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After Khrushchev: Activities of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU in October 1964 – June 1965 according to V. N. Malin's Notes

Abstract

The article analyzes preliminary working notes of the meetings of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) from October 1964 to June 1965, which were made by V. N. Malin, head of the General Department of the CC CPSU from

1954 to 1965. The purpose and objective of the study is to use unique historical sources from the fonds of the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), which are being thus introduced into scientific use, to deduce the mechanisms of developing key decisions in the supreme political leadership of the USSR, while political system was transformed and power functions redistributed after the resignation of N. S. Khrushchev. Extensive historiography of various aspects of the history of the Soviet Union under L. I. Brezhnev notwithstanding, this topic has not yet received its proper coverage in national and foreign scholarship. Due to research specifics, the authors have used comprehensive methodological approach, based on a combination of source criticism, problem-chronological and system-structural methods, which permits, to some degree, to interpret the historical sources introduced into scientific use as convincingly as possible. Having analyzed issues considered at the meetings of the Presidium of the CC of the CPSU at the time, the authors come to a conclusion that the main range of topics did not change after October 1964: key problems of domestic and foreign policy remained in the focus of attention of the supreme political body of the USSR, while its approach to them did change. An important area of activity of the Presidium of the Central Committee was overcoming the N. S. Khrushchev legacy. This could have been formal issues related to the resignation of the former Soviet leader from his numerous posts, as well as fundamental problems of ideological nature. International relations were central in revision of N. S. Khrushchev's policy, resulting in a reconsideration of the Soviet foreign policy strategy and tactics. In late October 1964-1965, the Soviet leadership made efforts to normalize the relations with the ruling parties of Albania and the People's Republic of China (PRC), which had been "tested for durability" in the N. S. Khrushchev era. The preliminary working notes of the meetings of the Presidium of the Central Committee show that internal problems of the USSR were discussed by the Soviet leaders just as vividly and intensely as international ones. The main discussions revolved around two fundamental issues: situation in the agriculture and changes in the planning system in industry. Discussions of the need for agrarian reforms dominated late 1964 – early 1965, while discussion of reforming planning industrial production figured large since spring of 1965. The authors conclude that, when implementing their initiatives, the leaders of the Soviet Union, in many respects, were limited by the configuration of the political system developed over the previous years, as well as by the existing foreign policy realities. The authors argue insufficient coverage of the mechanisms for developing key decisions by the top political leadership of the USSR and connect the prospects for this research with expanded access to archival complexes.

Keywords

USSR, Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, N. S. Khrushchev, L. I. Brezhnev, mechanism of power, Kosygin's Reforms, socialist camp, historical sources.

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