



The President's Daily Brief

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~~Top Secret~~

Lack of Snow Endangers Soviet Winter Grain



554078 2-73 CIA

Snow Depth
0-2 inches
2-4 inches
Over 4 inches

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

USSR

Dmitry Polyansky, demoted yesterday from USSR First Deputy Premier to Minister of Agriculture, is an obvious scapegoat for the country's continuing harvest difficulties. He has been the Soviet Union's top agricultural administrator since 1962. It is likely, however, that the broader scale of Kremlin politics is equally important in causing his fall.

Following Khrushchev's ouster, Polyansky was an important member of the Ukrainian "clique" surrounding Brezhnev. As Brezhnev has moved in the past two years into a position of greater dominance in the leadership, he has espoused the twin programs of detente abroad and consumer interests at home--moves that opened a gap between him and his relatively conservative Ukrainian allies. Polyansky's demotion is the second blow to this Ukrainian group in the Politburo since last May.

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Observations of a US Embassy agricultural officer suggest that the winter grain crop losses will equal or even exceed those of last year, when only 23 million hectares were harvested, compared to a normal average of 31 million.

The officer, who recently traveled by train through some of the major winter grain areas, reports that snow cover was no more than two inches over the entire route. Fellow passengers told him that there would normally be over 20 inches of snow at this time of the year. Soviet weather maps indicate that the same general weather conditions--little snow combined with extreme cold--prevail throughout most of the major winter grain areas.