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● USSR: Party

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## RENEWED RUMORS OF KOSYGIN'S RETIREMENT

(See end for summary)

For the umpteenth time since Khrushchev was overthrown nearly six years ago, "authenticated reports" from Moscow are predicting the imminent retirement of A.N. Kosygin. (1) On this occasion the reports claim that he will resign from his post as head of the Government soon after the Supreme Soviet elections on June 14th.

Because he was born in 1904, and therefore would be 70 by the time of the 25th Party Congress (2) it has always seemed possible that the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, USSR, might retire at the 24th Congress in October or November this year. N.V. Podgorny, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, is a year older. He was born in 1903, and it therefore seems possible that he too might retire this year, which would make room for the Politbureau to appoint Kosygin as head of State, replacing Podgorny, and therefore open the way for a smooth retirement of Kosygin later by "kicking him upstairs."

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(1) Daily Mail, 9 June 1970, and AFP, 9 June 1970.

(2) Party Congresses are normally held every four years.

This technique was most recently used in the case of A.I. Mikoyan, who was appointed Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in July 1964, to await his final retirement from Moscow (and from the Politburo) in 1966. On that occasion it worked extremely smoothly, and one of the last of the "old Bolsheviks" was quietly disposed of without the excesses of denunciation and demotion which accompanied the removal of men such as Molotov or Kaganovich.

Kosygin was in the hospital for a time in March and early April this year, and some (Western) reports from Moscow have claimed that he was suffering from any number of illnesses ranging from influenza to kidney trouble. Consequently it is possible that the state of his health combined with his age might preclude him from carrying out the numerous representational functions required of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and if this is the case, it would make a strong argument against the technique of "kicking him upstairs."

Moreover, gloomy reports about Kosygin's health have been a regular feature of political gossip for the past six years, without any adverse result for him as yet.

It can be said with confidence that Kosygin is one of the most censored men in the Politbureau. In March 1967 his speech at the Bolshoi theater on the occasion of the Supreme Soviet elections contained a strong criticism of the low level of Soviet exports compared with France, Italy and Britain, (3) which was deleted from Pravda's account on the following day.

Several of his more "dovish" statements made at press conferences abroad concerning the possibility of arms limitation and cooperation with the West have been eliminated from Soviet press reports, (4) and some Western sources have named him, Podgorny and Suslov as defeated "doves" concerning the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Nevertheless Kosygin still seems to have an inexhaustible appetite for work. He seems to spend more of his time abroad than any other major head of Government, and has visited Iran, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Egypt, Finland, Sweden, France, Britain, Turkey, and the United States, as well as most of the "socialist" countries in the past five years.

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(3) Radio Moscow, 6 March 1967.

(4) One example of the censorship of Kosygin's dovish initiatives came on 7 November 1968, when Pravda eliminated from the printed text of a speech by Mazurov, Kosygin's deputy, the statement that the USSR was ready to negotiate on missile limitation with the US. The announcement of Soviet readiness to do so was first made by Kosygin on 1 July 1968.

His greatest diplomatic achievement was the agreement of Tashkent, which ended the Indo-Pakistani war in 1966 and placed Soviet-Pakistani relations on a much better footing by adopting a more "even-handed" approach than that of Khrushchev. Perhaps still more vital for the USSR was his flight to Peking in the autumn of 1969, which put a stop to the border fighting between the Soviet Union and China, although it has not yet produced any agreed result concerning the principles of the border dispute.

Consequently he enjoys a considerable personal reputation outside the Party, and is respected by scientists, economists, managers, diplomats and writers as a moderate who has consistently favored higher living standards and rational policies even at the expense of dogma (e.g. his abandonment of the priority growth rates for heavy industry). This is something which can be said of no other member of the Politburo.

If he should eventually retire, or be promoted to Podgorny's post at the 24th Congress, the two First Deputy Chairmen of the Council of Ministers would be the most obvious candidates for promotion to Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

These two men are K.T. Mazurov and D.S. Polyansky. The latter has the advantage of being younger (he was born in 1917, Mazurov in 1914), and of being a Ukrainian, whereas Mazurov is from Byelorussia. (The Ukrainian lobby in Moscow is much stronger than Byelorussia's). Moreover Polyansky is a specialist in agriculture, at a time when it is reported from Moscow that investments in agriculture are to receive a further large-scale boost in the new Five-Year Plan (1971-75).

Since Brezhnev has invested so much of his personal prestige in his efforts to solve the agricultural problem, it is plausible that he might well wish to see an expert in this field at the head of the Government.

The factors speaking for Mazurov's promotion are his seniority (he became a First Deputy in the spring of 1965, Polyansky not until the autumn), his reputation as a "hard-liner," and the fact that recently he has had a greater exposure to international affairs in Moscow than Polyansky, partly because of the latter's preoccupation with agriculture. How much truth there is in the identification of Mazurov with the "hard-liners" is difficult to say, since the allegation seems to be based mainly on the fact that Mazurov was a

"partisan" leader in World War II. But so was Tito, who is not conspicuously "hard-line" in ideological questions. What does seem fairly certain is that if Mazurov should eventually take Kosygin's place, a less intelligent economic policy might be the outcome than if Polyansky were to get the job.

Should Kosygin eventually retire, or be moved upstairs, it will be widely attributed to the failures of economic policy and the failure of his reforms and the air will be thick with predictions that they are about to be reversed, etc. Such assertions will deserve to be met with scepticism. It is most improbable that Kosygin is the sole architect of the 1965 reforms, although he is their most outstanding exponent. The Soviet industrial growth rate in 1969 was the lowest for decades, but it is still respectable by Western standards. It seems likely to go up this year, and there is no evidence that it would have been higher in 1969 without the reforms.

What has really changed in the economy since 1964?

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1969</u>
Growth in national income	9.3%	6.1%
Growth in industrial output	7.1%	7.0%
Growth in agricultural output	12.0%	-3.0%
Labor productivity	4.0%	4.4%
Growth of incomes per capita	3.9%	5.0%
Growth of State investments	6.8%	4.0%
Coal output (million tons)	554	608
Oil output (million tons)	224	328
Electricity (billion Kw/hrs)	459	689
Steel output (million tons)	85	110
Gas (billion cu. ms.)	110	183
Fertilizer (million tons)	25.6	46.0
Automobiles (thousands)	603	844
Shoes (million pairs)	474	635
TV sets (millions)	2.9	6.6
Washing machines (millions)	2.9	5.2
Refrigerators (millions)	1.1	3.7



Although to compare one year with another selected on the basis of political criteria must introduce economic distortions (e.g. Kosygin's record in agriculture is by no means as bad as these percentages suggest), nevertheless the decline in the growth of national income, the failure in agriculture (except for grain, which has not been a major problem since 1965), the faster growth of incomes than of productivity, and the drop in the rate of growth of investments are all headaches for Kosygin's successor should the Premier retire later this year.

None of these add up to a crisis, but they do indicate a situation in which much more drastic reforms are needed to restore balance to the economy. A younger man could only succeed in pushing them through against the orthodox Party bureaucracy if he had the whole-hearted support of a majority of the Politbureau.

However, neither Polyansky nor Mazurov seems likely to get it, Polyansky because he is too closely identified with the agricultural lobby and Mazurov because he has never yet shown any sign of initiative as a leader. The latter characteristic might be exactly what Brezhnev is seeking. Ever since December 1969 he has repeatedly injected his presence into economic and governmental matters, as if seeking either to encroach on Kosygin's territory or to prepare the ground for such an invasion when Kosygin at last moves on. It would be pointless to speculate whether the agricultural expertise of Polyansky would be more useful to Brezhnev than the colorlessness of Mazurov, because the rest of the Politbureau will have a deciding voice in the choice of any successor.

If it wished to organize a "stop Brezhnev" movement it might promote Polyansky as a man who has shown at least some signs of independent thinking. If it opted for Mazurov or a third candidate, Brezhnev's chances of continuing his present campaign of self-aggrandizement would probably be enhanced.

Summary: This paper takes note of the latest crop of rumors concerning the retirement of Kosygin, and suggests that because he will be 70 by the time of the 25th Party Congress, he might possibly retire or be "promoted" to become Head of State at the 24th Congress in October or November this year. It also discusses the most probable successors to Kosygin should he eventually retire, in the light of their impact on Brezhnev's current campaign for self-aggrandizement.

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