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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY	USSR	REPORT NO.	<input type="text"/>	50X1
SUBJECT	Rumor Concerning Struggle for Power after Stalin's Death and Opinions about Top-Level Personalities Involved	DATE DISTR.	APR 1 1955	
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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
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SOURCE:

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Washington Comment

- The Kobulov mentioned on page 2 is probably Bogdan Zakharovich Kobulov, who was executed with Beriya.

LIBRARY SUBJECT AND AREA CODES

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COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Rumor Concerning Struggle for Power after Stalin's Death and Opinions about Top-Level Personalities Involved

DATE OF INFORMATION

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DATE DISTR. Mar. 9 1955

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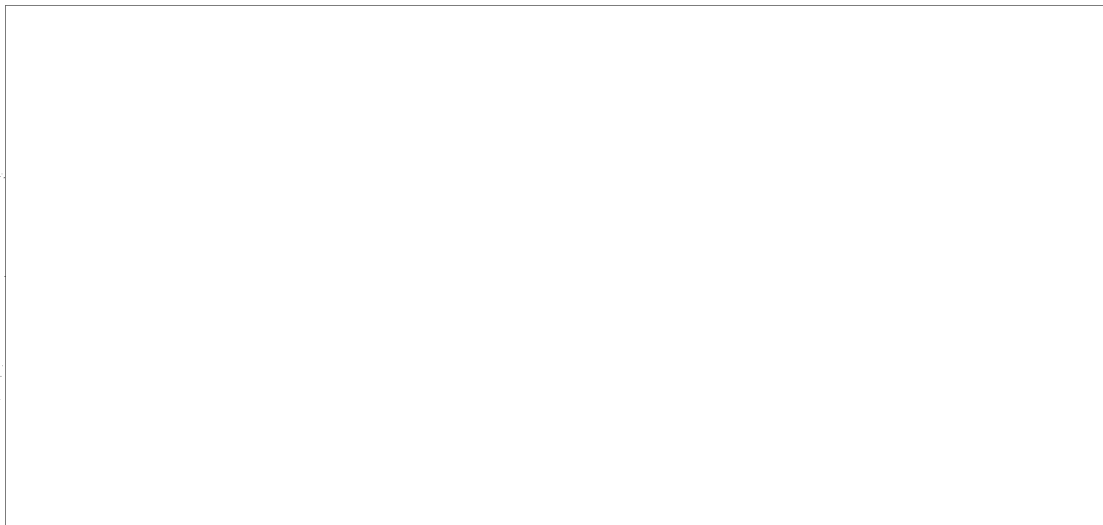
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SOURCE



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1. [redacted] source spent twenty-four days in the sanatorium 1/n Ordzhonikidze in Kislovodsk (N 43-55, E 42-43), USSR. The guests at this sanatorium are medium-level and high-level Communist Party officials. Since only first names are used, source cannot identify specifically any of the guests, but he remembers that two of them worked for, but were not members of, the Central Committee of the CPSU in Moscow. Others worked at the bureau chief level in various ministries, and still others were artists, writers, etc. During his stay, source became friendly with the other guests and heard several stories about top-level Soviet officials. When queried as to how these guests had access to such information, source stated that in Moscow it is very difficult to hide anything from the people because so many have friends and relatives working in the government. He also said that since Stalin's death, the people feel more free to discuss politics but added that stories are naturally elaborated upon as they are repeated. Following is a rumor concerning the struggle for power after Stalin's death which source heard while at the sanatorium.

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Even while Stalin was still alive, Lavrentiy P. Beriya surrounded himself with men whom he felt he could trust. Georgiy M. Malenkov, as one of his pupils and protégés, was brought into the government and into the leadership of the Central Committee of the VKP (b) by Beriya. When Stalin became seriously ill, Beriya confided to Malenkov his plan to take the government and the army into his own hands. He proposed for Malenkov the Central Committee of the Party, for Dekanozov the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for Kobulov the MVD, etc.

Because Malenkov was frightened of this change and, furthermore, not at all amenable to it, he disclosed Beriya's plans to Nikita S. Khrushchev. The latter called a small meeting of co-workers whom he considered reliable and trustworthy. The meeting was attended by perhaps 12 or 15 persons, including a majority of the members of the Party Presidium. Source remembers specifically that Molotov, Voroshilov, Ponomarenko, and Suslov were there; Bulganin, Mikoyan, and Kaganovich were not present, nor were any followers of Beriya or Malenkov. At the meeting Malenkov was asked to retell the Beriya plot. Khrushchev affirmed the necessity for the leadership of the CC and of the Presidium of the CPSU to remain united, firm, and single-minded in their decisions in case Stalin died, pointing out the discord within the Party and the government which Beriya wished to bring about. He proposed Malenkov for the future head of the government; Khrushchev himself was named by the others for the post of First Secretary of the CC of the CPSU. Malenkov was asked to submit his plans for a new government to the CC of the CPSU for confirmation.

After Stalin's death, Khrushchev called a second meeting, which was attended by members of the CC, including the entire Presidium as then constituted, and some members of the government.¹ Beriya was fully convinced that he should be the head of the government and consequently took the seat of the chairman at the conference table. When all had taken their seats, Beriya stood up and opened the meeting. Khrushchev interrupted him and announced that he would not give Beriya the floor.

At this conference Khrushchev summarized the historical situation, explained the responsibility of this political moment before the "motherland and the people," and indicated the necessity for unity and solidarity in the ranks of the Party and the government. Therefore, he said, from now on all economic and political questions should be decided by the leadership of the CC jointly, that is, collectively.

Regarding the question of the death of Stalin, Khrushchev said, "the CC of the CPSU sets before you, for collective solution, its proposals for the composition of the new government and the management of the CC of the CPSU". The floor was yielded to Ponomarenko to read the recommendations of the CC. Ponomarenko mentioned two names for the position of head of the government: first Malenkov and then Beriya. He named Khrushchev for the position of First Secretary of the CPSU. Khrushchev was elected unanimously. The candidacy of Malenkov was listed for voting prior to that of Beriya. During the voting, Beriya's partisans realized that the majority of the CC and of the Presidium of the CPSU were voting for Malenkov, having been prepared for this in advance. They became frightened, defected, and also voted for Malenkov.

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Beriya stood up and in confusion announced that "he could not subordinate himself to that cub Malenkov, who had done nothing meritorious either for the Party or for the Soviet people. Therefore, he requested that the question be examined once more; otherwise he would find another way of coming into power." From that time on, there was an open struggle between Malenkov and Beriya.

Malenkov, upon the advice of the CC of the CPSU, began a popularity campaign both among the Party and non-Party actives of the city of Moscow. For this purpose he held meetings and conferences in large factories and economic actives. Beriya, on the other hand, was getting ready directly to seize power by planting his assistants everywhere and by readying his apparatus, and partly the army, for combat.

The CC of the CPSU did not yet dare to isolate Beriya directly and attempted to quiet him down through peaceful discussions. When Beriya was personally insulted by Malenkov at one of the meetings, he was unable to restrain himself and fired a shot at Malenkov, wounding him superficially in the left arm. Despite this extreme action, Beriya was not removed but was again warned to be more temperate in his actions. It was not until Beriya began moving his troops into Moscow that he was called to a Presidium meeting, imprisoned, and later executed without a trial.

2. Source said that everyone believes the story that Beriya shot Malenkov, although this widely held belief is distorted according to classes.
3. Source expressed the following opinions about personalities involved in this story:
 - a. Malenkov. It was commonly rumored that Beriya was responsible for Malenkov's career. Malenkov was an apparatus man, a big intriguer, but he never went out among the people, or among lower Party personnel. He was, therefore, never known to the masses, nor was he popular with them. He was not even powerful in the Party until after Stalin's death. After he became Premier, Malenkov thought he was too big to bother with the apparatus. Khrushchev, on the other hand, was busy working behind the scenes.

After the Soviet announcement of 9 February and before the one of 1 March, source stated that even though Malenkov knows nothing about electric power, his new ministry is easy to run and is the least important ministry from the standpoint of being administered by a man who knows what he is doing. Malenkov's job on the Party Presidium is only a token, considering his lack of Party connections. In a year or so he will probably be shuffled out of his deputy premiership.

- b. Ponomarenko is one of the more brilliant Party workers who was too smart for Stalin to allow to become too prominent. He is a trusted disciple of Khrushchev. For this reason and because he is a very astute politician, he was chosen by Khrushchev to present the recommendations of the CC of the CPSU for the composition of the new government at the meeting described above.
- c. Suslov, like Ponomarenko, is one of the more brilliant Party workers who was too smart to be trusted by Stalin. He is, however, a trusted disciple of Khrushchev.

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- d. Mikoyan was not invited to the first meeting called by Khrushchev because Khrushchev does not consider him trustworthy. He is a careerist who will show allegiance to the top man, whoever he may be. Prior to the 1 March announcement, source thought that Mikoyan would be dropped because he had been a partisan of Beriya. After the announcement, source said that Mikoyan either was removed from his post as Minister of Internal Trade by Malenkov or, knowing that Malenkov's number was up, may have resigned himself.
- e. Kaganovich was not invited to the first meeting called by Khrushchev because Khrushchev distrusts him as a careerist, in the same way he distrusts Mikoyan. It is a common rumor that he will also fall from favor. It is even rumored that his name will be removed from the plaques at Moscow subway system entrance ways.
- f. Pervukhin was a protégé of Malenkov and also a careerist type. Prior to the 1 March announcement, source believed that his career would start to decline, since he was not a Khrushchev man. After the announcement, source reasoned that he must have turned against Malenkov and sided with Khrushchev prior to official action against Malenkov, for which action he was rewarded.
- g. Saburov was a protégé of Malenkov and also a careerist type. Since he was not a Khrushchev man, source believed that his career would decline. After the 1 March announcement, source reasoned that he must have turned against Malenkov and that he was rewarded in same manner as Pervukhin.

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