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SHELEPIN'S SLIP IS SHOWING

What happened to Shelepin in March? Whatever it was, it seems to have started a series of minor setbacks in his career which are now too numerous to be ignored.

Until the end of February, 1965, A.N. Shelepin was riding high. Promoted to full member of the Presidium in October 1965, he is still the only Secretary of the C.C., CPSU, who combines those two positions with a government position as a Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. In addition he is still the Chairman of the Party-State Control Committee.

The apogee of his career was reached on March 1st, when he appeared to be deputizing for Kosygin as the head of Government during the reception in Moscow for Josef Lenart, the Czech Prime Minister.¹ But towards the end of the month Shelepin suffered the first of a series of reverses, when he was the only full member of the Presidium, or Secretary of the C.C., CPSU, under the age of 70 to be omitted from the Commission set by the March Plenum to draft its decree on agriculture.

Podgorny proposed a 65-man commission under the chairmanship of Brezhnev.² It included notably:

Brezhnev, Andropov, Voronov, Grishin, Demichev, Yefremov, Kirilenko, Kosygin, Mazurov, Mzhavanadze, Podgorny, Polyansky, Ponomarev, Rashidov, Rudakov, Suslov, Titov, Ustinov, and Shelest.

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- 1) Reuter, 1 March 1965; Pravda, 2 March 1965.
 - 2) Stenographic Report of March (1965) C.C. Plenum.

It did not include Shelepin, Mikoyan or Shvernik, although it included every other full or candidate member of the Presidium and every other Secretary of the C.C., CPSU.

The failure to appoint Mikoyan, who is head of State, and Shvernik, who is 78, is easily explicable on grounds of age. But the omission of Shelepin, allegedly the "coming man of the Kremlin" (if we were to believe the theories of Frankfurter Rundschau,³ Der Spiegel, and other popular newspapers), is far more significant and must have been a deliberate slight.

At the end of the March Plenum, Shelepin's position was further downgraded by the appointment of K.T. Mazurov as 1st Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and full member of the Presidium.⁵ This move, which must have been made with Brezhnev's and Kosygin's approval, not only made Mazurov Shelepin's equal in the Presidium, but also ensured that during any future absence of Kosygin from Moscow, Mazurov -- not Shelepin -- would act as head of Government.

For example during the four weeks preceding November 6th, Kosygin was on leave on the Black Sea coast and Mazurov was basking in the limelight of the Moscow daily round. Shelepin was consequently pushed into the background. Moreover in September Shelepin was again by-passed in the Government hierarchy, for the second time this year, by the appointment of D.S. Polyansky as a 1st Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers.⁶

The final straws in the ill-wind of change for Shelepin were the speeches of Kosygin and Brezhnev to the September plenum. Both of these ignored the Party-State Control Committee (which was a creation of Khrushchev's),⁷ and both spoke of the Party organizations as being the main checking agencies for the USSR. One could detect the reins of Brezhnev's apparat tugging almost impatiently at Shelepin's previously prancing steed.

After being excluded from the March drafting commission, passed over twice in the promotion stakes to 1st Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and finding his organization ignored as an independent agency by both his Government and Party bosses, Shelepin must be finding 1965 a distinctly non-vintage year.

3) 29 September 1965.

4) March 1965.

5) Tass, 27 March 1965.

6) Pravda, 3 October 1965.

7) In November 1962.

He may yet recover and begin to move up again, but there is now ample evidence that since March both B and K have been deliberately soft-peddling Shelepin.