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Soviet Ethnic Relations and the Fall of Nikolai Podgorny

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Background

In late May 1977, Nikolai Podgorny lost his position on the Soviet Politburo; several weeks later he was dismissed from his position as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Podgorny was an exceptionally powerful figure in the Kremlin; his abrupt and unceremonious removal from the Politburo is widely recognized as a very significant political event.¹ This is especially true given the fact that within several weeks after Podgorny's ouster, General Secretary Brezhnev assumed Podgorny's former position as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. An analysis of Podgorny's fall from power is significant for it reveals a good deal about leadership politics under Brezhnev, and about the role of specific issues in power maintenance and loss. This study presents evidence supporting the proposition that Soviet nationality relations were a significant issue in Podgorny's loss of political power culminating in his dismissal from the Politburo and subsequent removal from the Presidium Chairmanship.²

The issue of Podgorny's removal from the Politburo has been raised and discussed in the literature virtually since its occurrence. However, a general lack of information has forced students of Soviet leadership politics into a position of uncertainty regarding the specific reasons for his political demise. The general reasons most often given for the fall of Podgorny are as follows:

(1) Brezhnev coveted Podgorny's position as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in furtherance of his drive for power and the emerging cult of personality³;

(2) There existed a political and personal rivalry between Brezhnev and Podgorny as members of the "Dnepropetrovsk" and Ukrainian factions, respectively⁴;

(3) Podgorny allegedly disagreed with the foreign policies of Brezhnev and Brezhnev's closest supporters (i.e., Podgorny's alleged opposition to Brezhnev's version of detente, or to detente altogether⁵;

(4) Podgorny allegedly opposed the Constitution of 1977, which appeared very shortly after Podgorny's fall from power.⁶

The closest to an inside account of why Podgorny fell from power comes from Arkady Shevchenko:

The removal in 1977 of Nikolai Podgorny, whose protocol role as head of state Brezhnev wished to claim for himself, reflected the slowness with which the rulers act. Podgorny's unpopularity in the Party had been clear since 1971, when, out of 14,000 ballots cast to approve the official leadership slate proposed to the Twenty-fourth Party Congress, about 170—a high number by Soviet standards—were marked against him.⁷

Yet this still gives precious little information concerning why so powerful a figure was dropped, apart from a degree of personal unpopularity.

Finally, it has been suggested that Podgorny's general orientation to the national question and his old ties to the Ukraine and Shelest were likely factors in his removal from office.⁸ The evidence presented in this study provides empirical support for the last hypothesis, and offers some guide to attempts to understand the critical period of Soviet politics surrounding Brezhnev's aggrandizement of political power.

Method

The basis of this study is a body of data drawn from thematic content analysis of Soviet Politburo members' public speeches and writings from 1970-79.⁹ Several major areas of Soviet politics were coded: economic policy, social policy, foreign and military policy, nationality issues, and references to Brezhnev and his role as political leader of the USSR. Coding was done for specific words, or themes, such as "economic detente," "economic reforms," "Leninist nationality policy," "the flowering of the nationalities," and so on. (Appendix A provides the complete list of all nationality word/themes coded in the study; Appendix B provides

the list of all elites included in the study). Every effort was made to include any and all references used from 1970-79 by Soviet elites pertaining to nationality relations.

The goal of the content analysis was to determine the salience of a given issue or theme to a particular Soviet leader. Salience is established by determining the percentage of references to that issue or theme (coded for that elite) out of all references coded for him in the study. The intellectual roots of this approach lie in the notion of attitude assessment and measurement in earlier political-psychology literature¹⁰ and later developed and applied to the study of Soviet elite politics.¹¹

The author recognizes that in the USSR before 1985, whether or not *public* utterances and writings accurately reflect elites' *actual* political orientations is problematical. Can differential policy preferences be inferred from systematic comparison among elites? It is undoubtedly true that public references by Soviet elites were screened and every attempt made to present a facade of collective leadership during the Brezhnev years. However, it was also true that Politburo members were (and still are) occasionally held politically accountable for public references.¹² Furthermore, the very presence of this kind of "self-censorship," or political screening calls for the most thorough and systematic study of public references if we are to make inferences from them. In this way, we will be able to discern personal perceptions of issues by specific elites.

Finally, the important role of "esoteric communication" in Soviet politics supports the method employed in the study.¹³ Given that top-level communication for most of the Soviet era has been largely "esoteric," or indirect in nature, perhaps the most fruitful way to uncover elite orientations to specific issues is by systematic examination of these references. This manner of identifying patterns of attention to political issues enables tracking of differences *among* individual elites, and how these differences change over time. This approach is more thorough, systematic, and potentially fruitful for understanding elite perceptions of a given issue than the anecdotal approach often found in the literature.

Even so, noting specific references has proven very useful for assessing the political orientation of a given member of the Soviet elite (e.g., Rakowska-Harmstone, 1971; Rywkin, 1979; Lapidus, 1984; Olcott, 1985). The present study applies essentially the same approach, but in a more comprehensive and systematic manner.

Inter-coder reliability was recognized as critical for the validity of the study. The quality of content analysis is heavily dependent on a satisfactory level of reliability. Toward this end several measures were taken to maximize inter-coder reliability. First, the speeches and writings which were coded were double checked to insure that the highest number of eligible references were in fact coded. Secondly, reliability tests were periodically undertaken regarding the thoroughness of the coding in order to assure that as much comprehensiveness as possible would be achieved. The results indicated that reliability was well within the bounds of validity recognized in the literature.¹⁴

A total number of 7,163 nationality references were coded in the project. The total number of references for all issues in the study was 125,095 (for purpose of determining salience of issues). This number represents a standardization of all elites across time. The purpose of standardization was to enable the analyst to compare elites whose number of references was relatively small to those who, over the decade, had a very large number of references (i.e., Brezhnev, Kosygin, etc.).¹⁵

Data Analysis and Findings

The study arrived at the following basic findings. First, compared with other members of the Politburo, Nikolai Podgorny devoted an extraordinary amount of attention to nationality issues from 1970 until his political fall in May-June 1977. Based on the frequency of his references *and* larger pattern of attention to political issues, we can conclude that

nationality issues were highly salient to him and a deep enough concern to provoke seeming constant public reference. Given Podgorny's powerful position on the Politburo, it is hard to imagine that his voice in nationality concerns was not connected in some way with his political power. His concern with nationality issues suggests much about the turbulent intra-Politburo politics during this time.

Secondly, significant aspects of Podgorny's orientation to national relations issues became increasingly at variance with his Politburo colleagues as time passed. The nature of this variance appears to have put his nationalities orientation at odds with other members of the party leadership. This factor in conjunction with other political factors contributed to his removal from the top Soviet leadership.

Thirdly, Podgorny's pattern of attention to specific nationality issues was significantly different from *both* the Politburo as a whole, and other individual minority Politburo members included in the study. Finally, Podgorny's larger pattern of references to General Secretary Brezhnev tends to confirm the notion asserted in the literature that some degree of personal coolness (if not actual rivalry) was present between the two.¹⁶ Podgorny's essentially contrary nationality orientation, combined with his tepid response to the deepening Brezhnev personality cult, may have left him in an especially vulnerable political position. Each of these major findings is now examined in greater detail with reference to the data from the project.

Concerning the salience of nationality issues to Podgorny, Table 1 provides the data on the percentage of references to nationality issues by each Politburo member included in the study. The amount of attention devoted to nationality issues may be seen as an indicator of the *relative* importance of these issues to a given individual. Perhaps not surprisingly, the ethnic minorities among the elites clearly devote the greatest attention to nationality themes. It is striking, however, that Podgorny's attention to nationality issues was surpassed only by Rashidov's (then First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan), and that from 1970-1977 more

Table 1. Salience of Nationality Issues to Politburo Members

[References to nationality issues during time period in percents; N = 7163]

Name	1970-79	1970-73	1973-76	1976-79
Rashidov	18.45	20.72	15.48	20.47
Podgorny	16.91	22.55	9.86*	**
Kunaev	10.69	13.52	7.43	9.80
Andropov	9.90	3.75	13.14	0.02
Suslov	9.42	10.09	11.06	1.86
Polyanski	7.67	20.75	1.41*	**
Aliyev	7.13	8.10	8.45	5.94
Shcherbytski	6.59	12.08	4.29	7.01
Shelest	6.09	6.09	**	**
Masharov	4.42	6.86	1.86	5.22
Brezhnev	4.30	7.91	2.55	1.3
Mazurov	4.13	3.70	4.87*	**
Ponomarev	3.87	21.53	2.19	0.58
Kirilenko	3.53	4.03	4.03	0.46
Grechko	3.03	2.40	3.57	**
Kulakov	3.02	6.29	2.21*	**
Shelepin	2.52	2.00	3.79*	**
Solomentsev	7.87	21.31	4.70	6.12
Ustinov	2.21	0.46	11.96	0.97
Kosygin	2.15	1.22	3.49	1.51
Gromyko	2.05	0.84	3.77	0.22
Grishin	1.64	2.18	0.73	2.64
Romanov	1.19	2.33	0.74	0.42
Voronov	0.43	0.43*	**	**
Total	5.72	7.42	4.60	3.94

* Includes references made during following time period, before the individual left office.

** Out of office

than 15 percent of Podgorny's coded references were to nationality issues. Setting aside for a moment the substantive content of Podgorny's references, it is clear that he devoted more public attention to the national question than nearly anyone else on the Politburo. Significantly, he

devoted a much larger proportion of public attention to the national question than any of the rest of the core leadership (Brezhnev, Kosygin, Suslov, etc.). Based on this we can safely assert that nationality issues were of high salience to Podgorny.

The second major finding is that Podgorny's pattern of references to specific nationality issues was increasingly at variance with the other members of the Politburo, and especially with other minority elites in that group. Tables 1 through 4 demonstrate these points. The data in Table 1 indicate that, as the 1970s progressed, public references to nationality issues decreased considerably. Even though Podgorny's issue-attention pattern follows this general trend, nearly 10 percent of his coded references were to nationality issues during the last several years of his tenure in office, and this at a time when the proportion of nationality references coded for the Politburo as a whole was only 4.6 percent and dropping. Podgorny may have followed the lead of the rest of the Politburo and substantially curtailed his attention to nationality issues to avoid being politically conspicuous. However, the remedy may have been a case of "too little, too late." But it is difficult to imagine that his increasingly variant nationality orientation was unnoticed by his colleagues, and that it was not somehow related to his ultimate political well-being.

By June 1977, Podgorny was out of office and the larger, Politburo-wide pattern continued: frequency of public references to nationality issues declined even further in the years after Brezhnev assumed Podgorny's position (Table 1, column 4). The further decline in frequency of nationality references after Podgorny's ouster seems to indicate that Podgorny's own decline in number of nationality references (1973-6) indeed was a case of political adjustment to the newly emerged *status quo*, and *not vice-versa*. That is, the Politburo appears *not* to have been following Podgorny's lead on nationality issues. The discrepancy between his orientation to this critical issue and theirs only widened after his fall from power. All the intra-elite nuances may never come to light. Nevertheless, the overall pattern shows through clearly enough: Podgorny was increas-

Table 2. Relative Attention to Nationality Issues

[In percents]

Nature of Reference	As a Percent of	1970-79	1970-73	1973-76	1977-79
	References to				
Character of Soviet National Relations	Nationality Issues	39.85	37.31	46.00	31.25
	All issues	2.28	2.77	2.11	1.23
Pro-National Minority Orientation	Nationality Issues	17.12	19.03	13.37	20.06
	All issues	0.98	1.41	0.61	0.79
Pro-Unity Orientation	Nationality issues	11.89	12.14	11.71	11.04
	All issues	0.68	0.90	0.54	0.44
Pro-Great Russian Orientation	Nationality Issues	10.71	7.19	12.62	24.88
	All issues	0.61	0.53	0.58	0.98
Substance of National Relations	Nationality Issues	7.48	8.70	6.73	4.35
	All issues	0.42	0.65	0.29	0.17
Criticism of National Deviations	Nationality Issues	6.13	7.89	4.32	2.33
	All issues	0.35	0.59	0.20	0.09
Ideological References	Nationality Issues	4.20	4.24	4.48	2.79
	All issues	0.24	0.31	0.21	0.11
The National Question	Nationality Issues	2.22	3.11	0.86	2.02
	All issues	0.12	0.23	0.04	0.08
Soviet Nationality Policy	Nationality Issues	0.39	0.35	0.23	1.24
	All issues	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.05
Totals	Nationality Issues	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	All issues	5.72	7.42	4.60	3.94
N =		7163	3977	2543	643

ingly at variance with the remainder of the Politburo on a set of issues that was both highly salient to him, and critical for the regime's stability.

At this point, the question arises whether it is simply a case of the absence of Podgorny accounting for the precipitous fall in the number of public references to nationality issues in the last several years of the 1970s. Here it becomes necessary to examine Podgorny's pattern of attention to *specific* nationality issues and compare that pattern with that of the entire Politburo. As Tables 2, 3 and 4 demonstrate, such a comparison indicates clearly that the substantive content of Podgorny's nationality orientation, as well as the salience level, was notably at variance with the rest of the Politburo.

The 59 different nationality-oriented themes in the study were organized into nine categories, or issues, as seen in Table 2. For purposes of analyzing Podgorny's nationality orientation, the most important of these are the "pro-Great Russian," "pro-national minority," and "criticism of national deviations" issues. (Appendix A contains the specific words/themes comprising these issues). Before examining specific elites' patterns of attention to issues, and how these patterns changed over time, the data in Table 2 require some commentary.

Table 2 provides a broad overview of the Politburo's pattern of attention to nationality issues from 1970-79. As time passed, more and more emphasis was placed on the "pro-Great Russian" issue; by the last several years of the decade this issue comprised nearly one-fourth (24.88 percent) of all references to nationality themes coded in the project. Nationality themes that were quietly abandoned, or at least referred to much less frequently, were: explicitly ideological references; the substance of nationality relations; public criticisms of nationality deviations; and "pro-national minority" references.

Thus, the following general trends appear to characterize the progression of the Brezhnev era regarding nationality issues. The Politburo as a whole assumed a position such that its public references had less ideological finesse, less emphasis on national deviations and, by contrast, greater emphasis on the positive aspects of the USSR's multinational character. There also was *far* greater emphasis on the Russian element in the ethnic

Table 3. References to Nationality Issues by Podgorny and Politburo

[In percents]

Nature of Reference	Entire Politburo	Podgorny
Character of National Relations	2.22	5.55
Pro-National Minority	0.98	3.68
Unity of Soviet Peoples	0.68	2.88
Pro-Great Russian	0.61	0.62
Substance of National Relations	0.42	2.17
Criticism of National Deviations	0.35	1.13
Ideological References	0.24	0.25
"The National Question"	0.12	0.58
"Soviet Nationality Policy"	0.02	0.04
Total Proportion	5.72	16.88

mosaic of the Soviet Union.¹⁷ The picture of elite orientations thus presented by the data certainly comports with the image of a resurgent Russian nationalism during this period. Significantly, Podgorny appears to have been simply out of step with this deepening trend.

As a general rule, Podgorny deviated from the rest of the Politburo's pattern of nationality references in several ways (Table 3). First and perhaps most importantly, Podgorny referred to "pro-national minority" issues far more frequently than any other elite in this study (again with relation to his overall pattern of references). He was much more likely to speak of national relations themes in these terms than any other members of the elite. In fact, of Podgorny's total of 405 coded references to nationality themes, 88 (or 21.7 percent) of these were under this category of "pro-national minority" references. In a political atmosphere of deepening Russian nationalism, Podgorny's evident willingness to enun-

ciate a wider scope for nationalities' rights, interests, and feelings may very well have undercut his political base as one highly attentive to nationality relations, as suggested by Bilinsky the year after Podgorny's fall.¹⁸

Secondly, Podgorny was more publicly critical of national deviations than the Politburo as a whole (1.13 percent of all Podgorny's coded references compared to the figure of 0.35 for the Politburo as a whole, as seen in Table 3). His public attention to minority deviations might be interpreted as designed to offset any politically destabilizing ramifications of his "pro-national minority" proclivities. However, another interpretation fits the larger picture more accurately. For the Politburo as a whole, references to nationality issues declined considerably over time, as noted earlier. In particular, the number of references to national deviations virtually disappeared by the end of the decade (Table 2).

It would appear that public reference to national deviations past a certain point was considered politically inexpedient under Brezhnev. Perhaps Podgorny's public references to this general theme were viewed by other Soviet elites as increasingly inappropriate.¹⁹ This is especially likely since the emphasis on the *Russian* element in Soviet national relations increased as the Brezhnev cult grew. In other words, public references to the national question were evidently to be: (1) positive; (2) unambiguous in giving the Russian "elder brother" his due; (3) generally leaving negative remarks about nationality deviations outside the realm of public reference, and (4) paying a degree, but *only* a certain degree, of public attention to themes which could be construed as "pro-national minority" in orientation. Too much of the last element, after all, could conceivably give the national minorities the wrong message about their place in the Soviet ethnic mosaic. Podgorny clearly did *not* follow this pattern, with the exception of giving the "elder brothers" their due in public references. It is also useful to recall Shelest's troubles only occurred several years prior to Podgorny's fall. A "pro-national minority" orientation was clearly dangerous.

Table 4. References to Selected Issues by Politburo Members

[References to issue as a percent of total]

Members' Ethnicity	Name	Nationality Issue		
		Pro-Great Russian	Pro-National Minority	Criticism of Nat'l Deviation
Ukrainians	Podgorny	0.62	3.68	1.13
	Polyanski	0.45	1.73	0.32
	Shcherbytski	0.43	1.04	0.57
	Shelest	0.14	0.94	0.11
Non-Slavs	Aliyev	1.42	1.37	0.24
	Kunaev	1.20	1.81	0.39
	Rashidov	4.49	2.63	0.59
Belorussians	Masherov	0.17	0.76	0.28
	Mazurov	0.54	0.63	0.34
Russians and Others	Brezhnev	0.27	0.78	0.40
	Andropov	0.20	0.61	0.81
	Suslov	0.18	2.10	1.06
Politburo Mean		0.49	0.99	0.39

It is also instructive to examine other minority elites' pattern of references to issues, and especially to this "pro-Great Russian" issue (Table 4). For the minority elites on the Politburo, giving the "elder brothers" their due in terms of public references seems almost a prerequisite to maintenance of political power. The case of Petro Shelest looms especially large here: the number of references he made to this "pro-Great Russian" theme was very far below the standard for the Politburo as a whole, and certainly far below that of the other minority elites, even Ukrainians. Minority elites on the Politburo at that time may well have been more or less expected to pay homage to their "elder brother," both to preempt an

inappropriately high level of demands from their own people, and also to demonstrate their continued political loyalty to Moscow. In the Ukraine, this would of course have been accomplished in a delicate manner for reasons of historical and even contemporary antipathies.²⁰ Perhaps the herculean task of balancing such demands helps to explain the precariousness of political power in the Kremlin for native Ukrainians, given the fates of Shelest, Polyanski, and Podgorny among others.²¹

Another significant aspect of Podgorny's variance from the Politburo norm has to do with the general theme of "unity of the Soviet peoples." Of all coded references in this project, this theme commanded 0.68 percent of all elites' attention for the period of 1970-79. By contrast, Podgorny's percentage of references to this issue was over four times as great, at 2.88 percent (Table 3). Several students of Soviet nationality politics have noted the conspicuous use of the idea of "unity of Soviet peoples" and the political significance of variations on this general theme.²² Various interpretations have been given for the use of the "unity" theme by the Soviet elites in the Brezhnev era. One of these asserts that the very concept of the "unity of the Soviet peoples" may have been something of a reaction against the old "fusion" ideal of the early 1960s. As an idea and a codeword, "unity" would be less threatening or less inflammatory to national minorities. Helene C. d'Encausse noted that:

Fusion entails not only assimilation but also the eventual dissolution of previously existing elements. Unity, on the other hand, suggests that the separate elements will continue to exist. The nonassimilationist implication of this concept seems to be a response from the periphery.²³

On the other hand, the general theme of "unity of the Soviet peoples" has also been seen as an essentially integrative device, used by the ethnic Russian members of the Soviet leadership in the face of potentially disruptive emphasis on "national liberation" in the Third World after 1970.²⁴ The available data allow us to determine more specifically who expressed this theme most frequently and at which time periods. That information

Table 5. Emphasis on "Unity" Theme by Politburo Members

[As a percentage of all references to nationality issues]

Name	Percent References to Unity	Member's Ethnicity
Grechko	25.74	Russian
Andropov	24.49	Russian
Kulakov	21.45	Russian
Ustinov	19.45	Russian
Romanov	19.10	Russian
Gromyko	18.93	Russian
Grishin	17.63	Russian
Kirilenko	17.28	Russian
Mazurov	17.21	Belorussian
Podgorny	17.03	Ukrainian
Suslov	15.71	Russian
Shcherbytski	14.56	Ukrainian
Brezhnev	13.95	Russian
Kosygin	13.88	Russian
Shelest	12.80	Ukrainian
Polyanski	11.73	Ukrainian
Voronov	11.62	Russian
Masherov	11.38	Belorussian
Ponomarev	11.37	Russian
Shelepin	8.33	Russian
Kunaev	8.32	Non-Slav
Solomentsev	8.18	Russian
Rashidov	7.26	Non-Slav
Aliyev	6.45	Non-Slav
Mean	11.89	

in turn should help us to understand how Podgorny fit into the larger picture.

Podgorny's comparatively high degree of public attention to the unity theme may well have been an attempt to put a brake upon ethnic as-

similationist tendencies of the Brezhnev era. It may have even represented a personal response to the “ferocity” of Moscow’s persecution of Ukrainian dissidents after 1972.²⁵ This seems especially likely given his pattern of attention to other nationality issues examined above. We can hardly be dogmatic on this point, but it does help to account for Podgorny’s inordinately high amount of public attention to the unity issue. It also corresponds with his larger pattern of attention to all political issues.

However, the data on Table 5 suggest that, generally speaking d’Encausse was probably incorrect in asserting that the impetus for the stress on “unity of Soviet peoples” came from the “periphery.” Rather the unity emphasis appears to have come largely from the ethnic Russian elites.²⁶ In this respect, Pogorny appears as something of an anomaly as a national minority elite. On the other hand, it may also be as Novikov has suggested that the core leadership took the “unity” theme and began using it for other purposes: to forestall national minority protestation which might be generated by the regime’s emphasis on “national liberation” outside Soviet borders. In either case Podgorny, as a national minority, was out of step with the core leadership.

The Brezhnev Cult: Podgorny’s Public References to the General Secretary

The data clearly indicate that Nikolai Podgorny was at variance with the Politburo in several critical ways in terms of his larger pattern of public references to nationality issues. Brezhnev’s political power definitely increased during the 1970s, and his assumption of Podgorny’s position as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was certainly a major stepping stone in this direction. It hardly seems likely that the connection between these two facts was fortuitous, especially given the high degree of

Table 6. Frequency of Public References to Brezhnev

[In percent of all references made]

Name	Percent	
Aliyev	16.21	
Ustinov	7.50	
Gromyko	6.42	
Kunaev	4.47	
Ponomarev	3.98	
Grishin	3.73	
Andropov	3.65	
Rashidov	3.39	
Shcherbytski	3.39	
Kirilenko	2.96	
Suslov	2.84	
Solomentsev	2.73	
Shelapin	2.36	Removed from Politburo
Romanov	2.14	
Masherov	1.75	
Kosygin	1.63	
Kulakov	1.58	Removed from Politburo
Polyanski	1.40	Removed from Politburo
Mazurov	1.26	
Grechko	0.97	
Brezhnev	0.83	
Podgorny	0.75	Removed from Politburo
Shelest	0.27	Removed from Politburo
Voronov	0.04	Removed from Politburo
Mean	3.17	

salience of national relations to Podgorny. It is also the case that Podgorny exhibited little of the public, quasi-cultic adoration of Brezhnev compared to most other Politburo members at the time. This kind of personal-political relationship had been noted in the literature on a number of occasions.²⁷ The data presented in Tables 6 and 7 underscore clearly just how true that assertion has been. They demonstrate that Podgorny

largely refrained from the public adoration of Brezhnev in which many other Soviet elites engaged during this period. This reticence, and the attitude behind it, may well have contributed along with Podgorny's contrary and publicly expressed nationality orientation to the destabilizing of his political position. At the very least, Podgorny's relative public neglect of Brezhnev as the *primus inter pares* strongly suggests reluctance or even refusal to accept the Brezhnev cult.

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the frequency of references to Brezhnev, and Table 7 provides a breakdown of the percentage of the types of references to him. The point from Table 6 is clear enough: Podgorny rarely made any public gestures of recognition and/or appreciation of the General Secretary, and certainly far fewer than most other elites. The data also bring two other interesting facts to light: (1) the national minority elites who were *not* removed (Aliyev, Kunaev, Rashidov and Shcherbytski) were all above the Politburo mean (with the exception of Masherov), and (2) the elites on this list who *were* ousted from the Politburo during this time period were all below the Politburo mean score in frequency of public reference to Brezhnev.

It would appear that, as the 1970s evolved and the Brezhnev cult grew, public recognition of the General Secretary and his persona were to some degree connected with one's political well being. Podgorny's reticence (as expressed in Table 6) is rather telling on this score.

Table 7 sheds further light on Podgorny's pattern of references to Brezhnev. There are of course many ways in which one may publicly refer to a senior colleague, reflecting a degree of personal warmth, absence of warmth, or positive distance. For purposes of analysis, the coded references to Brezhnev were organized into three categories: (a) personal warmth, (b) a neutral orientation, and (c) a distant or cool type of reference. (Appendix A provides a breakdown of the specific coded terms which comprise each of these categories). As can be seen on Table 7, most of Podgorny's references were classified in the distant category. Significantly, the references to Brezhnev by the other two ousted Ukrainians,

Table 7. References to Brezhnev by Nature of Reference

[As a percentage of all Brezhnev references made by each member]

Name	Personal Warmth	Neutral	Distant
Aliyev	17.66	26.99	55.34
Andropov	0.00	50.00	50.00
Brezhnev	0.95	6.66	92.38
Grechko	22.00	31.66	46.33
Grishin	9.82	29.05	61.11
Gromyko	16.79	52.67	30.53
Kirilenko	16.29	40.00	43.70
Kosygin	16.39	60.65	22.95
Kulakov	11.76	20.58	67.64
Kunaev	29.35	44.72	25.91
Masherov	4.84	32.59	62.55
Mazurov	3.84	7.69	88.46
Podgorny	5.55	33.33	61.11
Polyanski	9.09	9.09	81.81
Ponomarev	1.36	38.35	58.90
Rashidov	28.67	34.76	36.55
Romanov	16.18	48.55	35.26
Shcherbytski	20.76	34.35	44.8
Shelepin	0.00	6.66	93.33
Shelest	0.00	10.00	90.00
Solomentsev	27.90	41.86	30.2
Suslov	7.29	59.37	33.33
Ustinov	12.38	62.85	24.76
Voronov	0.00	0.00	100.00
Mean	17.06	36.58	46.34
N =	652	1398	1771

Totals for Individuals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Polyanski and Shelest, show a similar pattern. By contrast, a more balanced profile of public references is exhibited by the other national minority elites: Rashidov, Kunaev, Shcherbytski, and to a lesser degree

Aliyev. Although a clear line of causality can probably never be established here, the implication from the general pattern is clear enough: frequent and appropriately balanced reference characterizes those who prospered politically; neglect of this type of public reference characterizes those who did not. The cult of Brezhnev apparently became increasingly a *public* phenomenon regarding support from Politburo colleagues, notwithstanding vigorous claims of collective leadership by the leadership itself.

Summary and Conclusion

Podgorny's fall from power in May-June 1977 has remained something of a phenomenon for students of Soviet politics. Explanations have been largely speculative and have proven only partially satisfactory. In all likelihood, we will never know the full picture of how and why this powerful figure so suddenly exited the Politburo and the Presidium Chairmanship.²⁸ The best attempts to understand his downfall have linked it with Brezhnev's political aggrandizement. However, the evidence presented here lends credence to the suggestion that nationality orientations, as well as Brezhnev's drive for greater power, weakened Podgorny's political power in relation to his colleagues by identifying him as an "odd man out" on this critical policy issue. More specifically, it does not seem likely that Podgorny could have been swept from office by mere fiat from Brezhnev without reference to substantial differences with Podgorny on how significant political issues were viewed. The evidence presented here strongly suggests that Podgorny's collegial support was eroded beforehand by other elites' awareness of his increasingly contrary perceptions of the national question. These perceptions are clearly discernible from his pattern of public references to this critical political issue.

As the 1970s progressed and the Brezhnev cult deepened, it appears that those elites whose general orientation to major issues ran counter to the core leadership were increasingly vulnerable. In this respect, Podgorny seems to have been particularly at risk on several counts. First, nationality issues were highly salient to him and commanded a significant amount of his public attention. Secondly, significant aspects of Podgorny's public references to the national question and to specific nationality themes displayed a pattern that was increasingly at variance with the Politburo as a whole. This variance increased as time went on, and was especially pronounced when compared with other ethnic minority elites on the Politburo. The evidence clearly identifies Podgorny as out of step with the leadership on the national question. Given the extraordinary importance of the politics of ethnicity in the multinational USSR, Podgorny's position in this context can only be described as increasingly precarious. Compounding this precariousness was his neglect of public participation in the cultic adoration of the General Secretary which characterized other key elites in that time period.

Podgorny must have understood the larger direction of elites' patterns of public reference to nationality themes under Brezhnev. He must also have understood the connection between other elites' adulation of Brezhnev and the General Secretary's aggrandizement of political power. It is also likely that Brezhnev and others in the core leadership were cognizant of Podgorny's general orientation on nationality and other core issues. One thing is clear: at some point they concluded that the Politburo and the Presidium would be better served by his absence. The content of Politburo deliberations or schemes which preceded the downfall of Podgorny may well never come to surface. However, by identifying these larger patterns of Soviet elites' public references to issues in the 1970s, and by interpreting the political fortunes of specific elites in light of these patterns, our understanding of what transpired is appreciably deepened and made more specific.

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Notes

1. Seweryn Bialer (1980; p. 71); Jerry Hough (1979, p. 371); Robert Sharlett (1977); Archie Brown and Michael Kaser (1982, pp. 249-50); David Holloway (1982, p. 37).
2. Yaroslav Bilinsky (1978, pp. 105, 121).
3. For more on the apparently blossoming Brezhnev personality cult at this time, see Hough (1979: pp. 475-8); Bialer (1980: p. 73); Brown and Kaser (1982: footnote 20, p. 250); Robert E. Blackwell, Jr.; Grey Hodnett (1980: pp. 87, 95); Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone (1976: p. 57); Martin McCauley (1983: p. 13). For an alternative view, see Noge and Donaldson (1981: p. 288).
4. Bialer (1980, p. 73); Hough (1979, pp. 258-9); Sharlett (1977); Brown (1982, pp. 223, 249).
5. Grey Hodnett (1981, p. 87).
6. Hodnett (1981, p. 87); Sharlett, (1977). It is also interesting to note that Jeremy R. Azrael (1981: pp. 141-2) points to Brezhnev's Constitution (with justice, in my view) and its modifications regarding the national minorities as an indicator of Brezhnev's attitude toward the minorities. I will argue that the data indicate that Azrael appears to have been quite correct that the "new" (harsher, more "centrist") line taken towards national minorities as reflected in the new constitution did indeed reflect the Brezhnev coalition's orientation toward national relations by 1977, and that Nikolai Podgorny's orientation to this new line was not particularly sanguine. Robert G. Wesson also connects the "Brezhnev personality cult" with larger Soviet attempts to "make Brezhnev seem wiser and to improve the standing of the Russians in relation to other nationalities of the Soviet

Union" (1978: p. 252). Finally, Lapidus (1984: pp. 567-8) has provided highly useful comments and references on the debate in the Soviet Union surrounding the adoption of the 1977 Constitution concerning the precise role of the national republics. It seems clear that at some level the adoption of the new Constitution compelled the leadership to look closely at national relations. Perhaps in this process the aberrant pattern of Podgorny's nationality references came more forcefully to the attention of those who deposed him.

7. Arkady Shevchenko (1985, p. 179)

8. See for example Bilinsky (1978: p. 105), who writes: "In view of Podgorny's unceremonious ouster from the CPSU Politburo on May 24, 1977, ...the question may be raised whether Podgorny's old ties with the Ukraine and with Shelest in particular were a factor in his dismissal. I believe so, but this is not the place to develop that theme." It is important here to note also that Shelest was publicly reprimanded for nationality deviations (see, for example *Pravda Ukrainy*, April, 1973, 4). For more on the Shelest case and national deviations, see Lowell Tillett (1975) and James Mace (1984: p. 49).

9. Coding for the period 1977-9 was done on the basis of sampling of elites' speeches and writings as opposed to coding all public utterances as was the case for the period 1970-76. This was necessary for reasons of economy and feasibility. Although some degree of precision was inevitably lost, the author remains confident that the data generated for this latter period reflect elites' orientations accurately enough to justify reporting the findings.

10. C. E. Osgood, T. Saporta, C. Nunnally (1956, pp. 48-102); C. E. Osgood, J. G. Suci, P. H. Tannenbaum (1957).

11. Milton Lodge (1969); Philip D. Stewart (1977, 1984); George Breslauer (1983).

12. Michael Tatu (1969); Myron Rush (1959, p. 90); Tillett (1975).

13. Rush (1958, 1959).

14. Klaus Krippendorf (1982).

15. For further details of the coding process and overall research method, see Stewart, Warhola, and Blough (1984, pp. 4-6) and Stewart (1980).

16. Hough (1979, pp. 258, 475, 478); Brown (1982, pp. 223-4, 249:fn. 4, 250:fn. 20); Sharlett (1977).
17. Some of these larger patterns are being corroborated in the literature, which lends credence to the method employed in the study (Rywkin, 1979; Azrael, 1981; Olcott, 1985: p. 106).
18. Bilinsky (1978, p. 121).
19. This is especially the case since a hallmark of the post-Khrushchevian party line on Soviet national relations was that the problem was “resolved.” See Richard Pipes (1967), and *Leninism and the National question*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, Part II; more recently, A. V. Licholat (1982: pp. 17-31).
20. Bilinsky (1983).
21. For a good account of Soviet historiography’s handling of these antipathies, see Lowell Tillet (1969). Bilinsky has recently noted the importance of giving the “elder brother” his due in the Ukraine, and suggests that even Shcherbytski may be in danger of failing to do so in recent years (Bilinsky, 1983).
22. For example, Michael Rywkin (1979); Helene Carrerre d’Encausse (1978: pp. 142-6); Nikolai Novikov (1981); and Bilinsky (1978: p. 119).
23. d’Encausse (1978, p. 146).
24. Novikov (1981, pp. 812-3).
25. Bilinsky (1978, p. 132; 1983, pp. 8-10).
26. It is probably no coincidence that Grechko and Ustinov are very high on this list, given the paramount importance of mitigating ethnic antagonisms within the Soviet military. An effective way of doing so would of course be by emphasizing this very “unity” theme.
27. Hough (1979, pp. 256-8, 371-2, 475); Bialer (1981, p. 73).

28. However, Archie Brown does refer to a reliable source who maintains that it was in fact Podgorny's opposition to Brezhnev's power aggrandizement that constituted the essential reason for his downfall. (Brown, 1982, p. 249, fn. 4). I see no difficulty in reconciling this notion with the interpretation of the data presented in this study. Given Podgorny's considerable attention to nationality issues and his variation from the Politburo in general on these issues, his opposition to a furtherance of the aggrandizement of Brezhnev's power almost certainly would have involved an element of opposition to the direction which nationality politics would take under conditions of further power in Brezhnev's hands. For more on the Brezhnev aggrandizement of power, see Archie Brown (1980: pp. 141ff.).

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Appendix A: Terms and Themes Comprising Nationality Issues

1. Pro-Great Russian Orientation

Russian People as Elder Brother
Aid of Russian People to Minorities
Russian as a Common Language
Russian National Culture
Russian Language
The Great Russian People
First of All, The Russian People
Virtues of the Russian People
Russian Social Thought
Russian People as First Among Equals

2. Pro-Unity Orientation

Unity of Soviet Peoples
Moral Unity of Soviet Peoples
Fusion of Soviet Peoples
Unification of Soviet Peoples
Union of Soviet Peoples
Historical Union of Soviet Peoples
Ideological Unity of Soviet Peoples
Social Unity of Soviet Peoples

3. Character of Soviet National Relations

New Historical Community: The Soviet People
Rapprochement of Soviet Peoples
Brotherhood of Soviet Peoples
Friendship of Soviet Peoples
Gradualism of Merging of Soviet Peoples
Kinship of Soviet Peoples
Family of Soviet Peoples

4. Substance of National Relations

**Cooperation Among Soviet Peoples
Common Interests of Soviet Peoples
Interaction Among Soviet Peoples
Common Soviet Culture
Common Task of Soviet Peoples
Common Character of Soviet People
All-Union Division of Labor**

5. Criticism of National Deviations

**Nationalism
Great Power Chauvinism
Nationalist Feelings
Nationalist Ideology
National Differences Among Soviet Peoples
Chauvinism
Nationalist Deviation
Bourgeois Ideology (Nationalism)
Nationalist Dissension
National Conceit
Separatist Tendencies
Localism**

6. Pro-National Minority Orientation

**Nationalities' Interests
Flourishing of the Nationalities
Leninist Nationality Policy
Equality of Nationalities
Tsarist Exploitation of Minorities
Voluntary Union of Republics
USSR as a Multinational State**

7. Ideological References

Internationalist Brotherhood

Marxist-Leninist Worldview
Internationalist Consciousness (within USSR)
Proletarian Internationalism
Internationalist Upbringing

8. *“Soviet Nationality Policy”*

9. *“The National Question”*

10. *References to Brezhnev: Personal Warmth*

(Personal contribution of) General Secretary of CPSU Leonid Ilich Brezhnev

11. *References to Brezhnev: Neutral*

Leonid Ilich Brezhnev
Comrade Leonid Ilich Brezhnev
(Brezhnev as) Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet
(Brezhnev as) Soviet President

12. *References to Brezhnev: Distant*

Leonid Brezhnev
Comrade L.I. Brezhnev
Comrade Brezhnev

Appendix B: Soviet Politburo Members Included in the Study

<i>Member</i>	<i>Position</i>
Aliyev	First Secretary, Azerbaidzhan Communist Party
Andropov	Chairman, KGB; General Secretary, CPSU (11/82)
Brezhnev	General Secretary, CPSU Chairman of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (6/77) (Died 11/82)
Grechko	Minister of Defense (Died 4/76)
Grishin	First Secretary, Moscow City Committee
Gromyko	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Kirilenko	Central Committee Secretary
Kosyqin	Chairman, Council of Ministers (Died 12/80)
Kulakov	Central Committee Secretary (Died 1/78)
Kunaev	First Secretary, Kazakh Communist Party (Died, 1981)
Mazurov	First Deputy Chairman, Council of Ministers (Retired 1978)
Podgorny	Chairman, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (Removed from Politburo 5/77)
Polyanski	First Deputy Chairman, Council of Ministers USSR Minister of Agriculture (Removed from Politburo 3/76)
Ponomarev	Central Committee Secretary
Rashidov	First Secretary, Uzbek Communist Party
Romanov	First Secretary, Leningrad Region of CPSU
Shcherbytski	First Secretary, Ukrainian Communist Party
Shelest	First Secretary, Ukrainian Communist Party (Removed from Politburo 4/73)
Shelepin	Chairman, All-Union Council of Trade Unions (Removed from Politburo 4/75)
Solomentsev	Central Committee Secretary Chairman, Russian Republic Council of Ministers

Suslov	Central Committee Secretary
Ustinov	Central committee Secretary
	USSR Minister of Defense
Voronov	Chairman, Russian Republic Council of Ministers
	Chairman, Peoples' Control Commission
	(Removed from Politburo 4/73)

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