

Radio Free Europe/Munich  
Office of the Political Advisor  
Background Information USSR

December 9, 1957

THE SECRETARIAT AND THE PRESIDIUM

In institutional terms the most significant change in the relationship of forces of the "leading Party organs" during the post-Stalin period has been the increased status of the secretariat at the expense of the Presidium (see Background Information, 8 July 1957). This has been most clearly demonstrated during Khrushchev's rise to power by the process of first enlarging the secretariat at the XX Party Congress in February 1956 and then promoting three secretaries to be candidate members of the Presidium - Brezhnev, Furtseva and Shepilov. In the next reorganization of the Party leadership after the June Plenum had expelled the anti-Party group - Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Shepilov - Khrushchev's packed Central Committee elected O. Kuusinen to replace Shepilov as Secretary and also made him a full member of the Presidium; simultaneously four other members of the Secretariat were advanced to full membership in the Presidium - Brezhnev, Furtseva, Aristov and Belyaev. With Suslov and Khrushchev already full members, Pospelov - a candidate member - is the sole secretary who doesn't enjoy the status of full dual membership in the two top Soviet bodies.

A similar development has now taken place in the Ukraine. At the recently concluded plenary session of the Central Committee, V.V. Shcherbitsky, formerly first Secretary of the Dnieprepetrovsk oblast and L.I. Naidek, formerly first Secretary of the Odessa oblast were elected ~~to~~ the Ukrainian CC and then the "composition of the Presidium was broadened" to include both newly appointed secretaries. Two other secretaries O.I. Ivashchenko and S.V. Chervonenko were named candidate members at the same session. (Pravda, 6 December 1957.) Thus, the present Presidium of the Ukrainian CP now includes all the secretaries - four as full members<sup>+</sup> and three as candidates:

Full members

A.I. Kirichenko	1st Secretary
N.V. Podgorny	2nd Secretary
V.V. Shcherbitsky	Secretary
L.I. Naidek	Secretary

Candidates

N.D. Bubnovsky	Secretary
S.V. Chervonenko	Secretary
O.I. Ivashchenko	Secretary

D.S. Korotchenko	Chairman Presidium
	Supreme Soviet
N.T. Kalchenko	Chairman Council of Ministers
M.S. Grechukha	1st Deputy Chairman
N.M. Gureyev	1st Deputy Chairman
I.S. Senin	1st Deputy Chairman
Candidate	
V.I. Chuikov	Commander Kiev Military District

<sup>+</sup>In practically all the other Republic Parties the five members of the Secretariat are already full members of the Bureaus.

The justification for this marked expansion of the secretariats can be found in Khrushchev's speech at the XX Party Congress which, interestingly enough, reveals a distinguishable difference in emphasis from the view expressed by Suslov on organizational questions. The latter, whose extensive remarks on cadre problems may be indicative of the fact that he had once been responsible for this sector between 1953 and 1955 (see Background Information, November 9, 1957), stated categorically that the Party apparatus must be drastically pruned from top to bottom:

"The staffs of the Party apparatus must also be curtailed in order to make them consist of a small number of officials, but qualified ones. The Central Committee has cut its apparatus 25%. I think that this has merely laid the foundation for further reduction. We must schedule and carry out a reduction of the Party apparatus of territory committees, province committees, Central Committees of Union republic Communist Parties, city and district Committees of the Party. Their work can only benefit from this." (Pravda, 17 February, 1956)

The First Secretary, on the other hand, sought a similar qualitative improvement through organizational rather than further quantitative changes. Although he frequently mentioned the need to "perfect the Party apparatus in every way" and alluded to the structure of the apparatus as "cumbersome", there was no specific suggestion of cuts such as those proposed for the state bureaucracy. In the closing section of this part of his report, moreover, Khrushchev revealed that he approved of a practice which was in violation of "Party statutes. Thus, as pragmatic in matters of "Party-Life" as in agricultural and economic affairs he claimed that

"For the further improvement of the organizational activities of the Party certain partial amendments dictated by life itself must be made to the Party Statutes. Experience has shown that some provisions...do not conform to the prevailing norms of Party life. Oblast Territorial Committees, the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Republics and also some Rayon City Committees now have four or five secretaries instead of the three foreseen in the Statute."(Pravda, 15 February, 1956.)

The Party Statutes were then appropriately amended to fit the accepted practice but in a manner that left the ultimate decision in the Secretariat of the CPSU:

"It is recognized as inexpedient to maintain in the Party Statutes the provision concerning the number of secretaries of the Party Committees, since their number may be changed according to the specific conditions of work. It is established that the number of secretaries in the Party Committees is fixed by the CC of the CPSU." (Pravda, 25 February, 1956).

The post facto approval for this irregularity, one of the key operations in Khrushchev's manipulations of the Party machinery, marked the culmination of a process that had actually begun in the Ukraine and Moldavia in the summer of 1954 and continued throughout 1955 and early 1956 in the Republics in preparations for the XX Party Congress. That it represents a considerable acquisition of power by the First Secretary of the Central



Committee is apparent from a comparison of the following text of the 1952 statute with the 1956 amendment quoted above:

"The province or territory committee of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Union Republic elects an executive body consisting of not more than 11 persons, including three secretaries whose election is ratified by the Party Central Committee." (Pravda, 14 October, 1952.)

Since the authority to expand is, as N.S. Khrushchev has so skillfully demonstrated, equivalent to the power to promote one's own supporters, the Central Committee, i.e., its First Secretary, has been handed a most potent instrument with which to dominate the bureaus of all the Union-Republic Parties. No one has recognized the danger of this possibility better than one of the last appointees (1949) to Stalin's secretariat who, just five years ago, in his pre-Congress "theses" warned that

"for more efficient handling of current questions and better organization of checkup on fulfillment of decisions, it is necessary to provide in the Statutes that Secretariats be set up in the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics...In order to prevent the Secretariats supplanting the Bureaus of the...Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics, the number of secretaries should be reduced to three and the Secretariats should be directed to report the decisions adopted by them to the Bureau of the...Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Union Republic..." (Pravda, 26 August 1952.)

These hardly remembered "theses" of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev" were then repeated almost verbatim in the Congress speech (Pravda, 13 October 1952). For more than two years - from April 1953 until July 1955 - the balance of forces in the Presidium apparently made it impossible for Khrushchev as First Secretary to bring the Secretariat to its full complement of five (see Background Information, 16 November 1957), thereby successfully preventing the Secretariat (of the CC - CPSU) from supplanting the Presidium. Since that time - the July 1955 Plenum - each phase of the struggle for power has increased the position of the Secretariat relative to the Presidium. Today Khrushchev's warning words have become a fateful reality. For the second time in the history of the Soviet Party the famous prophesy of one of the great oppositionists - against Lenin as well as against Stalin - is again being confirmed:

"The organization of the Party takes the place of the Party itself; the Central Committee takes the Place of the organization; and finally the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee". (L. Trotsky: Our Political Tasks, Geneva, 1904, p. 54.)

Made in opposition to Lenin's conception of the Party, Trotsky's hypothesis has been proven "by life itself", under Khrushchev as well as under Stalin. The insistence on Leninist principles in Party life makes the eventual emergence of the one man dictator inevitable.