

The Drama of the Plenums : A Call to Arms

Khrushchev. You want to turn everything back in order then to take up the axe yourself.
Molotov. No, this is not so, com. Khrushchev. I hope that that is not what you want, and moreover,
 that is not what I want.
 CC CPSU Plenum, Kremlin, 24 June 1957

by *David Wolff*

In the third week of June 1957, a series of meetings of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) found N.S. Khrushchev, the First Secretary, in the minority. With a Kremlin coup in the offing, Khrushchev managed to convoke a CC plenary session, whose outcome was not at all certain prior to the meeting's opening. But by the third day, when the epigraph above was spoken, it was clear that the Army and security organs, together with the CC, would support Khrushchev. Thus, Molotov had no axe at hand and Khrushchev's concern was purely rhetorical, a reminder of the true correlation of forces on the plenum floor.¹ This kind of showmanship is illustrative of the theatrical qualities of the plenum transcripts, excerpts from which are presented here for the first time in English translation. Additional materials can be found on the CWIHP website.

For the most part, the CC CPSU Presidium/Politburo members staged and took leading roles in the drama.² Under Stalin, and later under Brezhnev, autocratic rule produced unanimously-approved speeches and decisions to be rubber-stamped by the plenum. But during the Khrushchev years, especially between 1953 and 1957, "collective leadership" produced multiple Presidium scripts to compete on the plenum floor, with the winning narrative to be determined by the audience. With this in mind, the selection of cadres for the plenum (to paraphrase Stalin) would decide all.³ Of course, the structure of CPSU work and promotion was such that all Presidium members had chaired innumerable meetings of the *aktiv* and knew all the organizational tricks. But Khrushchev was best of all, both at garnering loyalty and placing the trustworthy onto the CC. This is not to say, as Mark Kramer points out in his essay, that the plenum decisions were made in the course of the session. Nonetheless, the plenum discussions provide us with a window into the Presidium-level discussions that did lead to the key

CWIHP *Bulletin* 1, and are therefore omitted here.) In January 1955, the role of Malenkov and Beria during the 1953 German events took center stage, complementing Christian Ostermann's essay and accompanying documents. By July 1955 Molotov and Khrushchev clashed over the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia. These discussions supplement the Yugoslavia section. Khrushchev's "second secret speech" at the Sixth Plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party in March 1956 adds context to Stalin's conversations with Yugoslav leaders. In the part of the *Bulletin* devoted to Deng Xiaoping and

In October 1995 the Center for Storage of Contempo-

The different versions of the proceedings were preserved for most, but not all, of the 51 plenums. The status of each version is specified clearly both in the *opis*' and on the cover of each *delo*. The *dela* for a particular version are grouped consecutively, which makes it relatively easy to distinguish them from other versions.

In addition to the transcripts of plenum proceedings, Opis' 1 includes many files of documents that were used or distributed at the plenums. These documents in some cases were publicly available after the plenums, but in

were told by the highest party authorities, went along obediently this time as well.

The stenographic account of the July 1953 plenum was declassified and published in early 1991, and it has been cited by many Western and Russian scholars since then.¹⁹ Unfortunately, most of these scholars have failed to take due account of the context of the plenum. Rather than seeing the plenum for what it was—namely, an attempt by Beria’s rivals to rationalize their actions by blaming the ousted security chief for a host of purported “crimes”—many researchers have taken at face value the allegations made against Beria. This has been especially true of the claims about Beria’s supposed effort to “destroy the people’s democratic regime in [East Germany].” Beria’s real views about Germany in the spring of 1953 bore little resemblance to the accusations lodged against him. It was Molotov, not Beria, who had taken the lead in forging the new Soviet policy toward Germany after Stalin’s death, and all the other top Soviet officials, including Beria, had supported him.²⁰ The views attributed to Beria were contrived by Molotov to gloss over his own responsibility for having drastically reshaped Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik* just before the June 1953 uprising in East Germany. Numerous Western and Russian scholars who have used the published stenographic account of the July 1953 plenum have been far too accepting of Molotov’s tendentious portrayal of Beria and Germany.²¹

The misunderstandings that have arisen from the declassified account of the July 1953 Central Committee plenum underscore the need for circumspection when drawing on the materials in Fond 2. Unless scholars constantly bear in mind the purpose and context of each plenum, they risk going astray in their interpretations of substantive issues as well as of the dynamics of Soviet policy-making.

One additional problem that researchers may encounter when using the new plenum materials is the distortions that sometimes crept in during the editing of the Central Committee transcripts. As noted above, Fond 2 contains two or more versions of most of the plenums. For research purposes, the most useful version is the “author’s copy,” which contains a verbatim transcript with handwritten changes and handwritten or typed insertions. This version of the transcript enables scholars to see both the original proceedings and the changes that senior officials wanted to make. If scholars consult only the “corrected copy” or the “stenographic account,” they are likely to miss some important nuances in the original proceedings. For example, by the time a stenographic account was issued for the July 1953 plenum, numerous modifications had been made to cast as sinister a light as possible on Beria’s actions. A comparison with the verbatim transcript shows that, among other things, Beria’s views about Germany were depicted in far more extreme terms in the edited account. At one point in the verbatim transcript, Molotov claimed that Beria had supported a united Germany “which will be peaceloving and under the control of the

four powers.”²² (Molotov conveniently neglected to mention that this was precisely the position he himself had long supported.) To be on the safe side, the words “and under the control of the four powers” were omitted from the stenographic account, thus implying that Beria had wanted the Soviet Union simply to abandon East Germany. Numerous other changes of this sort were made, including some of much greater length. All of them were designed to bring even greater discredit upon Beria.

For most of the other plenums as well, extensive changes were made in the transcripts before stenographic accounts were issued. In some cases lengthy portions were rewritten, and several new paragraphs or even new pages were added. On occasion, entirely new speeches were inserted.²³ The finished product is valuable, indeed essential, for scholars to consult, but it can be highly misleading unless it is compared with the verbatim transcript. Only the “author’s copy” permits researchers to examine simultaneously the original proceedings and the subsequent editing.²⁴ If that version is not available, it is important to look at both the “uncorrected stenogram” and the “stenographic account.” In a few cases (e.g., the December 1959 plenum) these two versions do not differ markedly, but in the large majority of cases the differences can be of great importance.

Selected Plenum Highlights

Most of the Central Committee plenums between 1941 and 1966 had no direct bearing on foreign policy. Instead they focused on agricultural policy, economic problems, local party management, and the like. A number of the plenums, however, dealt at length with foreign policy issues. Some plenums covered two or more topics, both external and internal, whereas other plenums focused exclusively on important foreign developments. Plenums that approved changes (or impending changes) in the leadership, as in March 1953, July 1953, January 1955, June 1957, October 1957, and October 1964, also are of great importance for studies of the Cold War. In a brief article of this sort it would be impossible to give an exhaustive overview of the many issues covered by the plenums, but a few highlights will suffice to indicate how rich some of the material is.

Intensity of the Post-Stalin Leadership Struggle

One of the most intriguing aspects of the plenums from 1953 through 1957 is what they reveal about the leadership struggle. Western observers had long surmised that a fierce struggle was under way behind the scenes, but the only direct evidence for this at the time was the occasional announcement that a senior official had been dismissed or demoted. The declassified transcripts of Central Committee plenums, as well as other new documents and first-hand accounts, reveal that the leadership struggle was even more intense than most analysts had suspected. At some plenums, notably those in July 1953, when the Central Committee denounced Beria, in January

1955, when Malenkov came under sharp criticism prior to his dismissal as prime minister, in February 1956, when preparations were under way for Khrushchev's "secret speech" condemning Stalin, in June 1957, when Khrushchev ousted the Anti-Party Group, and in October 1957, when Khrushchev removed his erstwhile ally and defense minister, Marshal Georgii Zhukov, the leadership struggle dominated the sessions. Yet even at plenums that were ostensibly convened for other reasons, the ferocity of the leadership struggle often affected the entire proceedings.

One of the best examples came at the lengthy plenum in July 1955, which focused on several topics, including the recent *rapprochement* with Yugoslavia. [Ed. Note: For extensive excerpts, see below in this *Bulletin*.] During the debate about Yugoslavia, one of Khrushchev's chief rivals, Vyacheslav Molotov, came under fierce attack. At this juncture, barely a year-and-a-half after Beria had been executed, the prospect of losing out in the power struggle still implied potentially grave risks. Even so, Molotov largely held his ground and only grudgingly, at the very end of the plenum, sought to propitiate his attackers. The segment of the plenum that dealt with Yugoslavia featured a lengthy (138-page) opening speech by Khrushchev, which provided a detailed, highly informative (albeit selective and tendentious) overview of the reasons for the Soviet-Yugoslav split under Stalin.²⁵ (Much of the blame was laid on "the provocative role of Beria and Abakumov.") Toward the end of the speech, Khrushchev revealed to the Central Committee that the Presidium had "unanimously" decided to report that Molotov had "consistently adopted an incorrect position" on the Yugoslav question and had "refused to disavow his incorrect views."²⁶ Khrushchev read aloud the Presidium's conclusion that "Com. Molotov's position on the Yugoslav matter does not serve the interests of the Soviet state and the socialist camp and does not conform with the principles of Leninist policy."

Khrushchev's comments touched off a spate of denunciations of Molotov's views on Yugoslavia. One such attack came from Georgii Malenkov, who, despite having lost his post as prime minister four months earlier, admitted that the PCC Presidium had thieved from Ghe Yugoslav

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advanced by Com. Molotov as inimical to our party and a non-Leninist and sectarian position”), it was clear that Molotov had experienced a major setback. But what is perhaps most striking, in view of the intense criticism Molotov encountered, is that he was able to hold onto his position for another two years and that he very nearly won out over Khrushchev in June 1957. The transcript of the July 1955 plenum thus provides crucial evidence that Khrushchev, despite having consolidated his position a good deal, had by no means overcome his most formidable challenger. Anyone who could withstand and recover from the attacks that Molotov endured during the July 1955 plenum was obviously well-suited to be a constant threat.

Fissures in the Communist World (I): Yugoslavia and Poland

Quite apart from what the plenum documents reveal about the post-Stalin leadership struggle, they shed intriguing light on the priorities of Soviet foreign policy. One thing that quickly becomes evident from the 822 files in Opis’ 1 is the importance that CPSU officials attached to ideological relations with other Communist countries. Although no plenums dealt at length with the crises in East Germany in 1953 and Poland and Hungary in 1956 (in contrast to the much more prolonged crisis with Czechoslovakia in 1968-69, which was the main subject of three separate plenums), numerous plenums during the Khrushchev and early Brezhnev periods focused exclusively, or at least extensively, on the nettlesome problem of relations with Yugoslavia, China, and the world Communist movement. The momentous decision to seek a *rapprochement* with Yugoslavia in May 1955 was regarded as such an abrupt and, from the ideological standpoint, potentially disorienting change of course that Soviet leaders believed they should explain the move to the full Central Committee.³¹ At a plenum in July 1955, Khrushchev and numerous other Presidium members laid out the basic rationale—that “because of serious mistakes we lost Yugoslavia [*my poteryali Yugoslaviyu*] and the enemy camp has begun to lure that country over to its side”—and emphasized the “enormous importance of winning back our former loyal ally.” Not surprisingly, the Central Committee voted unanimously in support of the Presidium’s actions.

Similarly, in later years when tensions reemerged with Yugoslavia (in large part because of the crises in 1956), Khrushchev and his colleagues again believed it wise to explain these tensions to the Central Committee. One such occasion came in December 1957, when a plenum was convened to inform Central Committee members about a two-part conference held in Moscow the previous month to mark the 40th anniversary of the Bolshevik takeover. The leaders of the thirteen ruling Communist parties had been invited to the first part of the conference on 14-16 November, but Yugoslav officials had declined to take part. When the other twelve parties met and issued a statement reaffirming the CPSU’s preeminent role in the

world Communist movement, Yugoslav leaders refused to endorse it.³² At the CPSU Central Committee plenum a few weeks after the conference, one of the highest-ranking party officials, Mikhail Suslov, who was broadly responsible for ideology and intra-bloc relations, explained to the members that “Yugoslavia’s failure to participate . . . attests to the continuing ideological disagreements between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia [LCY] and the other Communist parties of the socialist countries.”³³ He cited several areas in which “ideological disagreements remain:” the “unwillingness of the Yugoslav comrades to speak about a socialist camp, especially a socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union”;

realized.³⁶

The plenum documents also reveal that Yugoslavia was not the only East European country that complicated

view, had left China “isolated in the international arena”). Of particular interest were Suslov’s comments about Mao’s “completely incomprehensible” retreat during the Sino-American crisis that erupted in August 1958 when China began bombarding the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu in the Taiwan Straits:

We [in Moscow] regarded it as our internationalist duty to come out decisively in support of the fraternal Chinese people, with whom our country is bound by alliance obligations. According to secret documents that we had intercepted, it had become clear that the ruling circles in America were already psychologically prepared to relinquish the offshore islands to the PRC. However, after precipitating an extreme situation in the vicinity of the offshore islands and making far-reaching statements, the Chinese comrades backed down at the critical moment. . . . It is obvious that in backing down, the Chinese comrades squandered things. The perception abroad was that they had caved in.⁴¹

In all these respects, Suslov argued, “the Chinese comrades are at odds with the common foreign policy line of the socialist camp. The lack of needed coordination between the two most powerful Communist parties on questions of foreign policy is abnormal.”⁴²

After recounting this litany of “serious disagreements,” Suslov emphasized that long-standing efforts to increase the appearance and reality of unity within the socialist camp made it imperative to curtail China’s deviations in foreign policy:

The incorrect actions of one of the socialist countries affects the international situation of the entire socialist camp. We must bear in mind that imperialist propaganda directly links the actions of the Chinese comrades with the policy of the USSR and other socialist countries. And indeed, our Communist parties, too, always emphasize that the socialist camp has only one foreign policy course.⁴³

Suslov declared that the Soviet Union would try to restore “complete unity” by continuing “to express our candid opinions about the most important questions affecting our common interests when our views do not coincide.” Although the aim would be to bring China back into line with the USSR, Suslov argued that if these efforts failed, the CPSU Presidium would “stick by the positions that our party believes are correct.”

Throughout the report, Suslov insisted that the disagreements were not yet irreparable. He noted several measures that could rapidly improve Sino-Soviet ties, and he pledged that the CPSU Presidium would do all it could to “strengthen and develop Soviet-Chinese friendship and unity” on the basis of “Leninist principles of equality and mutual cooperation.” Nevertheless, a key passage in his

report may have left some Central Committee members wondering whether relations with China could really be mended, at least while Mao Zedong remained in power:

It has to be said that all the mistakes and shortcomings in the internal and foreign policies of the Chinese Communist Party can be explained in large part by the cult of personality surrounding Com. Mao Zedong. Formally, the CC of the Chinese Communist Party abides by the norms of collective leadership, but in reality the most important decisions are made by one man and therefore are often plagued by subjectivism and, in some instances, are simply ill-conceived. By all appearances, the glorification of Mao Zedong in China has been growing inexorably. More and more often, statements appear in the party press that “we Chinese live in the great era of Mao Zedong.” Comrade Mao Zedong is depicted as a great leader and a genius. They call him the beacon, who is shining the way to Communism and is the embodiment of the ideas of Communism. The name of Mao Zedong is equated with the party, and vice versa. The works of Com. Mao Zedong are presented in China as the final word of creative Marxism and are placed on a par with the classic works of Marxism-Leninism.... All of this, unfortunately, impresses Com. Mao Zedong, who,

Suslov acknowledged to the Central Committee that the impasse resulting from the “obduracy” of the Chinese

These efforts by the CCP leaders, far from being limited to the ideological sphere, extend into the sphere of practical politics among socialist countries and Communist parties. In seeking to enervate the unity and cohesion of the socialist commonwealth, the CCP leadership resorts to all manner of tricks and maneuvers to disrupt economic and political relations among the socialist countries and to sow discord in their activities on the international arena. Recently, the fissiparous and subversive actions of the Chinese leaders in the world Communist movement have drastically increased. There is no longer any doubt that Beijing is seeking to achieve a schism among the Communist parties and the creation of factions and groups that are hostile to Marxism-Leninism.⁶⁰

Suslov's warning seemed even more pertinent a year later, when Romania's defiance had become more overt. In April 1964 the Romanian government issued a stinging rejection of Khrushchev's scheme for supranational economic integration within the socialist bloc (a scheme that would have relegated Romania to being little more than a supplier of agricultural goods and raw materials for the more industrialized Communist countries).⁶¹ From then on, the Romanian authorities began reorienting their foreign trade away from the Soviet Union. By 1965, Romania's divergence from the basic foreign policy line of the Warsaw Pact countries was extending well beyond foreign economic matters. In March 1965, Ceausescu declined to take part in a Consultative Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, which was designed to lay the groundwork for another world conference of Communist parties, following up on the November 1960 session. Romania's refusal to attend was based, at least in part, on China's boycott of the meeting. Soviet leaders had assured Ceausescu and the Chinese authorities that, in the wake of Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964, there was an opportunity to search for "new approaches and new means of achieving unity in the world Communist movement," but neither the Chinese, nor Ceausescu, agreed to take up the offer. Romania's absence from the meeting was conspicuous as the only ruling Communist party other than China and Albania that failed to show up. (Officials from Cuba, North Vietnam, Mongolia, and North Korea all attended, as did representatives of several non-ruling Communist parties.)

At a CPSU Central Committee plenum on 24-26 March 1965, Suslov praised the consultative meeting, but noted regretfully that Romania had not taken part. He then accused the Chinese of trying to sow discord within the Warsaw Pact:

The leadership of the CCP not only is directly supporting factional groups in the fraternal countries, but is also saying that "in the future this sort of work must be greatly stepped up." The Chinese leaders declare that their disagreements with the CPSU and the other

parties are "disagreements between two hostile classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie," and hence they reject any attempts to improve relations between our parties.⁶²

The tone of Suslov's presentation at this plenum was far more somber than his earlier reports. He even warned of Chinese efforts to stir up unrest in the Soviet Union itself, alluding to a student demonstration that Chinese officials had orchestrated in Moscow in early March 1965 to try, as Suslov put it, to "incite an anti-Soviet hysteria."⁶³ No longer did he hold out any hope that relations with China could be ameliorated. Although Suslov affirmed that "the CPSU Presidium believes it necessary to move ahead patiently without giving in to provocations. . . to show the Chinese people our sincere desire to live with them in friendship," he acknowledged that "the Chinese leadership has completely rejected all the positive suggestions in the communiqué from the Consultative Meeting."

The increasingly harsh tone of the speeches given by Suslov and other Soviet leaders at Central Committee plenums provides a valuable way to track the deterioration of Soviet ties with China. After having sought, at the December 1959 plenum, to caution against public denunciations of China, Suslov over time had to embrace the hostile rhetoric that characterized Sino-Soviet relations. This trend corresponded with the shift in bilateral ties from the amity of the mid-1950s to the tensions in the late 1950s to the bitter dispute of the early and mid-1960s. Once the conflict was fully under way, the pronouncements by Suslov and others at the plenums were intended not only to warn about real dangers from China, but also to reassure the Central Committee that the top leaders would not compromise Soviet interests.

The Zhukov Affair

Normally, the Central Committee was not involved in military policy. That sphere of activity was left to the CPSU Presidium/Politburo, the Defense Council, the Ministry of Defense, and the CPSU CC Administrative Organs Department. Military issues were not brought before the Central Committee even for nominal approval. A partial exception came in late October 1957, when Khrushchev decided to oust Soviet defense minister Marshal Georgii Zhukov from all his senior party and ministerial positions. Khrushchev took this step to consolidate his own power, but the affair inevitably had some bearing on civil-military relations. Although it did not represent an institutional clash between civilian and military authorities (and clearly was not motivated by fears that Zhukov would try to seize power in a *coup d'état*), it reinforced the norm of the army's subordination to civilian (i.e., Communist Party) control.⁶⁴

The declassification of the October 1957 plenum materials, amounting to several thousand pages, does not fully dispel the mystery that has long surrounded the Zhukov affair. Just four months earlier, in June 1957,

Zhukov had sided with Khrushchev against the “Anti-Party Group” and had been rewarded for his efforts by being promoted to full membership on the CPSU Presidium. Khrushchev’s abrupt shift against Zhukov in October 1957 came as a shock both inside and outside the Soviet Union. The decisive maneuvers to remove Zhukov occurred while the defense minister was on an extended trip to Yugoslavia and Albania in the last few weeks of October, a trip that had been authorized by the CPSU Presidium. When Zhukov began his travels he had no inkling that he was about to be dismissed, as he acknowledged at the plenum:

Some three weeks ago, when I was instructed to set off for Yugoslavia and Albania, I said goodbye to all the members of the CC [Presidium], or at least to most of them, and we spoke as though we were the closest of friends. No one said a word to me about any problem. . . . I was not given the slightest hint that my behavior was somehow deemed improper. Only now are they saying this to me. . . . We all parted in such good spirits and warm friendship three weeks ago that it’s still hard to believe all this has suddenly happened.⁶⁵

In a remarkably short period of time after Zhukov’s departure, Khrushchev arranged with the other Presidium members (and with senior military officers) to deprive the defense minister of all his top posts. The CPSU Presidium formally endorsed the ouster of Zhukov and the appointment of a successor, Marshal Rodion Malinovskii, at a meeting on 26 October, which Zhukov was hastily summoned to attend while he was still in Albania. The announcement of his dismissal and the appointment of Malinovskii as defense minister was carried by the TASS news agency later that day. Only after Zhukov’s fate was sealed did Khrushchev convene the Central Committee.

Because the notes from Khrushchev’s earlier discussions and from the relevant Presidium meetings (especially the meetings on 19 and 26 October) have not yet been released, key information about Khrushchev’s motives in the affair is still unavailable.⁶⁶ The plenum documents show only what Khrushchev wanted the Central Committee to hear, not necessarily what he really believed. Nevertheless, the plenum materials do add some intriguing details to previous accounts and, if used circumspectly, shed considerable light on the reasons for Khrushchev’s move against his erstwhile ally.

One of the most valuable aspects of the declassified documents, repetitive and turgid though they may be, is that they clarify the allegations against Zhukov. The general case against Zhukov had been known since a few days after the plenum, when summary materials were published in the CPSU daily *Pravda*.⁶⁷ Official histories of the Soviet Army’s political organs, published in 1964 and 1968, had provided some additional information.⁶⁸ Even so, a few of the allegations were at best unclear, and in some cases it was not known precisely what Zhukov

had been accused of. Nor was it known whether Zhukov had tried to defend himself against the charges. The vast quantity of declassified testimony and supporting documentation introduced at the plenum, beginning with Suslov’s opening speech (which outlined all of Zhukov’s alleged transgressions), gives a much better sense of what the charges entailed.

For example, it had long been known that Zhukov was denounced for having proposed certain changes in high-level military organs, but it was not known precisely what his alleged intentions were. The plenum materials indicate that Zhukov was accused of having wanted to abolish the Higher Military Council, a body consisting of all the members and candidate members of the CPSU Presidium as well as all the commanders of military districts, groups of forces, and naval fleets. The Higher Military Council was under the direct jurisdiction of the Defense Council, the supreme command organ in the USSR, whose existence dates after the plenum, and introduced it then

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Another allegation discussed at great length at the plenum was Zhukov's supposed desire to establish a "cult of personality" around himself. One of the main things cited as evidence for this accusation was the efforts that Zhukov allegedly made to highlight the depiction of his own feats in the film "Velikaya bitva" ("The Great Battle"), a documentary about the Battle of Stalingrad. The film had been commissioned in October 1953 to replace the 1943 film "Stalingrad," which was deemed to give undue prominence to Stalin's role in the campaign. The new documentary was completed in early 1957 but was then subject to a number of revisions. At the CPSU Presidium meeting on 26 October, Zhukov insisted that he had not been involved in the production of "Velikaya bitva," but Suslov argued at the plenum that Zhukov's denials "do not correspond to reality."⁷³ Relying on a letter from the Soviet minister of culture, Nikolai Mikhailov, which was drafted at Khrushchev's request after the decision to remove Zhukov had been made, Suslov claimed that the defense minister had "directly and actively intervened in the film-making" numerous times to "propagandize [his own] cult of personality."⁷⁴ Suslov cited a few other items as well—notably, the preparation of an article about World War II for the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, and the majestic depiction of Zhukov in a painting in the Soviet Army Museum—to bolster his claim that "Zhukov was deeply concerned to aggrandize his persona and his prestige, without regard for the interests of the [Communist] Party." Having waged "a struggle against the well-known abuses resulting from J. V. Stalin's cult of personality," Suslov declared, "our Party must never again permit anyone to build up a cult of personality in any form whatsoever."⁷⁵

Perhaps the most serious allegation put forth by Suslov and Khrushchev was that Zhukov had been trying to "take control of the army away from the party and to establish a one-man dictatorship in the armed forces."⁷⁶ Khrushchev argued that there was supposed to be "a division of responsibilities among [senior] members of the party," and that no single official, not even the CPSU First Secretary (much less the defense minister), could "take on all the functions of the Central Committee."⁷⁷ He condemned Zhukov for allegedly having sought to "place everything, the Committee on State Security as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, under the Ministry of Defense." Khrushchev added that if the situation had continued this way "for another month or so", Zhukov would have been insisting that "the Central Committee, too, must be brought under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense."⁷⁸

Khrushchev produced no concrete evidence to substantiate these claims, but both he and Suslov specifically accused Zhukov of having sought to establish military jurisdiction over the main security organs:

Com. Zhukov recently proposed that the chairman of the Committee on State Security and the Minister of

Internal Affairs be replaced by military officers. What lay behind this suggestion? Wasn't it an attempt to fill the leading posts in these organs with his own people, with cadres who would be personally beholden to him? Isn't he seeking to establish his own control over the Committee on State Security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs?⁷⁹

Newly available evidence suggests that this charge was disingenuous, or at least highly misleading. The KGB's own top-secret history of its activities and organization, compiled in 1977, makes no mention of any such effort by Zhukov. On the contrary, the KGB textbook emphasizes that in the mid- and late 1950s "the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government" themselves sought to "fill the ranks of the state security organs with experienced party *and military* personnel" in order to "eliminate the consequences of the hostile activity of Beria and his accomplices."⁸⁰ To the extent that military officers were brought into the KGB and MVD after 1953, this trend was initiated and encouraged by the top political leadership. (Khrushchev and his colleagues, after all, had learned at the time of Beria's arrest that they could count on Zhukov and other senior military officers to support the CPSU.)

The spuriousness of this particular accusation reflected a more general pattern. As valuable as the plenum materials are in spelling out the case against Zhukov, the main conclusion one can draw from the documents is that the affair was little more than a personal clash between Khrushchev and Zhukov. Despite the sinister veneer that Khrushchev gave (both at the plenum and later on in his memoirs) to Zhukov's actions, the documents leave no doubt that the charges against Zhukov were largely contrived. Zhukov was justified in pointing this out during his first speech at the plenum:

I think we have gathered here not to review individual offenses. . . . That's not what this is all about. In the end, the question here is political, not juridical.⁸¹

Khrushchev's motive in convening the Central Committee was similar to his (and others') motives in orchestrating the July 1953 plenum to denounce Beria. Rather than acknowledge that the ouster of Zhukov was the latest stage in a consolidation of power, Khrushchev used the October 1957 plenum to suggest that the defense minister had been removed because of genuine concerns



officers went out of their way to emphasize that Khrushchev “is not only First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, but is also chairman of the Defense Council,” a position equivalent to commander-in-chief of the Soviet armed forces.⁸⁶ Although it is now clear that General A. S. Zheltov, the chief political officer in the Soviet Army in 1957, was instrumental in pressing for Zhukov’s ouster, a substantial number of career military officers were also behind the move. (The plenum documents suggest that Zheltov resented Zhukov mainly because Zheltov had been left off the Central Committee at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, an omission that Zheltov evidently blamed on Zhukov.⁸⁷) Zheltov’s report at the CPSU Presidium meeting on October 19 was a catalyst for the final actions to remove Zhukov, but it is clear that the preliminary maneuvering had begun well before then, with the involvement of senior military commanders. Khrushchev was able to secure a political-military consensus on the need to dismiss Zhukov.

The lack of any civilian-military disagreements on this issue is well illustrated by the plenum itself, where not a single military officer spoke in defense of Zhukov. The norm of subordination to party control outweighed any inclination that senior commanders might have had to speak even mildly in favor of the deposed minister.⁸⁸ All of Zhukov’s military colleagues and subordinates joined with Khrushchev and Suslov in denouncing Zhukov’s alleged efforts to foster a “cult of personality” and to “take control of the army away from the party.” Zhukov’s successor, Malinovskii, expressed regret that Zhukov had allowed problems in the military to become so acute that the Central Committee was forced to step in to resolve matters:

Comrades, we military officers are very glad that the plenum of the Central Committee is discussing the matter of strengthening party-political work in the Soviet Army and Navy. On the other hand, it is regrettable that we, as military officers and members of the party, have reached the point where the Central Committee itself has been compelled to intervene in this matter.⁸⁹

Even military officers who had benefited greatly during Zhukov’s tenure, such as Fleet Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, who had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Soviet navy in 1956, argued that Zhukov’s “leadership of the ministry has created an extremely agonizing, oppressive, and distasteful situation, which is totally at odds with party and Leninist principles of leadership.” Gorshkov insisted that Zhukov “regards himself as absolutely infallible” and “refuses to tolerate views different from his own, often reacting with uncontrolled rage, invective, and abuse.”⁹⁰ Other officers expressed even stronger criticism, doing their best to side completely with the party hierarchy.

So clear was the party’s dominance of the military that

even the officers who had known Zhukov the longest—Marshal Semyon Budennyi, Marshal Ivan Konev, and Marshal Sergei Biryuzov, among others—disavowed their past ties with him.⁹¹ After one of the speakers on the first day of the plenum referred to the “special friendship between Com. Konev and Marshal Zhukov,” Konev spoke with Khrushchev and sent a note to the CPSU Presidium insisting that it would be a “profound mistake to believe I was ever particularly close to Zhukov.” Konev’s denials prompted Khrushchev to begin his own speech at the plenum by “correcting the record” along the lines that Konev sought:

We don’t have any basis for suggesting that Com. Konev’s past relationship with Com. Zhukov should cast any sort of pall on Com. Konev. Com. Konev is a member of the CPSU CC and a long-time member of the party, and he always was a loyal member of the party and a worthy member of the CPSU CC. He remains so now.⁹²

By highlighting Konev’s eagerness to renounce his previous ties with Zhukov, Khrushchev underscored the consensus against the deposed minister and let the full

disasters with aviation transport, combat aircraft, and ships.

The problem of drunkenness among servicemen, including officers, has taken on vast dimensions in the army and navy. As a rule, the majority of extraordinary incidents and crimes committed by servicemen are connected with drunkenness.

The extremely unsatisfactory state of military discipline in many units and formations of the army, and especially in the navy, prevents troops from being maintained at a high level of combat readiness and undermines efforts to strengthen the Armed Forces.⁹⁵

The standards used by Zhukov and Sokolovskii may have been a good deal higher than those used today, and the pervasiveness of “unsavory phenomena” is undoubtedly greater now than it was then. Some of these problems had been known earlier from the testimony of emigres/defectors and occasional articles in the Soviet press.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, it is striking (and comforting) to see that dissatisfaction about the state of military discipline was nearly as great in Moscow some 40-45 years ago as it is today.

February 1956 (Dela 181-184); 27 February 1956 (Dela 185-187); 22 June 1956 (Dela 188); 20-24 December 1956 (Dela 189-208); 13-14 February 1957 (Dela 209-221); 22-29 June 1957 (Dela 222-259); 28-29 October 1957 (Dela 260-272); 16-17 December 1957 (Dela 273-284); 25-26 February 1958 (Dela 285-298); 26 March 1958 (Dela 319-327); 6-7 May 1958 (Dela 304-318); 17-18 June 1958 (Dela 319-327); 5 September 1958 (Dela 328-332); 12 November 1958 (Dela 333-338); 15-19 December 1958 (Dela 339-360); 24-29 June 1959 (Dela 361-397); 22-26 December 1959 (Dela 398-448); 4 May 1960 (Dela 449-452); 13-16 July 1960 (Dela 453-485); 10-18 January 1961 (Dela 486-536); 19 June 1961 (Dela 537-543); 14 October 1961 (Dela 544-548); 31 October 1961 (Dela 549-553); 5-9 March 1962 (Dela 554-582); 23 April 1962 (Dela 583-587); 19-23 November 1962 (Dela 588-623); 18-21 June 1963 (Dela 624-658); 9-13 December 1963 (Dela 659-696); 10-15 February 1964 (Dela 697-743); 11 July 1964 (Dela 744-747); 10 October 1964 (Dela 748-753); 16 November 1964 (Dela 754-764); 24-26 March 1965 (Dela 765-786); 27-29 September 1965 (Dela 787-805); 6 December 1965 (Dela 806-812); 19 February 1966 (Dela 813-817); and 26 March 1966 (Dela 818-822).

⁶ See, for example, the standardized form (classified “sekretno”) that was circulated along with appropriate transcript pages to each speaker, in TsKhSD, Fond (F.) 2, Opis’ (Op.) 1, Delo (D.) 268, List (L.) 15.

⁷ The name of the CPSU CC Politburo was changed to the “CPSU CC Presidium” at the 19th Party Congress in October 1952. The name was changed back to the Politburo just before the 23rd Party Congress in March 1966.

⁸ See, for example, “Tov. Sukovoi E. N.,” 18 March 1958, memorandum on materials to include in the final stenographic account of the plenum held on 28-29 October 1957, in TsKhSD, F. 2, Op. 1, D. 269, L. 79, as well as the attachment on Ll. 80-145.

⁹ This is in contrast to the plenum documents in Opis’ 2 of Fond 17 at RTsKhIDNI. RTsKhIDNI gives out only the microfilms of these documents.

¹⁰ Useful compilations of the materials published after Central Committee plenums from 1953 through the late 1980s are available in two sources: *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s’ezdov, konferentsii, i plenumov TsK*, various editions (Moscow: Politizdat, various years); and the 29 volumes of the CPSU yearbook published between 1957 and 1989, *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika* (Moscow: Politizdat, published biennially until the mid-1960s and annually thereafter). From 1989 to 1991, the new Central Committee journal *Izvestiya TsK KPSS* featured stenographic accounts of selected plenums, including some from the pre-Gorbachev era.

¹¹ The term “Central Committee” refers here exclusively to the body comprising 200-300 people who convened for plenums. Even when plenums were not in session, many resolutions and directives were issued in the name of the Central Committee, but these were actually drafted and approved by the Politburo or Secretariat, not by the Central Committee itself. Soviet officials also frequently used the term “Central Committee” to refer to the whole central party apparatus, but this, too, gives a misleading impression of the Central Committee’s role. The term is used here only in its narrowest sense.

¹² See, for example, the marked-up draft “Postanovlenie plenuma TsK KPSS: Ob uluchshenii partiino-politicheskoi raboty v Sovetskoi Armii i Flote,” October 1957 (Secret), in “Materialy k Protokolu No. 5 zasedaniya plenuma TsK KPSS 28-29. 10. 1957 g.,” in TsKhSD, F. 2, Op. 1, D. 261, Ll. 69-74.

¹³ The term “circular flow of power” was coined by Robert V. Daniels in “Soviet Politics Since Khrushchev,” in John W. Strong, ed., *The Soviet Union Under Brezhnev and Kosygin* (New York: Van Nostrand-Reinhold, 1971), p. 20. Daniels had developed the basic interpretation at some length more than a decade earlier in his *The Conscience of the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), and similar views had been elaborated by numerous

scholars such as Merle Fainsod and Leonard Schapiro.

¹⁴ On this general problem, see Mark Kramer, “Archival Research in Moscow: Progress and Pitfalls,” *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Issue No. 3 (Fall 1993), p. 34.

¹⁵ For an analysis and translation of these notes and supplementary materials, see Mark Kramer, “Special Feature: New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises,” *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Issue No. 8-9 (Winter 1996/1997), pp. 358-410.

¹⁶ Almost all of the transcripts that were released in the early 1990s are now accessible in Fond 89 of TsKhSD. For a convenient, cross-indexed, and chronological list of these transcripts compiled by I. I. Kudryavtsev and edited by V. P. Kozlov, see *Arkhivy Kremlya i Staroi Ploshchadi: Dokumenty po “Delu KPSS”—Annotirovannyyi spravochnik dokumentov, predstavlenykh v Konstitutsionnyi Sud RF po “Delu KPSS”*, (Novosibirsk: Siberskii Khronograf, 1995).

¹⁷ The two most valuable collections put out by the Gorbachev Foundation are Mikhail Gorbachev, ed., *Gody trudnykh reshenii* (Moscow: Alfa-Print, 1993); and A. V. Veber et al., eds., *Soyuz mozhno bylo sokhranit’—Belaya kniga: Dokumenty i fakty o politike M. S. Gorbacheva po reformirovaniyu i sokhraneniyu mnogonatsional’nogo gosudarstva* (Moscow: Aprel’-85, 1995). Some relevant items also have appeared in the Foundation’s journal *Svobodnaya mysl’*. The items published in *Istochnik* (e.g., about the Politburo’s immediate reaction to the Chernobyl accident) seem to have been released for the same reason that materials were turned

passage. The second editor changed it to read: “We now have medium-range missiles, that is, European missiles, which can strike targets all over Europe after being launched from our territory.” See the marked-up verbatim transcript “Rech’ tov. N. S. Khrushcheva na plenum TsK KPSS, 29 oktyabrya 1957 goda,” 29 October 1957 (Strictly Secret), in TsKhSD, F. 2, Op. 1, D. 269, L. 66.

²⁵ Khrushchev’s speech, “Doklad Pervogo sekretarya TsK KPSS Khrushcheva N. S. ‘Ob itogakh sovetsko-yugoslavskikh peregovorov,’” is in “plenum TsK KPSS—XIX Sozyv: Stenogramma desyatogo zasedaniya 9 iyulya 1955 g. (utrennego),” July 1955 (Strictly Secret), TsKhSD, F. 2, Op. 1, D. 172, Ll. 1-138.

Since the collapse of the USSR, the doors of the Soviet archives are partially open to Russian and foreign researchers and we can say that the balance sheet is, for today, “on the whole, positive.” At the same time, however, faced with the multiplicity and diversity of meticulous scientific publications,¹ the historian has the right to ask: Is Soviet history hiding collections of unedited documents, worthy of publication in full?

In order to better grasp the importance of this question, we must keep in mind the fact that we are studying a system that made a veritable religion of secrecy. Currently, we are only in possession of very weak documentation on Soviet decision-making and on the exact terms of the decrees adopted at the top of the State-Party pyramid. In contrast to historians of France, we have neither an official journal nor a complete anthology of laws. Thus, after five years of a democratic regime, the collection of the joint decisions of the Soviet Central Committee and Council of Ministers is still stamped “for official use” and doesn’t include any secret decisions, clearly the most important ones.² Still more serious, the titles, (let alone the texts) of Politburo resolutions made after 1953 have not yet been declassified and the preparatory materials for these resolutions (notes, reports, etc.) remain inaccessible in the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (APRF).

Happily, in February 1995, the files containing the documents of the plenary sessions of the Central Committee of the VKP(b)-CPSU³ which took place between 1941 and 1966 were declassified and transferred from the APRF to the Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD).⁴

[A chronological classification of plenum files follows and can be found in the CWIHP Electronic Bulletin.]

Four major themes run through the plenum materials. The first has to do with major reports about the economic life of the country, especially agricultural reforms. Thus, we note the importance of the plenary session of 23 February to 2 March 1954 dedicated to the development of the “virgin lands” of northern Kazakhstan, of Siberia, of the Altai, and of the southern Urals. Less than a year later, at the 25-31 January 1955 plenum, Khrushchev returned again to the necessity of launching a major campaign to grow corn. In addition to agricultural reform, Khrushchev’s project also emphasized expanding the production of consumer goods. In this respect, the 6-7 May 1958 plenums sanctioned the reorientation of the chemical industry towards the production of synthetic

material to meet the needs of the population. This subject deserves a special study of its own.

These transcripts also offer a view into the inner-workings of the *nomenklatura*. Personnel changes at the head of the Soviet Party and State resulted in particularly violent settlements of accounts. Strong language was employed to discredit adversaries in the eyes of the Party “Parliament” which at least on paper made the final decision regarding the nomination and dismissal of leaders. Plenum transcripts concerning the dismissal of Beria, the demise of the antiparty group, and the removal of Khrushchev have already appeared in the journal *Istoricheskii archiv*.⁵ Therefore I use as an example the dismissal of Bulganin, decided by the 26 March 1958 plenum without even a hint of discussion. During the 5 September 1958 plenum, Suslov returned to this issue in order to justify this decision, certainly imposed by the Presidium on a Central Committee that possibly still needed convincing.

[The full citation is available on the CWIHP website.]

Another aspect of these transcripts is to present, from the inside, the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. One cannot hope to find in these transcripts “revelations” on the diverse interventions of Soviet troops which adorned the period or on major international crises. These subjects are part of the “private preserve” of the Politburo and they never directly appear in the plenum debates. These documents, however, do furnish us with supplementary

the Soviet Union, the circuitous route that a non-conformist manuscript had to follow to be published, and the resistance of certain sectors to all forms of change.

Khrushchev: A number of you have most certainly read the novel by Solzhenitsyn, *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, published in the last issue of *Novyi Mir*⁸ ...

[A few months ago] Comrade Tvardovskii, the editor in chief of *Novyi Mir*, sent me a letter and the manuscript of this new author, and asked me to read it. I read it, and it seemed to me that it was worth publishing the manuscript. I gave the manuscript to other comrades and asked them to read it. A little while later, I met these comrades and asked them their opinion: they were quiet [movement in the room].

They didn't say that they were against it—no, nobody said anything openly—they simply said nothing. But me, the First Secretary, I realized what this really means and I convened them to review the situation.

One discussant said to me, “We should be able to publish it, but there are certain passages”

I said to him: “We ban books precisely because they have this type of passage. And if it didn't have such passages, the editor in chief wouldn't have asked our opinion. Which passages bother you?”

-Yes, he said, the [security] organ officials are presented in a bad light.

-What do you want, it was exactly these people who were the executors of the orders and the wishes of Stalin. Ivan Denisovich dealt with them and why would you want him not to talk about it? Moreover, Ivan Denisovich does not have the same sentiment towards all of these people. In this novel, there is also the moment where the captain of the ship, the second rank captain, this Soviet sailor, who finds himself in a camp just because an English admiral sent him a watch as a souvenir, says to the head of the camp, Beria's henchman: “You don't have the right, you're not a real Soviet, you are not a communist.”

Buiovskii, this communist sailor, speaks on behalf of the prisoners, to a soulless being and calls for justice in calling to mind the high standards of communism. What has to be softened here? If we have to make it milder, and take this away, then nothing will remain of this novel.

Following that, I asked the members of the Presidium to read *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and we reached a consensus: we had the same positive opinion of this work as Comrade Tvardovskii ... Why did certain of our comrades fail to understand the positive contribution of Solzhenitsyn's book? Because once more we have before us some people branded by the period of the personality cult, and they haven't yet freed themselves from it, and that's all ...⁹

This brief overview of the broad range of questions raised by these transcripts testifies to their importance for a better understanding of the last four decades of the Soviet Union. Publication and a complete study of this body of

documents would permit us, to borrow the apt expression that Nicolas Werth applied to the 1930s, “to scrape off the many layers of vagueness, of factual error, and of hypotheses based on second-hand accounts, [the very source] on which the history of the USSR had been founded.”¹⁰

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[Translated from French by Christa Sheehan Matthew]

¹ See, e.g., *Stalin's Letters to Molotov* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1995); *Stalinskoe Politbiuro v 30-e gody* [Stalin's Politburo During the 1930s] (Moscow, AJRO-XX, 1995); *The "Special Files" for I.V. Stalin*, (Moscow, Blagovest, 1994); N. Werth, G. Moullec, *Rapports secrets soviétiques (1921-1991)* [Secret Soviet Reports], *La société russe dans les documents confidentiels* [Russian Society Revealed in Confidential Documents] (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); *Neizvestnaia Rossiia XX vek, Arkhivi, Pis'ma, Memuary, Istoricheskoe nasledie*

CPSU Plenums, Leadership Struggles, and Soviet Cold War Politics

by *Vladislav M. Zubok*

The transcripts of plenums of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is perhaps the most valuable collection released during the second (after 1991-92) declassification campaign in the Russian archives. Pressure from central media and his approaching re-election campaign made Russian President Boris Yeltsin deliver on his promise to transfer documents of “historical” value from the closed Kremlin archive (now the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation) to the open state archives for public scrutiny and publication. In fulfillment of Yeltsin’s decree of September 1994, no less than 20,000 files arrived at the Russian Center for the Study and Preservation of Documents of Contemporary History (RTsKhIDNI) and the Storage Center for Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD). Among them are the files of CPSU plenary meetings (plenums) declassified in February 1995, organized as “Fond 2,” and made available in the fall of 1995 in the TsKhSD reading room. This event brought surprisingly little attention in the press, so several months passed before researchers took notice of it.

The significance and role of CPSU plenums varied dramatically: in the early years of the Bolshevik regime they were reminiscent of the Jacobean club with its lively and sometimes vituperative debates. The Stalin plenums, along with Party congresses, became stages for the orchestrated character assassination of “deviationists,” yet only at the February-March 1937 plenum, the last of any political significance, did Stalin manage to crush the lingering resistance of the Bolshevik political elite to his absolute tyranny and continuing purges.¹ The next plenum known for its political drama took place only in October 1952, when Stalin feigned an attempt to resign, then before the stunned audience he denounced his staunchest, most senior lieutenants, Viacheslav Molotov and Anastas Mikoian, and excluded them from a proposed new political structure, the Bureau of the Presidium.²

In the years after Stalin’s death the plenum’s importance increased. Stalin’s former lieutenants, the oligarchs of the regime, mauled and bruised each other, seeking to change the power balance by appealing to the party and state elites, heads of the central CPSU apparatus, secretaries of regional party committees, leaders of powerful branches of the economic, military and security structures. Khrushchev’s son Sergei concluded that “in June 1957 [as a result of the plenum on the “anti-party group”] a totally new correlation of forces emerged. For the first time after many years the apparatus...from passive onlooker became an active participant that defined the balance of power.”³ In fact, this happened not just in June 1957, but gradually,

as the CC members recognized the importance of their role in demystifying, dislodging, and dismissing formidable oligarchs to the political profit of the half-baffoon N.S. Khrushchev. After Khrushchev’s ouster there was yet another period of “collective leadership” during which Kremlin infighting continued into the late 1960s, ending only with the victory of Leonid Brezhnev.

The “thirty-year rule” embedded in Russian legislation on secrecy allowed the release of plenum files up to 1966. Most of the documents contain copies of stenographic minutes of discussions that had been sent by the CC General Department to all members of the Secretariat and Politburo as well as other plenum speakers so that they could insert their corrections. After that, additional editing was done by professional editors and the copies were published in bound volumes for internal consumption. It is therefore possible to see to what extent the initial “unvarnished” discussion changed in the process of editing. In general, there was no deliberate policy to distort or excise texts (with a few important exceptions to which I will return later). In quite a few cases some speakers objected to cuts and editorial remarks and reinserted the passages from the verbatim transcripts. The guiding principle in this editorial game was, no doubt, political opportunism and (for some) ideological correctness.

The first important plenum reflecting the power struggle after Stalin’s death is the one devoted to the “Beria affair” in July 1953. It was published in 1991 in “*Vestnik TsK KPSS*” [CC CPSU News] and then translated into English and published in the United States by Nova Science Publishers, Inc.⁴

After Beria’s removal the next to fall was Georgii Malenkov who had first slipped in March 1954 when he made a controversial statement in his “electoral” speech that nuclear war might bring about the end of civilization. He was roundly criticized for this by Molotov and Khrushchev. However, this criticism did not leave the narrow confines of the CC Presidium. Only when the fate of Malenkov had been decided by political intrigues and coalition-building, his “sins” became a subject for discussion at the plenum on 31 January 1955. The scenario, like that of the “Beria affair” is easily recognizable: in fact, its prototype had been honed to perfection by Stalin and his assistants during the “party deviations” struggle in the second half of the 1920s. The victorious group, that is Khrushchev and Molotov, revealed, with well-rehearsed indignation, facts and judgments that led them to believe that Malenkov was unfit to occupy the leadership position.

Then a chorus of supporting voices chimed in. But in contrast to Beria's affair, where the object of criticism was safely incarcerated in a military prison on the other side of the Moscow River, Malenkov could speak, and in the comparatively open spirit of the times, even attempted to defend himself.

Malenkov: I have no right to not say that I was wrong, when in April or May [of 1953], during the discussion of the German question, I believed that in the existing international situation, when we had started a big political campaign ["peace initiative" after Stalin's death—trans.], we should not have put forward the task of socialist development in Democratic Germany [i.e. the GDR—trans.] in the question of Germany's reunification.¹¹

I viewed this question at that time from a tactical side. I fully understand that defending this view essentially is politically harmful, politically dangerous, incorrect. And I did not adopt such a position. The decision that was passed at that time at the suggestion of comrade Molotov I consider to be the correct one.

Bulganin: At that time you thought it was incorrect.

Malenkov: In the course of discussion I considered it to be incorrect.

Bulganin: You then said: For how long will we feed ourselves with the cud from Molotov's mouth, why do you read Molotov's lips.

Malenkov: You must have confused my words with Beria's.

Khrushchev: You simply lack courage even now to admit it, and Bulganin told me about [your words] exactly at that time.

Malenkov: Today I admit that I essentially took a wrong position on the German question.

Most remarkably, the Plenum transcript confirms that two leaders of the ruling triumvirate, and not only Beria, proposed to renounce the slogan of "socialist" Germany. This could hardly be "a confession" of the kind elicited by torture and terror in Stalin's times, although Malenkov must have been filled with dread when placed in the same category with "the spy and traitor" Beria, who wanted, according to the verdicts of the July 1953 plenum, to sell the GDR to the imperialists. Hence, his lame explanation that his support of Beria's proposal was dictated only by tactical expediency. [Ed. Note: After all, Malenkov would be the first top leader to be demoted in a non-fatal manner. But there was no way to know of this distinction in advance.]

After just six months of relative peace, infighting within the Presidium spilt over again onto the plenum floor. Khrushchev's growing annoyance with Molotov's seniority and the fact that Molotov was the permanent critic of Khrushchev's foreign and domestic initiatives led to frictions in February-April 1955 over the conclusion of

a peace treaty with Austria and, to a real showdown over Khrushchev's decision to reconcile with Tito's Yugoslavia. Molotov had since 1953 given lip service to the idea of "normalizing state relations" with Yugoslavia, while treating "the Tito clique" there as renegades of the communist movement. Khrushchev, however, insisted that there should be an attempt to bring Yugoslavia back into the communist camp. Molotov finally agreed to a trip of the Soviet party-state delegation to Yugoslavia in April 1955, but refused to support the resolution on the results of the visit and, according to his accusers, threatened "to go to the plenum" to explain his dissent,⁵ but Khrushchev and his growing camp of supporters pilloried Molotov. Again, in the best traditions of Stalinist politics, everyone had to spit on the fallen leader, only Klement Voroshilov among the Presidium members attempted to protect his old friend Molotov from the pack of party wolves.⁶

The July 1955 plenum was a remarkable discussion, for such a large forum, of underlying principles, aims, and tactics of Soviet foreign policy. Perhaps it was the most extensive airing of such topics for the entire period of the Cold War. Khrushchev defended his initiative on Yugoslavia from two angles—geo-strategic and political: "The United States of America has in mind for a future world war, as in the past war, to let others fight for them [chuzhimi rukami], let others spill blood for them, with the help of equipment supplied to future 'allies.' Knowing the combative mood of the Yugoslav people...American top brass considered that the Yugoslavs, along with the Germans, could be a serious force that could be used against the Soviet Union. It is known that in an emergency Yugoslavia is capable of mobilizing from 30 to 40 divisions."⁷

Besides this concern about the Yugoslavs as a factor in the future, Khrushchev evoked memories of World War II, so important for the vast majority of the people in the audience: he indignantly reminded them that the Yugoslav communists were the only force that fought the Nazis right until 1944, only to be rewarded with excommunication from the communist camp in 1948.⁸

Although Khrushchev had won the power game against Molotov even before the plenum began, it was not enough. The man had been a member of Lenin's Secretariat and Politburo, the second most respected and visible politician in the Soviet Union for at least two decades—therefore it was necessary to destroy his *political* authority in the eyes of the elite gathering. The Khrushchev group was prepared to do it by all means, including ideological polemics. Their goal was to prove that Molotov became hopelessly dogmatic and lost touch with the "ever-evolving and live" ideology of Marxism-Leninism. But the old party horse Molotov was unusually well prepared for this kind of battle and delivered a broadside of Lenin quotations.

In the political discussion about Titoism, Molotov also held strong cards. His main thesis was about the political danger of the Yugoslav version of "nationally-oriented

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¹ Materialy fevral'sko-martovskogo plenuma TsK VKP(b) 1937 g. [Materials of the February-March CC VKP(b) Plenum of 1937], *Voprosy istorii*, Moscow, 1995, no. 2-8, 10-12.

² See the plenum files in TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, dd. 21-22; for substantive recollections on Stalin's speech there (not in the records of the plenum) see Konstantin Simonov, "Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia. Razmishleniia o I.V. Staline" [Through the eyes of a man of my generation. Reflections on I.V. Stalin], *Znamia*, 1988, no. 4, pp. 96-99; Aleksandr Shepilov in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia: XX vek* [Unknown Russia; the twentieth century] (Moscow: Istoricheskoe nasledie, 1992), vol. 1, p. 275.

³ Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev: krizisy i raketi* (Moscow, Novosti, 1994), p. 320.

⁴ D.M. Sickle, *The Beria Affair. The Secret Transcripts of the Meetings Signalling the End of Stalinism*, translated from Russian by Jean Farrow (New York, Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 1992). A researcher Svetlana Savranskaya cross-checked the original transcripts and the published text at the request of the Cold War International History Project and found no major cuts and changes.

⁵ See the speech of A. Mikoian on 11 July 1955, TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, d. 174, l. 99.

⁶ His speech on 12 July 1955, TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, d. 176, ll. 141-142.

⁷ Khrushchev's speech at the CC CPSU Plenum, 9 July 1955, TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, d. 172, l. 87.

⁸ TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, d. 172, ll. 88, 100-101.

⁹ Molotov's speech at the CC CPSU Plenum, 9 July 1955, TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, d. 173, l. 3.

¹⁰ TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, d. 173, l. 40.

¹¹ TsKhSD, fond 2, op. 1, d. 173, l. 4.

¹² "Posledniaia 'antipartiinaia' gruppa. Stenograficheskiĭ otchet iun'skogo (1957) plenuma TsK KPSS" [The last "anti-party" group. Stenographic report of the June 1957 Plenum of CC CPSU], *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 3, 4, 5, 6 (1993) and 1, 2 (1994). This huge document still fails to attract serious attention from historians and Soviet studies experts, although it has already been published in Chinese in full.

¹³ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 3 (1993), pp. 74-75.

¹⁴ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4 (1993), p. 4.

¹⁵ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4 (1993), p. 6.

¹⁶ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4 (1993), p. 12.

¹⁷ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4 (1993), p. 7.

¹⁸ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4 (1993), p. 27, 29.

¹⁹ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 3 (1993), p. 79.

²⁰ TsKhSD, f. 4, op. 1, d. 271, l. 33.

²¹ "I must declare with all the determination of which I am capable that the position of Molotov in this question [on Yugoslavia] is erroneous, profoundly mistaken and does not correspond to the interests of our state...Comrades, in conclusion I must declare with all determination that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs only then will become a communist [partiinim] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when it follows the line of the Central Committee of our party." Gromyko's speech at the July 1955 Plenum, TsKhSD, f. 2, op. 1, d. 176, l. 202.

New Sources and Evidence on Destalinization and the 20th Party Congress

By V. P. Naumov

[Ed. Note: Although the Cold War International History Project specializes in the publication of newly-declassified documents, a prerequisite to this activity is knowledge regarding which key materials are likely to emerge from the vault in the near future. Among the best predictors (though far from guaranteed) are citations in the published work of Russian scholars with privileged access. In this respect, as well as for its innate historical value, the appearance of V. P. Naumov's article "Towards a history of N.S. Khrushchev's Secret Report [on 25 February 1956] to the 20th Congress of the CPSU" in *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* 4 (1996) and its subsequent reprint in German was of exceptional importance.

Although Naumov made use of many new sources, three stand out both for their significance in the context of his article, but also for their potential as resources for scholars working on many aspects of Cold War history. The first is the dictated memoirs of longtime Politburo/Presidium member A. I. Mikoian covering his activities from the 1920s until the ouster of Khrushchev in October 1964.¹ Prior to its transfer to the archives, this folder had been read by only four men: Iu. V. Andropov, M. A. Suslov, K. U. Chernenko and V. A. Pribytkov (Chernenko's top assistant). As featured in CWIHP *Bulletin* 8-9's treatment of the 1956 crisis, with translation and introduction by Mark Kramer, the "Malin notes" offer remarkable "fly-on-the-wall" vision of Presidium decision-making. V. N. Malin, the head of the CC CPSU General Department under Khrushchev, kept notes on the discussions at which he was present, often with verbatim excerpts.² Finally, the original draft of N. S. Khrushchev's secret speech to the 20th Party Congress is a marvelous supplement to the "second secret speech" (See below in this *Bulletin* section) presented by Khrushchev in Poland a month later.³

Below are a few excerpts from Naumov's article.]

Concluding the [1 February 1956 Presidium] discussion, Khrushchev said, we must decide this in the interests of the party. "Stalin," he stressed, "[was] devoted to socialism, but he did everything by barbaric means. He destroyed the party. He was not a

together, drove in a car together, traveled from dacha to dacha, etc. No, comrades, we should admit that we are dealing with a very profound phenomenon that exists not only inside the CC, but exists even lower: in regional committees, in district committees, but here it took a very dangerous turn, comrades. The absence of principles in party life, particularly for the leader of the whole party, the whole state—this is a dangerous affair. And that comrade Malenkov overlooked criminal tendencies in Beria's activities—this was not a coincidence, not merely blindness. Regarding this blindness we all share the blame, here are all the members of the Presidium—we all were a little bit blind, even too much, since we took Beria until Stalin's death (I am speaking for myself) for an honest communist, even though a careerist, even though a crook, who would frame you up behind your back [*okhulki na ruku ne dast*]. As a careerist, he would not stop at any machinations, but on the surface, he seemed an honest person. I must say that on the day of Beria's arrest, when we sat at the Presidium, and Beria sat in the CC Presidium, here in the Kremlin, I gave a speech: here is a turn-coat [*pererozhdenets*], but comrade Khrushchev turned out to be more correct and said that Beria was not a turn-coat, but he was not a communist and had never been, which is more correct.

(Voice from the audience: That is right).

I was convinced myself. This is a more correct, sensible, truthful assessment. He was not a communist, he was a scoundrel, rogue to the core, who insinuated his way into our party, a smart fellow, a good organizer, but he made it to the top, ingratiated himself with comrade Stalin so that his role was very dangerous, not to mention that it was mean and depraved. Yet I must say that I did not take part in the talks between Malenkov and Beria, and they were in communication every day, between them two, and they must have spoken about certain subjects which would make comrade Malenkov blush, but we do not ask him to speak about them.

What happened, comrades? Comrade Stalin's death. We stand at the bed of the sick, dying man. An exchange of opinions would be appropriate, but nobody talks to us. Here are the two [who talk to each other—trans.]—Malenkov and Beria. We sit on the second floor: me, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, and these two are up there. They bring down the prepared, well-formulated proposals, an announcement of the CC, draft decisions of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the composition of the government, the head of the government, of the Ministry [of Security], such and such ministries should be merged, etc. All that was presented to us by Beria and Malenkov. And they were not people

selves into admitting that some kind of war allegedly would lead to the end of capitalism and the end of civilization, it means that we do not have our head on our shoulders, but on the totally opposite part of the body (laughter). Therefore, no science, no political considerations can justify [such a statement of Malenkov]. It merely proves how harmful is carelessness in the questions of theory and the lack of principles in politics.

[Source: *TsKhSD*, f. 2, op. 1, d. 127. Translated by Vladislav Zubok.]

¹ Khrushchev is probably referring to the discussion of Beria's role in the debate on the future of Soviet policy in Germany at the July 1953 Plenum [see the publication in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, no. 1-2, (1991)]. In the following paragraph Khrushchev criticizes Malenkov's position on the "construction of socialism in the GDR" during the meeting of the Soviet leadership on 28 May 1953, when Lavrentii Beria and Viacheslav Molotov presented two rival proposals. Beria suggested renouncing the goal of constructing socialism altogether and, according to some sources, even contemplated a neutral, democratic, bourgeois Germany. The rest of the leadership, however, opposed this proposal and agreed with Molotov who only suggested rejecting the course of "forced" construction of socialism that had been earlier sanctioned by Joseph Stalin for the GDR communist leadership. The debate resulted in the behind-the-scenes negotiations that led to the "New Course" proposals of the Soviet leadership. The following excerpts from Khrushchev's speech at the plenum highlight Malenkov's role in the debate. Khrushchev, clearly for the purpose of undermining Malenkov's authority, "reveals" that he had been supportive of Beria's proposal. On M 5

scended from the ceiling [*bralsia s potolka*], that is, was thought up.

Bulganin. Yes, the material was a fabrication. It was then that they made fabrications about Marxism-Leninism and nationalism. Let's speak plainly. After all, it was so. I understand that com. Molotov will say that Bulganin is simplifying. I am not simplifying; I am saying how it was. That is how the disagreements with Yugoslavia began, as a result of which we lost the friendship of this country.

Com. Molotov spoke here about 1945, about Trieste. The disagreements started, he said, not in 1948, but back in 1945.

From 1945 to 1948, we lived like great friends with Tito; both during the war and afterward, we had very good relations. Tito visited Moscow. You introduced him to me, com. Molotov; incidentally, together we drove with him to [visit] Stalin. We lived like friends. What sort of conflict did we have with Tito in 1945? There was no conflict. Everything happened in 1948.

I already talked about Albania, and now I will talk about the Balkan federation. Comrade Molotov spoke about how the idea arose, but he forgets that there were witnesses: myself, Mikoian, Malenkov and other members of the Presidium, Kaganovich, Voroshilov; Khrushchev at that time was not there; he was in the Ukraine.

Khrushchev. Yes, I was not there; at that time I was in the Ukraine.

Bulganin. Now com. Molotov is ascribing the Balkan federation to Tito. [Ed. Note: For more on this, see the article by Gibianskii in this *Bulletin*.] But the issue was first raised by Stalin in a conversation with Dimitrov—what if, he said, you united the Balkans, created a federation[?]

Khrushchev. There, in Yugoslavia, they almost built an office building for the federation's institutions, but did not finish it.

Bulganin. You would be supported, said Stalin to Dimitrov; try talking with Tito. Dimitrov went home, visited Tito, spoke with him, and then it [i.e. the federation] got underway [*poshlo*].

Khrushchev. And now he is being accused of straying from Leninism for that.

Bulganin. I state that with all responsibility. Let the other members of the Presidium confirm where the idea came from. Now com. Molotov is foisting the idea on com. Tito.

Malenkov. That's right.

Khrushchev. How is that! They directed such actions by com. Tito against Leninism.

Bulganin. That is how the matter stood. Now I want to speak about Yalta.¹ We were not there. Coms. Stalin and Molotov were there. Was Voroshilov there or not?

Voroshilov. I was not.

Bulganin. How did they divide Yugoslavia between
Bulganin. were that! They 3.2Tf

which went to London as an instruction from com. Molotov, the following clarification was made: if necessary, if you are asked, what the term “agreed levels” means, you must say that we have in mind a reduction of arms and armed forces by one third. Com. Molotov then excused himself, saying that he had made an oversight, that it was a mistake, but I consider it necessary to speak about this.

[Source: *TsKhSD f.2, op. 1, d. 173, ll. 76 ff.* Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.]

¹ Ed. Note: In February 1945, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met in the Palace of Livadia at Yalta in the Crimea to discuss and agree on the postwar order.

² Ed. Note: In October 1944, Churchill and Stalin met in the Kremlin and divided up spheres of influence in Europe, allegedly on the back of an envelope. For details, see Albert Resis, “The Churchill-Stalin Secret ‘Percentages’ Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944,” *American Historical Review* 83 (1977-78) pp. 368-87.

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Evening, 9 July 1955

Bulganin. (Chairman) Com. Molotov has the floor.

Molotov. [Ed. note: Molotov presents the development of Soviet-Yugoslav relations since World War Two for about twenty minutes.] Comrades, the issue of Yugoslavia has great political significance. Obviously, the complex nature of the Yugoslav issue is clear to us all...

If one were to judge by this statement, it would appear that the main reason for the rupture in relations between the CPSU and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) in 1948 was some “materials” which were fabricated by the enemies of the people Beria and Abakumov, and the rest is not worthy of attention.

From what I have said and from a real acquaintance with the materials, one can, however, establish that this statement, which tries to explain the reason for the rupture in relations with the CPY in large part by the hostile intrigues of Beria and Abakumov, does not fit with the factual situation. Beria and Abakumov’s intrigues, without a doubt, played a certain role here, but this was not of chief importance.

The groundlessness of that explanation, it seems to me, is visible from the following:

First, it was incorrect to place the blame for the rupture in relations between the CPSU and the CPY only on our party, while keeping silent about the responsibility of the CPY. This falsely exonerates [*obeliaet*] the leadership of the CPY, for which there are no grounds.

Secondly—and this is the important point—it should not be ignored that as the basis of the disagreement

between our party and the leadership of the CPY, there was the fact that the Yugoslav leaders distanced themselves from the principled international positions for which they had stood in the previous period.

In a discussion of this issue in the CC Presidium, some doubt was expressed in relation to the awkwardness and incorrectness of the given explanation. However, the following arguments followed in defense of the given explanation of the reasons for the rupture: that if we did not say that the main reason was Beria’s and Abakumov’s intrigues, then the responsibility for the rupture would fall on Stalin, and that was impermissible.

These arguments should not be accepted.

Khrushchev. On Stalin and Molotov.

Molotov. That’s new.

Khrushchev. Why is it new?

Molotov. We signed the letter on behalf of the party CC.

Khrushchev. Without asking the CC.

Molotov. That is not true.

Khrushchev. That is exactly true [*tochno*].

Molotov. Now you can say whatever comes into your head.

Khrushchev. Without even asking the members of the Politburo. I am a member of the Politburo, but no one asked my opinion.

Molotov. Com. Khrushchev is speaking imprecisely [*netochno*].

Khrushchev. I want once again to repeat: I was not asked, although I [was] a member of the Politburo.

Molotov. You must not forget that the basic and real reason for the rupture was the move of the leadership of the CPY from a position of communism to a position of nationalism, and not just someone’s intrigues which, of course, also played their role.

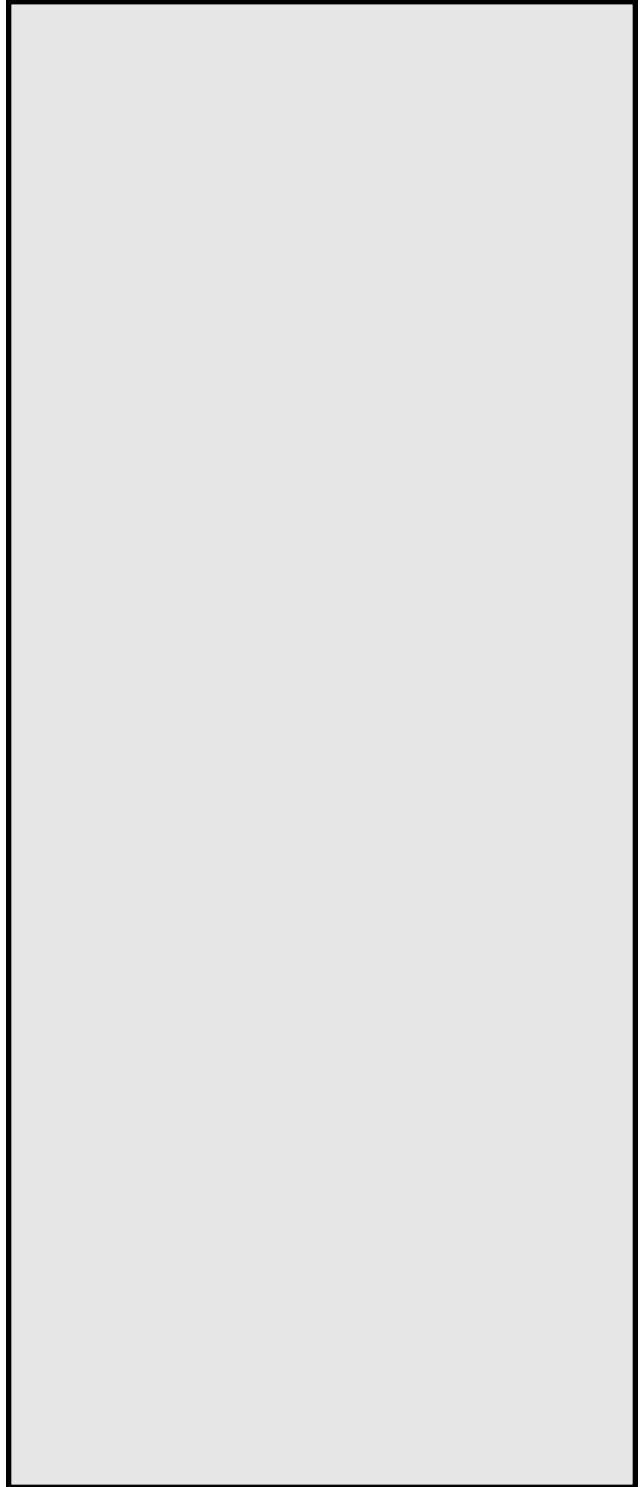
Did such a departure by the Yugoslav leaders from communism occur or not? We must give an answer to that question...

Does this mean that there are no grounds for rapprochement between the USSR and Yugoslavia? No, it does not.

If a rapprochement and an improvement of relations between the Soviet Union and this or that country which does not belong to the socialist camp (for instance, India or Finland) is possible, then, consequently, an improvement in relations and a rapprochement between the USSR and Yugoslavia is also possible, if Yugoslavia shows, along with the USSR, an aspiration to this. In the present conditions such a rapprochement is possible chiefly along intergovernmental [Ed. note: i.e., non-party] lines.

In our relations with Yugoslavia, we cannot forget the fact that Yugoslavia left the people’s democratic countries with which it was together from 1945-1947. But, on the other hand, we must reckon with and appreciate the fact that Yugoslavia, although it drew closer to the imperialist camp, is trying in some capacity to preserve its sovereignty and national independence, although in recent years

its ties with countries like the USA, England and others,
and together with this, its dependence on these countries,



Concluding Word by com. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV
[12 July 1955]

Comrades. I want to read you a telegram which com. Gromyko cited in part, since this document is of interest in understanding the position of the Yugoslav leaders. It is a communication from our ambassador in Yugoslavia about

correct to stay in Austria. It is a beach-head [*platsdarm*], and only a fool would give up such a beach-head if he planned to make war now. If [you are] not for war, then we have to leave. In our country, communists do not understand you; the Austrian communists do not understand, and Austrian workers begin to see our troops as occupiers. Communists abroad also do not understand us. Why are we sitting in Austria; what are we waiting for there?

Com. Molotov was commissioned to prepare a draft. He presented the draft, but it said that if an *anschluss* were to be prepared of Austria with Germany, we would reserve the right to lead our troops into Austria. There was a lot of all sorts of nonsense in the draft presented by the MID.

I said to com. Molotov:

- Listen, we have to look at things realistically and concretely. Let's assume that we manage to conclude a treaty in which this is said. Imagine that they prepare an *anschluss*. After all, after we find out about it, everything will be ready for an *anschluss*—artillery will be deployed where they should be, and troops will be assembled. After all, they are not fools, and know that if there is an *anschluss*, we can oppose an *anschluss* and, probably, repulse it. So, in such a situation, would you start a war?

You have to keep in mind, after all, that the Austrians and Germans are nations [*natsii*] close to one another. If someone set us such conditions: to separate the Russians from the Ukrainians or Belorussians, what would we say? We would say, without pausing for thought:

- You take your proposals to God's mother [*k bozh'ei materi*]!

Why should we stick our noses into that matter? Remember what has already happened. After the First World War, France reserved rights for itself as to the Saar, the Ruhr, and the Rhineland zones. But Hitler came to power in Germany. He squeezed France, seizing the Saar district [and] the Ruhr [and] Rhineland zones, and what became of it? An embarrassment. The French disgraced themselves, since it became clear that France was not in a condition to defend itself. And Hitler, having gotten cocky [*obnaglev*], began to mobilize forces for other expansionist adventures.

I said to Molotov:

- Why should we do what you are proposing in Austria? Let us save our strength at home, and everyone will understand us correctly.

And so when we all bore down on him [*navalilis' nego*], he couldn't do anything other than to say, I agree; we have to submit whatever draft you propose. After the resolution of the Austrian issue, abroad they began to write about how wise [and] what a good diplomat Molotov was, and how he so skillfully took care of the Austrian issue. I even once said to com. Bulganin: "Probably Molotov doesn't like to read such articles." After all we know what position com. Molotov took on that issue. And then at a meeting of the CC Presidium he said:

- Did I really object to the resolution of the Austrian

issue?

Perhaps in another month he will say that he approved the resolution on the Yugoslav issue as well?

Or take the issue of arms control. For a long time we took an incorrect position, proposing to cut the armed forces of all countries by one third. With such a stance on the issue [*postanovka voprosa*], they will send us to the devil and put forward convincing arguments as well. Who will make such an agreement? We have so many million [men] at arms (and the Americans have data on this). We say: let's disarm, cut armaments by a third. And what sort of disarmament can there be here; can they really discuss our draft? Judge for yourself: we have, for example, six million soldiers, reduced by one third—four [million] are left. They have, for instance, three million, which must also be reduced by one third. After this, what sort of correlation of forces is left after that? By making that sort of proposal, we give the imperialists trump cards to decline our proposal; we will look like opponents of disarmament. The rulers of bourgeois states under the pressure of their people also raise the issue of disarmament. In order to knock all of the trumps out of the hands of the imperialists, we decided to introduce a proposal that, on the issues of arms control, we start from the conditions of each state, taking into account the size of the territory of the country, the quantity of its population, and other conditions. Based on these conditions, we must attain arms cuts to an appropriate level. Is this decision correct? Undoubtedly, it is correct. Such a proposal permits us the possibility of taking the initiative.

We adopted a resolution of the CC Presidium on this issue and instructed com. Molotov to inform com. Malik about it, but he sent a different directive, did not fulfill the resolution of the CC Presidium, as com. Bulganin has correctly stated here. At the meeting of the CC Presidium we asked com. Molotov: why did he do so? He explained it like this: I gave correct instructions, but when they looked at the ciphered communication, it turned out that it was incorrectly written. Com. Molotov admitted that he had made an error in this matter, for which we then gave him a warning...

[Source: *TsKhSD f.2, op.1, d.176, ll.282-95. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.*]

**The Speech by Comrade Khrushchev
at the 6th PUWP CC Plenum (Excerpt)
20 March 1956, Warsaw**

[Head of State Council]

Comrade Aleksander Zawadzki [in Polish]

Comrades, the [PUWP] Politburo has taken advantage of the occasion afforded by Comrade Khrushchev's visit with us, and has invited Comrade Khrushchev to meet with the Central Committee plenum. As a result we should treat this as the beginning of the plenum—the actual meeting will begin in the late afternoon.

I suggest, in the name of all present, that we give Comrade Khrushchev a heartfelt greeting, at this, our plenum. (Applause.) We ask that Comrade Khrushchev take advantage of this meeting, and speak to all who are gathered, from a perspective of personal experience.

Comrade Khrushchev [in Russian]

My task is very difficult because I don't know which problems interest you, the Polish United Workers' Party. The questions [discussed at] the 20th [CPSU] congress. All the questions of the 20th congress.

I was told that you're familiar with the report presented at the closed session of the congress. You also read it. Now, comrades, I would like to talk about a very crucial question—the question of the cult of personality.

The report of the closed session [of the 20th CPSU

asked: "Do we procure more meat now or less?" "More."
I said: "I'm saying more too." "More milk?" "More."
"Well, the population has increased too." Wages have
risen. The purchasing ability has increased too. Then, if
that's so, talk -14f4rhen, if

Listen! When Stalin died, 109 people were killed. 109 people died because everyone moved like a mob and smothered them. This is just such a psychosis (*psikhos*). Some people, when they were in the hall near the casket, started crying—What are we going to do now? Comrades, common people is one thing, but how many party members and Komsomol members thought when Stalin died, what will happen after him? Is it proper? Is it appropriate to imagine a hero, and make everything dependent on him? Comrades, do we then need the party? What is it? It means not believing in human judgment, not believing in the force of democracy, not believing in collective leadership. Comrades, then let's choose a king. The monarchists say their system is better, because all your elections depend on your voters, and they adapt [to each other], but our monarch, he was given the power to rule and manage by God. Then we must agree with even such an absurdity. And now, we're trying to break this myth of power and infallibility. Some say, what would you have done during the war, if you didn't have Stalin? Defeated the Germans. Defeated them—and defeated them sooner, with less blood [lost]. I'm sure of it. And maybe we could have avoided the war. Maybe, if our policy was a little smarter, maybe, we could have avoided the war. Nobody knows. That is how I and my friends in our collective see these things.

Listen, such absurdity. When Lenin died, no busts. Stalin died, there wasn't a single town or city where a monument to him was not placed. We, when he died, we couldn't imagine what to name after him, to immortalize him the day he died, because whatever we did would have been significantly worse than what he had done during his hiaybe, if os goryihado- his

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Evening, 24 June 1957

Suslov chairing. Com. Molotov has the floor.

Molotov. Comrades, I have already spoken about the fact that I wish further to touch on international issues. It seems to me that in this regard com. Khrushchev's efforts are not entirely successful. We all understand and consider it necessary to conduct, support, and stimulate those measures which assist the lessening of international tensions. This is the basis for our work on strengthening peace, on delaying and averting a new war. And we must by all means possible be careful that this policy gives the results that we want to derive from it.

In connection with this, I consider that when com. Khrushchev, in a conversation with the editor of the American newspaper, *The New York Times*, Turner Catledge, published on 14 May spoke about the mutual

Khrushchev. Imagine: the President in the presence of the other Finnish leaders invites guests to a steam bath, but the visitors spit and leave. That offends, insults them. When we returned to Moscow and they started to upbraid me for visiting the Finnish steam bath and Bulganin began to join in as well, I said: Molotov wants to depict me as an unprincipled person because I went to the bath. How can





American and English [bourgeoisie], cannot permit themselves the luxury of keeping a person who has lost all value for the state leadership in his job. An example: Churchill. He did not serve badly in the interests of the colonial British empire, but when he lost his value, they sent him to paint landscapes. (Laughter in the hall.)

Voice. Correct.

Gromyko. When Eden lost his value, although he was a bit younger, they sent him on an indefinite vacation. I think that the troika, and perhaps some of those who formed a bloc with the troika, should also be sent to paint landscapes. (Laughter in the hall.)

Voices. Correct.

Gromyko. Comrades, I wanted to emphasize with all decisiveness one more point, since it relates to many of the actions of our foreign policy. In my opinion, the Central
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time to introduce [show to the Presidium] this issue before his return. The minister arrived; he examined the proposal. Deputy minister V.S. Semenov who is present here and I tried to convince com. Molotov that the draft should be brought to the CC as had been pre-approved in the Presidium. Am I speaking correctly, com. Semenov?

Semenov. Correctly.

Gromyko. We said: it is a correct decision and should be introduced in this form in particular. Com. Molotov says: no, by introducing such a draft, we will extend a hand to [West German Chancellor Konrad] Adenauer and entreat him. He cancelled this decision and introduced his own proposal. Of course, the Presidium altered the whole thing and affirmed its decision.

Molotov. An open letter is one thing, and a non-open letter is another. The difference here is not an essential one, but one of form.

Gromyko. Not only on this issue, although it in particular was a very important issue.

Voice. We were talking about the content.

Gromyko. We were talking about making a direct proposal on normalization to put Adenauer in a difficult position and not to drag out the matter as before.

On disarmament. I am not going to repeat what has been said before—it is a complex problem. But here as well the main decisions were, as a rule, taken by the First Secretary of the CC.

The virgin lands were spoken about here. I want to emphasize this matter from another angle. If it hadn't been for the virgin lands—and it is well known on whose insistence the relevant decision was made—this year we not only would have been on hunger rations [*na golodnom païke*], but we could not have sold grain to our friends. We would have been obliged to market our gold abroad, in the context of our very tight foreign-trade balance. We could not have sold bread to the Poles, the Hungarians, or the Albanians. I am not even talking about the fact that we could not have sold [bread] to Egypt.

I do not want to repeat myself on the theme of how significant that would have been, but I do want to emphasize one fact: if we had not given [*dali*] the people's democratic countries bread, then...

Mikoian. If we had not sold [*prodali*] it [to them].

Gromyko. If we had not sold them bread, those countries would have been obliged to turn to someone else; there is only one someone else—the Americans. And they will not only sell bread, but will sell with the simultaneous attachment of one-sided conditions.

The negotiations which have recently taken place between the Poles and the Americans on some issues, including on the issue of selling so-called agricultural surpluses to Poland, have shown that the Americans seize anything they can with their teeth in order to attach the conditions they need.

After all, in Egypt, if it had not been for our arms and our grain...

Mikoian. And oil plus [our] purchases of cotton,

then, although it cannot be said definitely; in such matters you cannot make categorical assertions; but there is a good likelihood that Egypt would have been brought to its knees.

I want to touch on another issue as well. It would be good if com. Molotov mentally went out into the middle of the hall and looked at himself speaking from this tribune. He would see what a pathetic picture it is. It was also a pathetic picture when he tried to denigrate the visits of our leading officials, above all, of course, com. Khrushchev, to other countries with serious missions, as a result of which the foreign-policy influence of our state, the Soviet Union, has been increased in several countries and several world regions.

I must say that I simply bow before the huge work of great state importance which was done during these trips by com. Khrushchev. As is well known, com. Bulganin travelled with him, but com. Khrushchev was always the soul of the matter.

Voices. Correct. (Applause).

Gromyko. This applies to the visit to India. I was among the accompanying persons. It applies to the trip to Yugoslavia, to Afghanistan, to Burma, to England, to Finland, and to the meeting of the leaders of the four powers' summit in Geneva in 1955. And I think that com. Molotov resorted to fairly dirty methods on purpose in his effort to denigrate [Khrushchev], since com. Molotov did not and could not have any other arguments worthy of attention.

Voices. Correct.

Gromyko. In Finland during the last visit there was a pack of foreign correspondents from Finnish, French, American, and English newspapers that were very hostile to us. But not one of the correspondents nor any one of the newspapers which were most hostile to the Soviet Union dared to bring any facts that would cast a shadow on the behavior of com. Khrushchev and com. Bulganin during their last trip.

What sort of conclusion follows from this? The conclusion is as follows: the ethics of the bourgeois newspapers which were most hostile to us turned out to be more elevated than the ethics by which Molotov now lets himself be guided at the CC Plenum.

Voices. Correct. (Applause.)

Gromyko. Com. Molotov also dredged up com. Khrushchev's interview. I want to inform the Central Committee [about something]. I consider that it has the right and should know this fact. Com. Khrushchev did not propose himself, did not ask for this interview. The proposal that com. Khrushchev agree to give an interview was made by the MID, by me. It was discussed in the CC Presidium. At the beginning I had the following impression: com. Khrushchev did not have a very fixed opinion as to whether he should or should not give an interview. I spoke "for," and the members of the Presidium approved our proposal, and the decision was taken.

By its content the interview given was good and

the assent of the USA, the English and French imperialists had conducted things so as to deflect public opinion and make quick work of Egypt.

The delegations of Egypt and other Arab countries in the UN were in a very anxious state; help could only come from the Soviet Union. And the Soviet Union did not let them down. When on 5 November they found out in the UN about the letters sent by the Soviet government on 5 November to England, France, the USA and Israel, there was an effect that could not have been produced by the explosion of several hydrogen bombs. On 7 [November], military actions were halted, and after that the withdrawal of the aggressors from Egypt began.

Even the bourgeois diplomats, who of course are embittered against the USSR, said in conversations with us that from the point of view of diplomacy it was a step that was hard to overestimate. At the same time they noted with obvious envy that the Soviet Union, without a single shot, without any actual involvement, forced two imperialist plunderers—England and France—to cease military activities and withdraw their troops from Egypt.

Besides this, these actions by the Soviet government helped us to acquire many new friends and to strengthen ties with old ones.

I want to draw your attention to the fact that com. Molotov talks a lot about using contradictions in the capitalist camp. It is well known that before 1953, the Soviet Union in its position on many international issues pushed the USA, England, and France together. [People] simply stopped believing that [over] there, the USA, England, and France have serious differences on many problems...

Khrushchev. ...we stopped buying butter abroad.

When Malenkov was Chairman of the Council of Ministers in 1953-1954, we threw away a lot of gold in order to buy butter [*maslo*], herring, fabric, and other products and goods. How much gold did we spend then, com. Malenkov—200-250 tons?

Voice: If not more.

Khrushchev. Can one really resolve state issues in such a way? We will give away all of the gold, and there will be no more butter. They must be resolved in another way.

I want to say the following. Everyone knows that we must help (by treaty) the German Democratic Republic [GDR], since it is our socialist stronghold, our front line [*perednii krai*] in the struggle with the capitalist world. Politics has its logic. If the Germans in the GDR live worse than in the Federal Republic of Germany, then communists there will not be supported. For that reason, we must sell the GDR the necessary agricultural products. And we are doing this. Now we received a telegram in which the Germans are asking us to withhold shipments of butter and meat to them, since more has been prepared there than foreseen by the plan. That is a gratifying development.

This year for the first time, we celebrated the First of May without introducing a resolution on strengthening shipments of goods to the cities. Because everything that was stipulated in the plan is being supplied. This is the first time that has happened. And they try to depict that as a deviation! Oh, you... What makes you happy, if our successes distress you so?

Remember what sad results this policy led to, to the disruption of friendly relations with Turkey and Iran, our neighbors. It was literally a stupidity [*glupost'*]. In our incorrect policy in relation to Turkey we helped American imperialism. The Turks used to receive Voroshilov like a brother; they named a square after Voroshilov. But when the Second World War ended, we wrote a note to Turkey [saying] that we were tearing up the friendship treaty. Why? Because you are not giving up the Dardanelles. Listen, only a drunkard could write such a thing. After all, no country would give up the Dardanelles voluntarily.

The issue of Iran. What did we do in Iran? We put our troops there and started to boss them around [*stali tam khoziainichat't-f* 4then

