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Brezhnev's Collected Works

Thirteen years ago the present writer undertook a similar survey of the works of Nikita Khrushchev.¹ Appearing within a few weeks of that Soviet leader's well-celebrated seventieth birthday, the article assumed (as Khrushchev probably did) that there was some connection between the ornaments of power and its reality. Yet by the end of the year Khrushchev had been hustled into retirement by the Central Committee, an act that, incidentally, allowed the review article to stand as a definitive one in the sense that no additional books by that particular author could appear in the USSR. It seems doubtful that the present survey will be able to make the same claim. Despite the close parallel in the timing of their collected works in the lives of the two septuagenarian leaders, it does not seem that Brezhnev's administration will end before more volumes will be added to those listed here.²

Nevertheless, the opening of 1977 seems a good time to take stock of the Brezhnev literary corpus. He has just passed seventy, has accumulated fourteen volumes of anthologized works, and seems to have established a degree of primacy unmatched since Stalin's death. In a political culture that makes much of ideological classics, the anthology of a leader's works remains an important symbol of status, even if the content of the writing is pedestrian. Brezhnev was permitted this kind of monument only in the later stages of his career, having clearly outstripped his leading colleagues only

1. "Khrushchev's Collected Works," *Slavic Review*, 23, no. 1 (March 1964): 129-36.

2. The Brezhnev anthologies are listed in order of appearance. An asterisk denotes those volumes that should be obtained in order to have the fullest available collection of Brezhnev material without needless duplication.

**Molodym—stroit' kommunizm* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), 399 pp.

KPSS v bor'be za edinство vsekh revoliutsionnykh i miroliubivnykh sil (Moscow: "Mysl'," 1972), 303 pp.

Ob aktual'nykh problemakh partiinogo stroitel'stva (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), 456 pp. Second, amplified edition, 1976, 639 pp.

**Leninskim kursom: Rechi i stat'i*, vols. 1-5 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973-76), vol. 1: 1973, 544 pp.; vol. 2: 1973, 608 pp.; vol. 3: 1973, 535 pp.; vol. 4: 1974, 488 pp.; vol. 5: 1976, 599 pp.

O vneshnei politike KPSS i Sovetskogo gosudarstva: Rechi i stat'i (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), 599 pp.

**Voprosy agrarnoi politiki KPSS i osvoinie tselinnykh zemel' Kazakhstana: Rechi i doklady* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1974), 423 pp.

**O kommunistscheskom vospitanii trudiashchikhsia: Rechi i stat'i* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1974), 599 pp. Second, amplified edition, 1975, 639 pp.

**Ob osnovnykh voprosakh ekonomicheskoi politiki KPSS na sovremennom etape: Rechi i doklady*, vols. 1-2 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1975), vol. 1, 448 pp.; vol. 2, 479 pp.

**Voprosy upravleniia ekonomikoi razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva: Rechi, doklady, vystupleniia* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976), 600 pp.

I am indebted to Mary Desjeans and Alan Kimball for their assistance in obtaining several of the volumes discussed here.

by 1973.³ His first anthology, *Molodym—stroit' kommunizm*, went to press in May 1970. The timing tends to confirm the opinion that the Central Committee plenum of December 1969 witnessed the emergence of Brezhnev's personal primacy, but this first anthology also suggests that there were still serious restraints on the inflation of his image. The introduction of this slender and rather narrowly defined anthology states that it was published on the initiative of the Central Committee of the Komsomol, a constituency that was probably in the secretary general's pocket at a time when the Politburo would have been offended by a more ambitious campaign of publication of Brezhneviana. By June 1973 his primacy was such that publication of the principal collection of his works began. This is the series *Leninskim kursom*, which began with the avowed intention of publishing in two volumes his "speeches and articles" (in fact only some of them) from the years 1964–70. Subsequently, three more volumes have been added, most recently in April 1976, bringing the coverage to the close of the party congress in March 1976. The congress, dominated by Brezhnev, was soon followed by a series of tributes to his eminence, including his domination of May Day with a speech that he delivered to a Moscow auto factory on the eve of the holiday, his assumption of the rank of marshal along with the revelation of his previously unknown title "Chairman of the USSR Council of Defense" (May 7), the unveiling of his bust in Dneproderzhinsk (May 8), and finally publication of the fifth volume of *Leninskim kursom*. It required several years of advance planning to manufacture the padding needed to produce this volume on schedule, just after the party congress. Twenty-seven greetings to conferences, for example, appeared in volume 5, while only five appeared in volume 4. The fifth volume also included a new medium for Brezhnev: congratulations to victorious workers here and there in the USSR, of which over three dozen appeared after the opening of 1975. Such material had the advantage of being medically invulnerable—it continued to stream forth in the period from December 1975 to February 1976 when he was out of circulation and presumed ill. The one item in this morass that seems to be something more than a formality (and happens to be the only document in all of Brezhnev's anthologies that concludes with a proper source citation in the manner of Lenin's *Sochineniia*) is a letter of May 11, 1974 to a Pioneer organization in Piatagorsk, which had asked him to donate for their museum some memorabilia related to his war service in that area. While one should be restrained in using the word "cult," this letter does at least indicate the potentialities that could await Brezhnev's image.

In some ways the form of *Leninskim kursom* resembles the standard *sochineniia* model of the ideological classics. It is a general collection, not topically specialized, and it has a good index.⁴ Moreover, the first four volumes of this series were reissued in 1974 in a remarkable boxed edition of miniatures, bound in red with gilt edges, somewhat resembling the famous collection of Mao Tse-tung's sayings (but four times

3. There appears to have been some effort to preserve balance among the three most eminent Soviet leaders. Both Kosygin and Podgorny have had nonserial volumes of their speeches published, but by the mid-1970s they were clearly in Brezhnev's shadow in this respect. Suslov, who enjoys a somewhat different status as senior ideological specialist (but without a visible, top-level administrative power base) has been permitted three separate anthologies.

4. The index, surely a token of status, was introduced only in July 1973 when the third volume went to press. The timing of the publication of the first two volumes, without index, and the third, with a retroactive index, is curious. The third volume was given to the press only seventeen days after the first two. Is it really possible that Brezhnev's editors had simply overlooked the possibility of a larger series, extending the coverage beyond 1970, and suddenly had this idea in the first two weeks of July 1973? Or did Brezhnev only then succeed in overcoming some kind of resistance to such cultish publications, index and all?

weightier). To be sure, this typographical shrinkage of Brezhnev's speeches made them almost illegible, but the set obviously was meant only as a gift item, suitable for presentation at party ceremonies, and nobody is seriously expected to read it. Speaking of book design as a measure of Brezhnev's status, it should be noted that in addition to the five matching volumes of *Leninskim kursom* all other volumes published since 1973 have coordinated design. Placed in a row on a shelf one sees a sturdy phalanx of thick volumes, the spines of which bear only "L. I. Brezhnev" in large gold letters.

But it is *Leninskim kursom* that most nearly approximates the *sochinennia* model, and in publishing this Brezhnev has surpassed Khrushchev, who never had a single, general series of volumes collecting his works, but merely a series of topical anthologies. On the other hand, *Leninskim kursom* is not (and does not claim to be) a complete collection, even of previously published works postdating October 1964. By and large it is restricted to speeches and formal letters of greeting or congratulations published in *Pravda*. True, there are three articles (not from *Pravda*) to which Brezhnev lent his name and a very few items that first appeared in newspapers other than *Pravda*. It appears that there are only two of the latter, though the present writer has not checked all 339 documents in the series against *Pravda*, nor scanned every page of *Pravda* to see if anything was omitted. One item, Brezhnev's speech to American senators in June 1973, seems not to have been published before. The editors of all the Brezhnev anthologies are totally unhelpful concerning such matters. The introductory essays for the volumes are noncommittal concerning editorial policy, and only one bit of source annotation appears, excepting footnote references concerning quotations from Lenin. Still, it is a considerable convenience to have the volumes of *Leninskim kursom*, rather than having to poke through *Pravda* day by day, if one is attempting to follow Brezhnev's administration. As far as I can determine, the anthologies *KPSS v bor'be za edinstvo vseh revoliutsionnykh i miroliubivyykh sil* and *O vneshnei politike KPSS i Sovetskogo gosudarstva* merely duplicate material in *Leninskim kursom* and may be ignored, except as symbols of Brezhnev's prestige. The first edition of *Ob aktual'nykh problemakh partiinogo stroitel'stva* was similarly redundant, but the second edition does include some works dating from after the Twenty-fifth Party Congress, which no doubt will appear in a sixth volume of *Leninskim kursom* if there is one. The second edition also includes a few of the documents mentioned below, which are not to be found in *Leninskim kursom* or *Pravda*.

These documents appear in *Voprosy agrarnoi politiki KPSS i osvoenie tselinnykh zemel' Kazakhstana*, *O kommunisticheskom vospitanii trudiashchikhsia*, *Ob osnovnykh voprosakh ekonomicheskoi politiki KPSS na sovremennom etape*, and *Voprosy upravleniia ekonomikoi razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva*. For most researchers the most interesting category of material that these volumes add to the published Brezhnev corpus consists of the reports that he gave to certain plenums of the Central Committee. From November 1964 to January 1977, the party leader gave twenty-seven speeches to the Central Committee, according to official announcements. Six of these were published (at least in excerpts) in *Pravda* and *Leninskim kursom*. Of the remaining seventeen, ten have been published in excerpted form in other Brezhnev anthologies.⁵ This leaves eleven of his speeches to the Central Committee still entirely unpublished.

5. *Ob osnovnykh voprosakh ekonomicheskoi politiki KPSS na sovremennom etape*, vol. 1: pp. 99-111 (December 1965 plenum), pp. 244-50 (September 1967 plenum), pp. 371-76 (December 1968 plenum), pp. 414-29 (December 1969 plenum); vol. 2: pp. 107-12 (December 1970 plenum), pp. 203-12 (November 1971 plenum), pp. 242-56 (December 1972 plenum), pp. 341-61 (December 1973 plenum). *Voprosy agrarnoi politiki KPSS i osvoenie*

The newly published portions of Brezhnev's speeches to Central Committee plenums definitely form a basic part of his record, and should be acquired by every good library in the field. One must bear in mind, however, that this material appears in excerpted form, and the single case in which two anthologies provide alternative versions of one of these reports suggests that the editors do not always insert ellipsis marks where a deletion has occurred.⁶ The impression is that the most important excisions in these published versions consist of Brezhnev's critical remarks about Soviet economic performance, and in one case Sino-Soviet relations. This seems quite clear in the report of December 1965, in which ellipsis marks appear each time Brezhnev has started to touch on some kind of problem. Brezhnev himself, in his report of December 1970, referred to his presumably crucial speech one year before as "a basic discussion of fundamental problems of our economic policy and also shortcomings in the work of economic and other organizations."⁷ Yet the published excerpts of the December 1969 plenum, while interesting, do not include any particularly harsh or fundamental criticism, an anomaly most readily explained by the presence of ellipses.

Most of the other items published in Brezhnev anthologies but not in *Leninskim kursom* relate to the virgin lands of Kazakhstan. Brezhnev, who was for a time party secretary of this republic during the great Khrushchevian grain campaign there, seems to have adopted this somewhat debatable achievement as his own. The volume devoted to the subject, *Voprosy agrarnoi politiki KPSS i osvoenie tselinnykh zemel' Kazakhstana*, opens with eleven items dating from Brezhnev's sojourn in that republic in 1954–56, the only material in all of his anthologies to originate prior to 1964. Some of this material, such as his report to the Twentieth Party Congress, has been published previously, and it may be that even the more obscure speeches appeared in the local press of Kazakhstan, which is unavailable to this writer. In recent years Brezhnev has returned to this scene of his earlier triumphs, and it appears that not quite all of his speeches on such occasions found their way into *Pravda* (and hence *Leninskim kursom*).

Two additional documents not to be found elsewhere in Brezhnev's publications turned up in *Voprosy upravleniia ekonomikoi razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva*, the most recent of his books. Both are examples of his emphasis on the primacy of the party. The first, an excerpt from a "note in the Central Committee" is a rather routine exhortation on behalf of a "socialist competition" for 1973, which is interesting because it attributes to Brezhnev personally a party "decision" in the formal sense.⁸

tselinnykh zemel' Kazakhstana, pp. 344–55 (December 1973 plenum). *O kommunisticheskom vospitanii trudiashchikhsia*, pp. 156–61 (April 1968 plenum). *Voprosy upravleniia ekonomikoi razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva*, pp. 575–91 (October 1976 plenum).

6. Cf. *Ob osnovnykh voprosakh ekonomicheskoi politiki KPSS na sovremennom etape*, vol. 2: pp. 341–61; and *Voprosy agrarnoi politiki KPSS i osvoenie tselinnykh zemel' Kazakhstana*, pp. 344–55. It does appear, incidentally, that there is such a thing as editorial carelessness in Soviet political publications, with no plausible political motivation. *O kommunisticheskom vospitanii trudiashchikhsia* gives the date of the Nineteenth Moscow City Party Conference as May 29, 1968, when in fact *Pravda* and *Leninskim kursom* confirm that it was March 29, 1968.

7. *Ob osnovnykh voprosakh ekonomicheskoi politiki KPSS na sovremennom etape*, vol. 2, p. 110.

8. *Voprosy upravleniia ekonomikoi razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva*, pp. 358–59. The definition and species of the party decision is discussed in my *Guide to the Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1917–1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. ix–xviii.

As far as I know, none of the quasi-legal documents of this sort have been attributed to any particular Soviet leader since Lenin. The second document is still more exceptional in form. It is a speech of October 1, 1974 to the Council of Ministers.⁹ Brezhnev has never been a member of this body, and his opening sentence makes it clear that his presence there was a special occasion. He uses the occasion not only to reiterate various familiar themes concerning the economy, such as the need for better discipline, but also to demonstrate that the Politburo has the upper hand and may instruct the Council to make various corrections in the plan. The tone of the speech is rather formal (one wonders if various deputies might have been invited to enlarge Brezhnev's audience), and on occasion the meeting evokes the mood of a party congress in the days of Stalin rather than a council of leading executives: Brezhnev states that everyone should have a good apartment to come home to after work and a parenthetical note has the entire Council of Ministers responding with the ritual "*Pravil'no!*"¹⁰

If the amount of previously unavailable material now published in the Brezhnev volumes is modest, this harmonizes with the discreet, even secretive, style of his administration. It is only a minor exaggeration to say that the emphasis of Brezhnev's works is least on those subjects that interest Western Sovietologists most. Khrushchev is not mentioned, Stalin perhaps twice (and never at length). There are only a few veiled allusions to the democratic movement. The problem of minority nationalism is ignored. The fate of the economic reform of 1965 is circumlocution. The ultimate goal of a Communist society, which Khrushchev had promised by 1980 and discussed at some length, virtually disappears from Brezhnev's works, except for numerous warnings concerning real economic difficulties and the introduction in 1972 of the unexplicated term "developed socialist society" to describe the present USSR. After returning from Prague in February 1968, Brezhnev found it unnecessary to mention Czechoslovakia in any of his published speeches in that year, with the exception of one insignificant listing of members of the Warsaw Pact. The China problem does surface, but in Brezhnev's speeches its presence and his handling of it are carefully modulated. Compared to the generality of anti-Maoist propaganda in the USSR, Brezhnev's open contributions to the subject are intermittent, brief, and restrained.

Despite this determined discretion, Brezhnev has had a lot to say on some subjects, and a scanning of his works serves to confirm some fairly familiar aspects of his political profile. Above all he is an advocate of the Communist Party and ideological orthodoxy. Although it is far from easy to define precisely the role that ideology plays in Soviet foreign and domestic policy, it is difficult to come away from prolonged immersion in Brezhneviana without a conviction that ideology is somehow important to him and essential to an understanding of him. Easy generalizations about the death of ideology or the end of the Cold War are hard to square with this body of prose, for all its lack of concern for anything resembling theory. Concerning the party as a specific institution, Brezhnev redundantly emphasizes its essential role in the economy and society in general. The theory that he won a victory for himself and the party *apparatus* at the end of 1969 seems confirmed by the strikingly specific and repeated allusions to the role of the Politburo in his address on agriculture at the July 1970 Central Committee plenum.¹¹ As a traditionalist, it is no surprise that Brezhnev's main theme concerning the industrial economy appears to be the critical need to achieve the goals for capital construction, and he has been fairly frank in admitting that consumer interests must wait. Military strength is clearly a

9. *Voprosy upravleniia ekonomikoi razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva*, pp. 468–78.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 474.

11. *Leninskim kursom*, vol. 3, pp. 62–100.

leading priority with Brezhnev, as he has attempted to stress by his repeated speeches to military institutions and his penchant for waving the bloody shirt of World War II. (A particularly welcome opportunity for this occurred in September 1973, when Novorossiisk was elevated to the status of "hero-city." While the battle in this area was decidedly second-rate compared to those in such previous hero-cities as Moscow, Leningrad, and Stalingrad, it did involve the personal participation of Brezhnev, as was duly emphasized a year later when he visited Novorossiisk.¹²) While Brezhnev leans heavily toward Russian nationalism (and sees no contradiction between this and Marxism-Leninism), he has demonstrated a real awareness of the need to keep fences mended with the non-Russian republics and the Warsaw Pact countries. Although the anthologies contain no new documents in this field (apart from some minor ones on visits to Kazakhstan), they do call attention to the energy that he has devoted to visiting or receiving visitors from these components of his sphere, considering that about a third of all Brezhnev's speeches have been associated with this activity.

The same penchant for vigorous personal politicking is evident in Brezhnev's numerous speeches in connection with visits to or from non-Communist leaders, beginning in 1971. Here one sees not the orthodox party man—posing Lenin's " *kto kogo*" question, as he explicitly did in April 1965 in terms that could hardly be considered "revisionist"¹³—but a hearty, confident, "frank" advocate of coexistence and increased trade. The disparity between these images apparently accounts for the fact that the *Pravda* and United States Treasury Department versions of what Brezhnev said to American business leaders in June 1973 are quite dissimilar; the Soviet account substantially tones down the flavor of good fellowship that one finds in the American transcript.¹⁴

In sum, the collected works of Brezhnev are a suitable monument for the man. They are stolid, uninspired, discreet in their suppression of awkward topics. They reflect neither a "great leader" nor an intellectual, but rather a hardworking, determined, shrewd politician whose gifts are well adapted to the bureaucratic system that he manages. It would be a mistake to underrate his importance to the post-Stalin world and the importance of his collected works as a fundamental source on the Brezhnev administration.

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 267. On the connection of this with Brezhnev's war service, see *Pravda*, September 7, 8, and 9, 1974.

13. *Leninskim kursom*, vol. 1, p. 109.

14. Cf. *Leninskim kursom*, vol. 4, pp. 160–64; and *New York Times*, June 23, 1973, p. 9.