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● USSR: Party

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POLITBUREAU RATINGS 1966 AND 1970

(See end for summary)

Elections to the Supreme Soviet have become such a meaningless formality over the years that it is difficult to say why they continue at all. But every four years they provide one indicator of some slight interest, and that is the "popularity rating" of the members of the Politbureau as reflected in the number of constituencies for which they are nominated.

If the number is related to the status of the Politbureau member concerned (a big if) then it is worth noting that although the top four members stand in the same order as at the time of the 23rd Congress in 1966, there have been some minor yet possibly significant changes of position among the other six men concerned.

Order of Precedence as announced by Brezhnev

- | | |
|-----|-----------|
| 1. | Brezhnev |
| 2. | Kosygin |
| 3. | Podgorny |
| 4. | Suslov |
| 5. | Voronov |
| 6. | Kirilenko |
| 7. | Shelepin |
| 8. | Mazurov |
| 9. | Polyansky |
| 10. | Shelest |
| 11. | Pelshe |

Order of Precedence based on nominations to Supreme Soviet, 1970 (1)

Brezhnev
Kosygin
Podgorny
Suslov
Kirilenko
Shelepin
Polyansky
Voronov
Pelshe
not applicable
Mazurov

(1) As reported by UPI, Moscow, 12 June 1970.

Here it can be seen that Voronov has dropped from fifth to eighth place. The only other member to suffer a similar setback is Mazurov, who has fallen from eighth to eleventh, if one assumes that Shelest, who is located in the Ukraine, remains in tenth place.

On the other hand, Kirilenko and Shelepin have both moved up one place, while Polyansky's rating seems to have improved from ninth to seventh. Pelshe has also improved his status, but in view of the fact that he is more than 70, this probably has no bearing on his position after the 24th Congress, when he seems likely to retire.

The reasons for the apparent decline in status of Voronov and Mazurov are not known in the West, but it may be worth recalling that Voronov was seriously ill for a period of several months last year. He is already sixty years of age.

Despite Mazurov's fall to bottom place in the "popularity rating," he seems a less likely candidate for eventual removal from the Politbureau than Voronov. This is because he has frequently deputized for Kosygin in foreign policy matters during recent months, at a time when Polyansky has seemed to be preoccupied with agricultural and domestic affairs.

In fact there is no convincing reason why either Voronov or Mazurov should be dropped from Politbureau status, merely because of an apparent slide in influence based on constituency nominations. If both men remain, as now seems probable, after the 24th Congress, while Suslov (2), Pelshe (3), and Podgorny (4) are retired, there would still be room to promote three new men to full membership.

Vitor Grishin, who is now 56, seems to be one of the most likely candidates for promotion to full membership, particularly in view of the fact that he now controls the Moscow Oblast Party organization. This apparatus has frequently before proved to be the way to the top, notably in the case of Khrushchev.

(2) who is now 68.

(3) who is now 71.

(4) who is now 67.

For the time being and probably until the 24th Congress, it would be wise not to attach any great weight to the slight shifts in position indicated by the 1970 nominations. The most striking aspect of the 1966 and 1970 line-ups is that the same group of eleven men, of whom only three are now under sixty, are still running the USSR as they were four years ago. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the USSR gives the appearance of being more concerned with conservation than innovation, with orthodoxy than with change, and with repression than with reform.

Summary: At election time the number of nominations of Politbureau members in various constituencies in the USSR constitutes a form of order of precedence. If the 1970 summer election results are compared with the rating announced by Brezhnev at the 23rd Congress, it will be seen that Voronov and Mazurov have moved down, while Polyansky, Kirilenko and Shelepin have moved up.

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Viktor Gerasimov, who is now 55, seems to be one of the most likely candidates for promotion to full membership, particularly in view of the fact that he now controls the Moscow Oblast Party organization. This apparatus has frequently proved to be the way to the top, notably in the case of Khrushchev.

- (1) who is now 58.
- (2) who is now 71.
- (3) who is now 57.