carter yet to appear in the Soviet press. The Soviets had hitherto been restrained in criticizing the President by name. The article followed a strongly-worded attack on Presidential adviser Brzezinski, which concentrated on the issue of human rights. The Soviet press also suddenly renewed its attack on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in the same period.

This public criticism of US policy across-the-board is presumably part of a continuing Soviet campaign to seize the diplomatic offensive prior to the Belgrade meeting on June 15, but Moscow at the same time is trying to create the impression that current leadership politicking should not be confused with domestic weakness. The politicking goes on, however, and such key Politburo members as Foreign Minister Gromyko appear preoccupied with internal matters. Only two days after Podgorny lost his seat on the Politburo, Moscow suddenly asked the Egyptians to hold this week's talks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmi in Moscow, reversing a previous Soviet commitment to meet in West Europe.

New Appointments To Come

A more definitive test of Brezhnev's power will come during the next few months: first, in seeing whether or not he does take over the presidency; second, in the selection of a successor to Kosygin if he should retire; and third, in filling the new position of first deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium after the constitution is adopted in October. If any of these positions should go to either Party secretary A. P. Kirilenko or Ukrainian first secretary Shcherbitsky, then Brezhnev is a major winner; a post for Leningrad party boss G. V. Romanov, however, would be more of a feather in Suslov's cap. Selection of more neutral figures such as Moscow party leader V. V. Grishin or RSFSR Premier M. S. Solomentsev would suggest a stand-off for Brezhnev.

The fact that Suslov is still a problem for Brezhnev is reflected in the draft constitution text, which takes several bows in the interests of the senior party secretary. The first three "tasks" identified for the current stage of the

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USSR's development are placed in the field of ideology, Suslov's bailiwick. Also important symbolically is the fact that, in a brief foreign policy section, the pledge to peaceful coexistence ranked behind support for national liberation struggles, another point congenial to the Soviet party's old man.

Economic Affairs

Despite a record grain crop last year and excellent prospects for this year's winter grain, the USSR continues to suffer from its worst food shortages in a decade. The industrial sector, meanwhile, may be heading for a second consecutive year of sluggish growth.

The USSR's winter grain crop, which normally accounts for 30 percent of total production, may reach a record 70 million tons this year. Winter grains were sown last fall on the largest area since 1968 and winter losses will be below normal. As a result of last year's record crop and this year's favorable outlook, the Soviets have made no new grain purchases since last December.

While current grain prospects are good, Soviet consumers are still plagued by serious meat shortages stemming from the poor 1975 grain harvest. Industrial meat output in March-April jumped 21 percent above the 1976 March-April level, but the customary lag between output and improved retail supplies has meant continuing shortages. The leadership in response has launched an extensive campaign to boost meat production in the private sector which produced 30 percent of last year's meat supplies.

The Soviets have reason to be sensitive to prolonged meat shortages. [REDACTED] in the USSR have commented in the past that [REDACTED] provincial cities may have led to three bombings in Moscow in January. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] have also alleged that Brezhnev's decision to travel to Tula in January to bestow a hero-city award was designed to address local grievances. Brezhnev's speech in Tula contained an unusual reference to consumer problems.

In the industrial sphere, last year's growth was the slowest since World War II and, during the first quarter of 1977, Soviet industry as a whole grew by only 4.3 percent over the same period last year. Growth in production of fuels and electric power reached an all-time low of 3.5 percent,

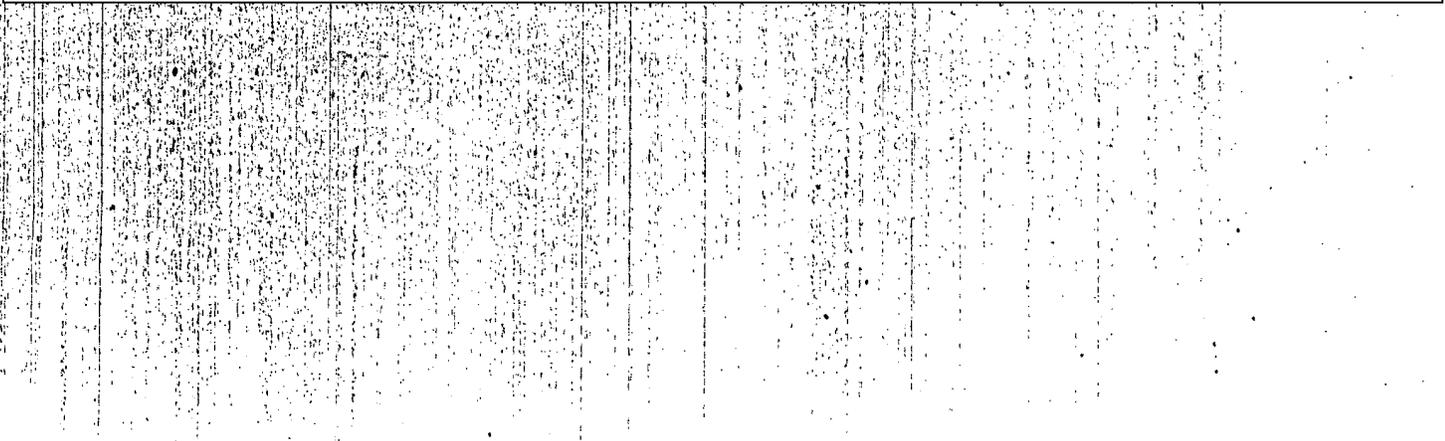
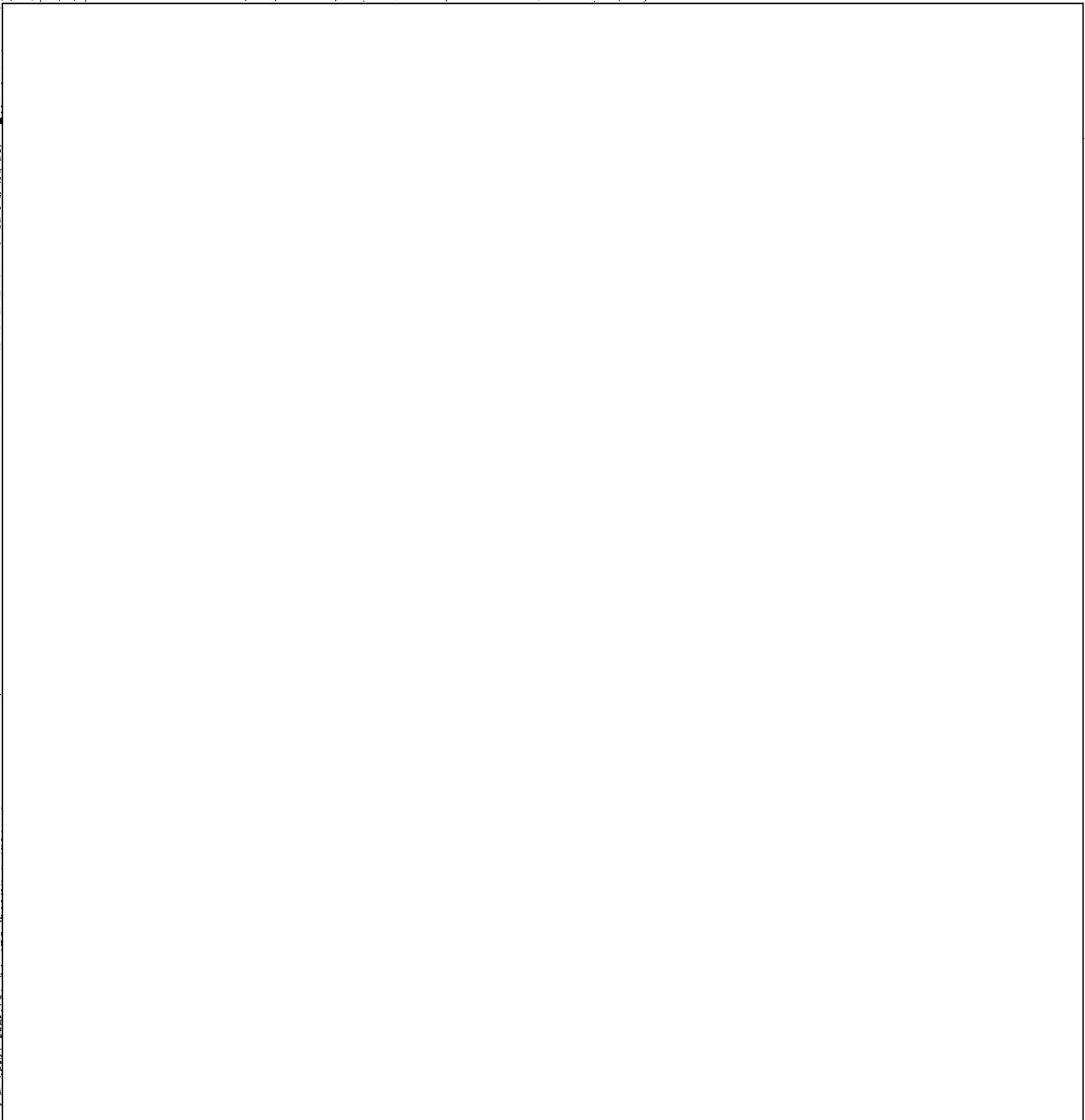
[REDACTED]

steel production dropped by one percent, and the growth rate for civilian machinery output--usually a star performer--fell to a seven-year low in 1976 and sank even lower during the first quarter of this year.

Contributing to industry's difficulties are fuel shortages which have been reported in several areas of the country since last summer. [REDACTED]

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the USSR might have difficulty in meeting 1976-1980 targets for oil production. Oil allocations to the Ministry of Nonferrous Metals will be cut by seven percent during the third and fourth quarters of this year and other ministries may suffer similar reductions. Deliveries of oil products to the USSR's marketing organization in Belgium have been reduced significantly since the beginning of 1977.



Recipients of Bi-Monthly Review

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Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The White House

Colonel William Odom
Military Assistant to Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski
National Security Council Staff
The White House

Dr. Victor Utgoff
Director, Policy Analysis
National Security Council Staff
Room 476
Old Executive Office Building

Mr. William Hyland
USSR/Europe
National Security Council Staff
Room 368
Old Executive Office Building

Dr. Roger Molander
National Security Council Staff
Room 479
Old Executive Office Building

Mr. Anthony Lake
Director, Policy Planning Staff
Room 7311
Department of State

The Honorable Arthur Hartman
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Room 6226
Department of State

Mr. John Armitage
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Europe
Room 6226
Department of State

Mr. Mark Garrison
Director, Office of Soviet Union Affairs
Room 4217
Department of State

Mr. Marshall Shulman
Special Adviser to the Secretary of State
Room 7246
Department of State

Mr. A. Denis Clift
Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs
Office of the Vice President
Room 298
Old Executive Office Building

Mr. Walter Slocombe
Principal Deputy, Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA)
Room 4E813, The Pentagon
Department of Defense

Mr. Robert Hormats
Economic Affairs
National Security Council Staff
Room 361
Old Executive Office Building

Mr. Robert Gates
c/o Dr. Brzezinski's Office
The White House

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CONCUR:

Deputy Director for Intelligence

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