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NAMES IN THE NEWS (XII)

Changes in the Moscow Machine

As a nucleus of power and prestige the first secretaryship of the Moscow City Committee of the CP (gorkom) is the most prized position of any of the Party's subdivisions short of the Central Committee. The alumni of this nerve center of favor include Stalin and Khrushchev, and among the younger apparatchiki, Furtseva. The secretaryship of the Moscow regional Committee (obkom) has been traditionally less important than the city post, although among the choice plums in the Party pie.¹ The regional office cadre have sometimes advanced into the forward command post.

With the appointment of first secretary V. I. Ustinov,² of the Moscow City Committee, as Ambassador to Hungary the first secretary of the Moscow obkom was promptly moved forward to fill the normal three-year tour of duty.³ The new man is P. N. Demichev, since March 1959 first secretary of the obkom and a member of the same committee since June 1956. That Demichev is one of the rising stars among the younger ranks of the Khrushchev apparatus is clearly indicated by his presence on the New Year's Honors list where he, Khrushchev, and ten others were awarded the medal "for labor valor."⁴ Not much is known of his earlier career, although he had agit-prop experience. At the December (1959) Plenum he reported on the progress of agriculture in Moscow oblast, which is one of the largest and richest income farm regions in the Soviet Union. It is also a strategic area for experimenting with new aspects of Kremlin farm policy -- the creation of specialized potato,

¹ Until the end of the Stalin era, the city and regional secretaryship was held by one person, Khrushchev being the last to hold the dual posts.

² Ustinov's term was 1957-60; the predecessor, Furtseva, served from 1954-57.

³ Pravda, 7 July 1960. The communique laconically listed Presidium member A. B. Aristov as having participated in both the gorkom and obkom meeting of the respective Party bureaus. He is also K's deputy on the CC Bureau, RSFSR.

⁴ Pravda, 1 January 1960. See also Background Information, "Awards in Agriculture," 4 January 1960.

vegetable, milk state farms from auxiliary and collective farm lands is being piloted through in Moscow oblast. Accordingly, the obkom secretaries are generally knowledgeable in agriculture. In his speech Demichev referred four times to N. S. Khrushchev for his help, guidance, and wisdom in farm planning.⁵ This agrarian background will stand the 40-year old Demichev in good stead up the long jagged furrows to the Party summit.

Demichev's vacancy as first secretary of the Moscow obkom was taken over by G. G. Abramov, the second secretary since April 1959. Not much is known of this young apparatchik other than that he is the recipient of the medal for labor valor. (Pravda, 22 January 1960). Of one thing there is no doubt, Demichev and Abramov, the one-two men in the Moscow party administrative hierarchy are Khrushchev appointees. As such they bear watching, as young apparatchiki on the rise.

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⁵ A valuable comment on a little known subject was his reference to the existence of about a thousand auxiliary farms belonging to Moscow factories/enterprises with over 114,000 hectares cropland designed to supply communal food. They were mostly absorbed by the new sovkhozy (Proceedings of the December Plenum CC, CPSU, 1959, pp. 235-40).