

~~SECRET~~

5 November 1964

RSS No. 0003/64
Copy No. 101



INTELLIGENCE STUDY

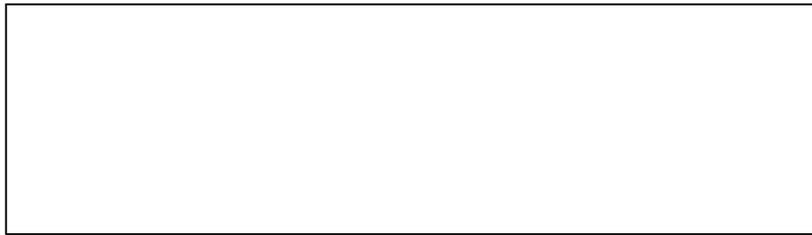
THE MILITARY AND THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM IN THE USSR

REFERENCE TITLE: CAESAR XXV

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

HR70-14
(U)

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

THE MILITARY AND THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM IN THE USSR

PREFACE

This is a working paper, an informal essay on the role of the Soviet military in politics. The first part of the paper surveys in a general way the army-party relationship since Stalin's death in 1953. The second, conjectural part explores the possible actions of the army in any struggle to settle the present succession problem.

In preparing this paper, the writer received much advice, not all of which he accepted, from colleagues who have far more knowledge of Soviet political affairs than he. The writer alone is responsible for the paper as a whole,

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

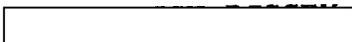


THE MILITARY AND THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM IN THE USSR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	i
I. THE MILITARY IN SOVIET POLITICAL LIFE.....	1
A. Involvement in Past Leadership Struggles.....	2
B. Role in Policy Formulation.....	12
C. The Anatomy of Party Control Over the Military.....	14
II. THE MILITARY IN A NEW LEADERSHIP CRISIS.....	21
A. The Possibilities.....	21
B. Divisions Within the Military.....	26
C. The Army's Candidate.....	28
D. Consequences for Policy.....	32

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

THE MILITARY AND THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM IN THE USSR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Khrushchevian era has ended. The master politician has been forced to quit the Soviet political scene. His heirs who ousted him have sought to impress the world with the orderly manner in which they have achieved continuity of rule. Yet, the present coalition--or in Soviet parlance, collective leadership--is at best a temporary and uneasy one. The current party leadership appears to be split not only between individuals but between bureaucracies as well--notably, the professional party apparatus and the vast planning and management apparatus. This relative diffusion of supreme political power, we think, is an inherently unstable arrangement which cannot long endure. Sooner or later, the party leaders will have to come to grips with controversial issues, and to determine where in the bureaucratic structure the locus of supreme power is to reside. It is then that Khrushchev's heirs, driven by personal ambitions, will actively contend among themselves to consolidate the enormous powers given up by him.

Among the "power" questions that may give impetus to political struggle are, who shall don the mantle of Supreme High Commander, that is, who shall have his finger on the nuclear trigger; who shall take Khrushchev's place as chairman of the Supreme Military Council, which Khrushchev had made a personal instrument of control over the army; and who shall preside over the powerful RSFSR Bureau. On a somewhat lower plane, the new leadership is faced with the immediate need to make personnel decisions which are bound to be controversial and replete with political implications. They must, for example, fill the recently vacated posts of chief of the general staff and head of the powerful administrative organs department of the central committee.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

In short, the arrangements made by the new leadership have not solved the problem of Khrushchev's succession; they have only been the opening moves of the game. How long it will take to settle the succession problem or what will transpire in the interim is, of course, anybody's guess. (It took some four years to settle the post-Stalin succession problem.) It is our thesis that the army high command will almost of necessity become involved in any active struggle for supreme power. Although we are uncertain as to what role the military elite will play, we would surmise that an intercession by them could, under certain circumstances, have great consequences for both the outcome of the political contest and the future course of Soviet policy.

The army is no stranger to politics, even though it has no legitimate prerogatives in that sphere. Participation in formulating defense policies, which bear on all important sectors of Soviet political life, is a normal function of the high command. But more than that, the high command has become involved at critical times in the politics of leadership, notably in the struggles to settle on Stalin's successor between 1953-1957. Regarding the military's role in the ouster of Khrushchev, all that we can say at this point is that the conspirators in the party presidium had apparently secured in advance the assurances of key members of the high command that they would not oppose the planned coup. We think that the military leaders (with some exceptions) would have wished to see Khrushchev ousted principally because of his efforts in the preceding month to push through a new economic program to the detriment of the defense sector.

There is no evidence to suggest that the military have been the initiators of or the main driving force behind struggles in the party leadership. But, in situations of developing leadership crises, their support apparently has been solicited to add to the forces of a particular faction. Thus, even though the military may not have had a dominant role in precipitating leadership crises, their support or neutrality, as the case may be, apparently has been viewed as crucial to the outcome of each struggle. Had the military sided with Beria in

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

1953, Malenkov in 1954-55, and the "anti-party group" in 1957, Khrushchev probably would not have attained supreme power in the USSR. By the same token, had the military in the most recent crisis sided with Khrushchev, he probably would not have been toppled.

The next stage in the leadership situation may see the political leaders (and their respective bureaucracies) struggling to consolidate supreme power in their own hands (and offices). In any such contest, the rival factions will again find the army far too powerful an institution to ignore. The political rivals are likely to consider the army's support critical in the contest and will be anxious to gain their backing or to deny it to the opponent. At the same time, the military leaders themselves may wish to intervene to protect their stake in policy. They may also wish to help bring the struggle to a speedy conclusion for reasons of national security or simply to be counted on the bandwagon of the frontrunner. But even if they were reluctant to become embroiled at all, forces beyond their control--such as appeals for support by the political contestants or a deadlock among them--would work to draw the military into the political dispute in a partisan role. On the other hand, we would regard it as only a remote possibility that the army chiefs instead of doing the bidding of one of the contending factions would act independently, to initiate a new political coup or to capture supreme power for themselves.

The army's involvement might be limited to public or private demonstrations on behalf of a candidate; or it could even come to the use or threatened use of troops. Should the military leaders be divided as to which political figure to support, their division might forestall a military intercession. But we think it highly unlikely that military discipline would break down to the extent that senior officers would translate their private differences into action--say, by supporting rival party factions with troops. The military chain of command can tolerate considerable differences in outlook among the top marshals because the operational control of troops is centered in the hands of only one of them--the Defense Minister. The man who fills that post may be the pawn

-iii-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

of the general staff or of a party faction, but whoever owns him virtually owns the army.

It appears to us, on the basis of the scant information at our disposal, that none of the present top party figures now has a particularly strong advantage as far as gaining the backing of the military is concerned. A number of the party leaders have had connections with the army in the past, and some, notably Brezhnev and Podgorny, continued to have responsibilities in the defense sector up to the time of Khrushchev's fall. Nevertheless, Khrushchev had virtually made the military his personal domain and had methodically prevented his presidium colleagues from developing strong ties with the military.

Irrespective of the kind of role they may play in any succession struggle, the army chiefs will try to protect their interests and impose their common viewpoints on a new political leadership. In the military sphere, they can be expected to resist new cuts in defense and might attempt to recover ground lost under Khrushchev. In domestic matters, they would not want to see either a return to the Stalinist era--under which they suffered--or a radical swing to liberalism. They can also be expected to oppose turns in Soviet foreign and economic policy that seem in their eyes prejudicial to the military establishment or national security. Their success in getting their positions adopted will depend, in part, on the views of the new leadership; in part, on the role they play in any power struggle; and, in part, on the political mettle of the military chiefs.

If the military were to make some major gains at the expense of party authority, chances are good, on the basis of past experience, that the pendulum would swing back against them soon after the new political leadership consolidated its control.

-iv-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

THE MILITARY AND THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM IN THE USSR

"There are no forces in the world that can shake the monolithic unity of the party, the people, and their Armed Forces."

Col. Gen. M. Kalashnik,
Main Political Administration, RED STAR, 18
June 1964

I. THE MILITARY IN SOVIET POLITICAL LIFE

Readers of Soviet military literature are frequently reminded that party rule over the army is an "objective historical law." This law is said to be reflected in the CPSU Program adopted in 1961, which declares that "party leadership of the armed forces, and the increasing role and influence of the party organizations in the army and navy, are the bedrock of military development." Indisputably, the Soviet military establishment is subject to party control, but that control is neither absolute nor unyielding.

In the past, party control has fluctuated in degree and effectiveness. It has never, however, in the post-Stalin period been so oppressive as to transform the military establishment into a thoroughly servile, voiceless behemoth in Soviet society, without any will, mind or political influence of its own. On the contrary, the military bureaucracy has led within the system of party rule an active--if, from our vantage point, an inconspicuous--political life.

In the first part of this paper, we shall lay out the facts and deductions that are our measure of the political viability of the military bureaucracy. We shall thereby set the stage for a conjectural discussion in the latter part of the paper on the various roles the military

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

might play in any struggle among Khrushchev's survivors to succeed him at the helm of supreme power in the USSR.

A. Involvement in Past Leadership Struggles

Despite its complete lack of ideological or constitutional prerogatives for participation in the politics of leadership, the Soviet army can boast of practical experience in that dangerous game. Our evidence on the subject is lamentably incomplete. Nevertheless, we believe we are on firm ground in stating that the military have participated in one way or another in the major political crises known to have taken place at the center of party rule between the time of Stalin's death in 1953 and the settlement of the post-Stalin succession problem in 1957. This experience, we would think, must be given weight in any consideration of the present succession problem in the USSR.

The Beria Episode: On Stalin's death, a somewhat dazed group of senior politburo members acted in concert to inhibit military interference in the political realm for a brief interregnum during which the relative powers of individuals and apparatuses were clouded in uncertainty. A temporary moratorium on struggle in the Kremlin was established, in effect, during which time the army high command remained entirely passive. This may not have been a difficult achievement at the time. The military, it will be recalled, no less than the rest of the population, had been cowed into a politically submissive role by Stalin. What additionally helped to pacify the military chiefs were the decisions taken by the new, uneasy coalition shortly after Stalin's death to reunify the defense establishment (which Stalin had divided into separate ministries for the army and navy), and to recall the celebrated Marshal Zhukov from relative obscurity to

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

to serve as First Deputy Minister of Defense.*

But as the uneasy coalition began to crumble in the weeks that followed Stalin's death, the military chiefs found themselves confronted with a situation which necessitated their involvement in the Kremlin struggle. It was no longer a question of throwing their support behind a unified party leadership; they now had to choose between contending factions. When the showdown with Beria finally came in June 1953--Khrushchev recalls with trepidation that it was a "dangerous" period--the military evidently played an active, perhaps even a critical, role in thwarting Beria's bid for power. A great deal of mystery still surrounds this event; there are a number of exciting, but unfortunately conflicting, versions of what had actually occurred. All of the accounts available to us, we would emphasize, ascribe to the military an important role in the crisis.

The winning faction in the Kremlin rewarded the army for its partisan support. The gains, which were to result in the greatly increased prestige of the military, began to appear as early as July 1953. The rival MVD army was dissolved; there was a certain relaxation of security within the armed forces; new military personnel policies were adopted which stabilized and standardized induction methods, terms and conditions of service, and demobilization measures; awards and honors were heaped on the military (including the unveiling of a bust of

*Zhukov was the best known of the marshals; his great popularity in the USSR was probably the reason for his downfall in 1947. He was celebrated not only as an able strategist and wartime hero but also a professional officer who resented political interference. Time would prove his reputation, for during his tenure as Defense Minister, he would help raise professionalism to a high level and undercut, to the dismay of the party, political activities in the armed forces to the extent that he thought they hampered military efficiency.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Marshal Zhukov); the number of officers in government and party positions was increased to some extent; a number of disgraced officers were rehabilitated; and the virtual freeze which had existed on officer promotions was lifted.

A parallel step, perhaps a part of the reward, was to remove the gag from the mouths of the military theoreticians who for years had to live with the stagnating military doctrine which had been dictated by Stalin during the war. (From 1947-1953, as one expert observer put it, "thought was reduced to silence, and genius reduced to Stalin".)* The new military thinking and writing led eventually to a basic restructuring and reequipping of the Soviet armed forces with modernized weapons.

The Khrushchev-Malenkov Struggle: The military also suffered some losses shortly after the Beria episode-- most notably, cuts in the military budget and in personnel--owing to Malenkov's efforts to finance his consumer goods program. These setbacks were obviously not appreciated by the military, who saw an opportunity to make plain their grievance in the midst of the Khrushchev-Malenkov struggle for power that ensued in 1954 and 1955. In this struggle the military came down squarely on the side of Khrushchev, who chose to fight Malenkov's economic line with a program in sympathy with the military's interests.

The power struggle in 1954 hinged on the question of military preparedness and found expression in a running debate on the priority of heavy over light industry. Speeches made by presidium members during the year indicated that they were divided into two groups on the question of allocation of resources to the armed forces: Khrushchev, Bulganin and Kaganovich emphasized Western aggressiveness and the need for continued priority for heavy

*R. Garthoff, Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age, 1958, p. 62.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

industry in order to maintain the defensive strength of the country; Malenkov, Saburov and Pervukhin were inclined to consider the financial needs of other sectors of the economy at the expense of the military. In this debate, the military leaders were also vocal and partisan, supporting the campaign for renewed emphasis on heavy industry before as well as after Malenkov's political defeat.

It is quite possible, although we do not have firm evidence, that Khrushchev's followers actively sought the support of the military leaders. But it would appear that these two dissatisfied groups (i.e., the military and Khrushchev's followers) were brought together, without the need of much wooing on either side, by similar viewpoints on the failure of Malenkov's policy and the felt necessity of increased military strength. It was, in short, an ideal symbiotic relationship that brought important gains to both parties.

It is difficult--if not impossible, given the present paucity of evidence--to evaluate the effect of the military's role on the outcome of the Khrushchev-Malenkov power struggle. Minimally, it could be said, the military chieftains contributed to the defeat of Malenkov. Undoubtedly, Khrushchev could have won the day had the military been entirely indifferent to the political struggle and the great debate that was its expression. However, the outcome of the power struggle might have been very different had Malenkov and the military found common cause against Khrushchev.

There is also an interesting postscript to the Khrushchev-Malenkov struggle. Immediately after Malenkov's first defeat was assured, the military once again received a tidy reward for their support for Khrushchev. These events happened in February 1955: the 1955 budget revealed that the Soviet government intended to return to the 1952-53 level of appropriations for defense, bringing it to a post-war high; new attention was given to armaments; and Zhukov moved into the post of Minister of Defense with Bulganin's rise to premier. In March, six officers were promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union and five to the rank of chief marshal or marshal of a

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

special service--in the largest simultaneous promotion to these high ranks ever made in the USSR.

Nevertheless, the military bonus was kept within well-defined limits. No representatives of the professional military class were yet promoted to the ruling party organ, the presidium, although Zhukov was elevated to candidate membership (non-voting) in that body in the following year. Moreover, as the new Khrushchev-Bulganin foreign policy began to unfold in late spring and summer, 1955, the military found themselves the objects of bargaining in the regime's campaign to relax international tensions. Militancy gave way to conciliation; the Soviet military occupation of Austria was ended; and in the fall, the Soviets announced that as a result of the "relaxations of international tensions" following the Geneva conference, the Soviet armed forces would be reduced in size by 640,000 men. (It is possible that the 1955 announcement of a troop cut was an effort to take belated credit for cuts which had actually taken place under Malenkov's aegis in the two preceding years.) Thus, as before, the pendulum which had first swung in favor of the military seems to have swung against them shortly afterwards.

The Anti-Party Group: In June 1957, when a new coalition in the presidium made an abortive attempt to force Khrushchev from the commanding position, the Minister of Defense, Marshal Zhukov, played an important role in defending Khrushchev against the "arithmetical majority" in the presidium.

That Zhukov came to Khrushchev's defense is beyond question. However, we have a somewhat muddled picture of what he actually did. For example, we have only an unconfirmed rumor that he was directly responsible for having supplied special planes for transporting provincial central committee members to the Kremlin in an effort to muster support for Khrushchev.* We do not know whether

*See CAESAR XV, "Khrushchev and the Anti-Party Group," 27 April 1962.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

in the pitch of the crisis Zhukov acted independently or in consort with the rest of the marshals. Robert Conquest has written on the basis of one account (which we have not been able to track down) that a decisive point in the crisis may have been reached when Zhukov announced to an emergency session of the central committee that the Soviet armed forces would not permit anyone to bid for power.* We do know from an official Soviet statement, that the anti-party group made an abortive attempt to get the military to do their bidding.** According to another unconfirmed account, however, Zhukov allegedly spoke up only towards the end of the plenum, after the tide had clearly turned. This would suggest that Zhukov held back until it became clear to him that Khrushchev was going to win. However, if Zhukov, as reported elsewhere, had in fact helped to round up Khrushchev's supporters in the provinces for the central committee meeting, it would mean that he had made his commitment earlier, at a time when the odds were against Khrushchev.

In any case, it is obviously difficult to judge whether Zhukov's support was critical to Khrushchev victory. We can only guess whether the party first secretary could have overcome his formidable opposition had Zhukov

*Robert Conquest, "The Soviet Succession Problem," p. 101.

**Bulganin, acting on behalf of the "anti-party group," had given a futile order to troops in the Kremlin to isolate the presidium members in order to carry through the plan to unseat Khrushchev. Hence, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers was powerless to act without the cooperation of his subordinate, the Minister of Defense. That all of the key commanders in the Moscow area stood firm during the anti-party group crisis and refused to act except on Zhukov's orders is revealed by the fact that they retained their important jobs afterwards. Had any of them balked at Zhukov's authority and yielded to appeals for support by the anti-Khrushchev faction, in the party presidium, events might have taken a very different turn.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

not remained loyal to Khrushchev and lent his name to the "anti-party group." Our guess is that Khrushchev would have lost under such circumstances.

In any event, it does seem clear that Zhukov, whether he wanted to or not, had to choose between the contending factions. He was privy to the meetings of the presidium, since he was then a candidate member of that body, and was undoubtedly propositioned by members of the anti-Khrushchev faction. In those critical June days, "party controls" and "dominance" over the army became irrelevant to the issue at hand. The relevant facts were Zhukov's effective leadership of the army; the loyalty of his subordinates in the army high command to himself and to Khrushchev (many of the top leaders owed their positions to Khrushchev); and Zhukov's decision to side with Khrushchev despite the majority vote of the presidium to unseat him. The reasons why Zhukov backed Khrushchev are not entirely clear to us, although we would surmise that the marshal believed that the army had more to gain from Khrushchev under whom it had fared well, than from a new leadership under Malenkov (who had tried to cut back the army) or Molotov and Kaganovich (who perhaps threatened a return to the Stalinist era).

The tribute which Khrushchev paid to the army was probably commensurate with the importance of the support Zhukov had rendered the first secretary. For the first time in the history of the USSR, a professional military officer was taken into the ruling inner sanctum, the presidium, as a voting member. Zhukov would thus share in some of the powers of the man whose political life he had helped to save. But Zhukov's rich reward would also be his undoing. The prominent display of his uniform in the ruling party presidium threatened the sacrosanct principle of strict party dominance over the military; and his prestige and haughty manner, at least in Khrushchev's eyes, threatened the party chief's image as top man, if not his actual power.

Hence, the pendulum which had lifted Zhukov to a lofty position in June 1957, swung in the opposite direction four months later, and finished both his military and political career in the same stroke.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

The Spectre of Bonapartism: There is an important postscript to the Zhukov affair that merits attention here. The case represents one of the rare occasions in Soviet history when the military elite during a period of relatively stable party leadership, threatened or were thought to have threatened the principle of party dominance. (A notable precedent was the case of Stalin's blood purge of the Soviet officer corps on the eve of World War II.)

A conclusion to be drawn from this, it seems, is that the threat of Bonapartism, whether real or not, has in the past alarmed the party chiefs. (The party condemned Zhukov, among other reasons, for having manifested "Bonapartist tendencies.") Various party leaders may continue to regard the army high command as a source, and perhaps the only one, of potential opposition to party supremacy. (The Chinese Communists had on several occasions appealed to the Soviet army to overthrow Khrushchev on the grounds that he was selling out the army, country and world Communist movement.) Khrushchev himself took prophylactic measures against a possible Bonapartist coup by revitalizing the system of political controls and by surrounding himself with military men who had served with him during the war and owed their high ranks to him. While Khrushchev may have felt secure in the thought that the high command--even though they resisted him on certain policy matters--would not rise against him, will the new party leadership have that confidence?

The Overthrow of Khrushchev: What role Soviet military leaders played in the ouster of Khrushchev from power is still largely a mystery for us. Although we have no positive evidence that they played a direct role in bringing Khrushchev's rule to an end, it does appear that key figures in the high command, including Malinovsky, had been advised in advance about the impending coup, and had given their assurance that they would not act on Khrushchev's behalf. By refusing to defend the Supreme High Commander against a powerful opposition in the party, the military chiefs thus contributed in a major, if negative, way to his overthrow. For had they interfered, they might have prevented any such drastic moves against Khrushchev by his party colleagues. Indeed, had the conspirators even thought that the military, learning of the

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

plan to depose Khrushchev, would have come to his support, it is doubtful that they would have risked a showdown in the central committee on the 14th.

Throughout Khrushchev's reign, the military were on the defensive against the strong-willed leader who had his own ideas about peacetime and wartime requirements for Soviet national security, and tried, with uneven success, to impose them on the military leaders. They in turn made no secret about their dismay over, or sometimes opposition to, his ideas about modern warfare; his schemes for making sweeping cuts in the defense budget and military manpower; his passion for strategic weapons to the detriment of conventional weapons; and his handling of the Cuban missile venture. Such grievances are rumored to have been among those hurled at him at the central committee plenum which felled him.

Long-standing differences with Khrushchev, then, undoubtedly helped to put the military chiefs in a frame of mind receptive to the suggestion of ousting Khrushchev. But the military probably also had an immediate reason for wishing to see Khrushchev put out to pasture. If, as it now seems, Khrushchev had tried (and failed) last September to push through a new long-range economic program oriented toward the consumer sector, the defense allocation would have been severely reduced, and the panoply of weapons and forces desired by the military for the latter part of this decade and the beginning of the next would have been placed in jeopardy. As late as 12 October Pravda carried an editorial which made it clear that Khrushchev was unswerving in his determination to have his way with respect to a new economic program. Hence, by that time, the choice might have been cut-and-dried for the military, as well as for the civilian opponents of Khrushchev.

One of the first acts of the new leadership was to make it plain that there would be no change in economic priorities, no shift in resource allocations away from the defense sector. The new leadership would promote consumer welfare, to be sure, but not at the expense of the military's purse, as Khrushchev had wanted to do. The

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

military would continue to get their share of investment-- a payment for their neutrality in the political crisis.

This is not to suggest, however, that the military chiefs were necessarily of one mind that Khrushchev should be deposed. A number of senior military officers, it will be remembered, were in sympathy with some of Khrushchev's views on war, doctrine and force requirements. Such people would probably have been loathe to see Khrushchev removed, not only because of the effect of that action on the issues, but also because of their fear of losing their jobs. Marshal Biryuzov, the late chief of the general staff, may have been one such person. Had he not been killed in an airplane crash on 19 October, he might well have been removed from office for political reasons. A long-time strategic weapons commander, Biryuzov owed his rise in the military hierarchy to Khrushchev. And on the very day that the central committee was voting to remove Khrushchev from power--14 October--Red Star carried an article signed by Biryuzov which heaped praise on Khrushchev for his role in the liberation of the Ukraine. By contrast, Pravda on the same day carried an article, signed by Marshal Konev (who had once felt the end of Khrushchev's boot), that also dealt with the liberation of the Ukraine but nowhere alluded to Khrushchev. If Biryuzov had been among the military leaders tipped off about the impending political crisis, his article might have been intended to prevent the defaming of Khrushchev.

Some Conclusions: We cannot, of course, draw any definitive conclusions from our woefully incomplete information on the Soviet political struggles of the period 1953-1957 and the recent deposing of Khrushchev. We would, however, like to set forth for consideration some tentative generalizations about the nature of Soviet military involvement in these struggles, generalizations which may have some relevance for the present succession problem.

The case histories which we have reviewed suggest that intensive political infighting in the Kremlin tended to make precarious the normal army-party relationship. The fragmentation of party authority at the top caused the army to emerge temporarily as a more powerful political

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

force in relation to the party itself. These disruptive developments in the army-party relationship were tempered, however, by the restrained political objectives and actions of the army high command (e.g., they have never to our knowledge made a bid for supreme power). The high command, either in the person of the Defense Minister or his senior associates, is the element of the military that has become involved in party politics.

In the Kremlin struggles, moreover, contending figures have had to take new measures either to neutralize the army politically or to gain its active backing. While the army chiefs had never given evidence of dividing themselves among rival factions contending for Stalin's mantle, they might have had differences of opinion about the wisdom of depriving Khrushchev of that mantle. And, perhaps prophetically, the military have never turned up on the losing side. Also they were rewarded for their services or neutrality in each crisis. But, up until the present crisis, they were eventually deprived of some of their gains or--in the case of Zhukov--severely cut back to size by the former party ally who became jealous of his political prerogatives and anxious to secure the submission of the army to his own authority.

B. Role in Policy Formulation

If the army's role in politics has been limited, generally, to times when the party leaders are divided, the army's participation in policy formulation has been a continuing process.*

*The role of the army in the formulation of policy is a recurring theme in our CAESAR reports and has also recently been discussed in unclassified forums. The May/June 1964 issue of Problems of Communism, for example, contains two illuminating articles addressed to this subject: Mr. Gallagher's "Military Manpower: A Case Study," and T. Wolfe's "Shifts in Soviet Strategic Thought." Hence, our treatment of the subject in this essay will be brief.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

[REDACTED]

Like any bureaucracy, the Soviet military establishment tends to develop its own professional interests which at times give rise to views and positions which diverge from those of the ruling party elite. There is fragmentary evidence [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that the military have voiced independent views on the allocation of resources and foreign policy--notably on the critical Berlin and Cuban questions--as well as the more technical military questions of force size, composition, doctrine and nuclear testing.

In their capacity of advisers to the supreme leadership, senior Soviet officers have often found themselves deeply involved in matters of general policy. On the invitation of Khrushchev or his party associates or upon their own initiative, the military chiefs used secret forums like the Higher Military Council to make their viewpoints known to the policy-makers. The Higher Military Council, where senior officers came into direct contact with Khrushchev and other presidium members, probably became the most important channel for bringing the military influence to bear on policy since the expulsion of Marshal Zhukov from the party presidium in 1957. In meetings of the Council, the officers evidently often crossed the thin divide between advice and special pleading.* Whether the Council, in the absence of Khrushchev, will continue to be such an important channel, or even to function at all, remains to be seen.

Over the past decade, the influence of the high command in general policy has grown, largely because of the critical importance of the military factor in foreign and economic policy decisions. The political leaders have revealed their anxieties about this trend in military influence in some acutely defensive reactions in the specialized military press. They have periodically rebuked

*For an examination in depth of this institution, see our CAESAR XXIV, The Higher Military Council of the USSR, dated 20 July 1964.

~~SECRET~~

[REDACTED]

~~SECRET~~

the military, especially since the Cuban debacle, for their presumptions in the policy-making sphere. The military, for their part, seem to have retreated, in the past year, to safer ground in this dialogue. Instead of claiming, as in the past, a direct role in molding "military doctrine" (which in Soviet terminology is equivalent to national policy on defense matters), they have been emphasizing their technical contribution to military doctrine--"military science"--which only the officer corps can make. But the fact that they continue to talk about much the same things as before under the rubric "military science" suggests to us that they have not relinquished their prerogatives in the policy sphere, but have merely executed a tactical maneuver.

What role they may play in the policy sphere under the new leadership and in the event of a struggle by one of the leaders to consolidate power in his own hands will be discussed in a later section of this paper.

C. The Anatomy of Party Control Over The Military

The party has maintained its dominance over the army through a complex system of controls, both institutional and personal.

Loyalty. An important, and in the case of the high command, the most important factor is loyalty. This is the core, the sine qua non of party control. Generally speaking, the loyalty of the officer corps to the party has long been unquestioned and virtually indistinguishable from loyalty to country. The period of grave distrust by the party of the professional military officers came to an end during World War Two.

The party leaders have sought to insure the loyalty of the army by infusing it with the lifeblood of the party itself. Even before Stalin left the scene, over 90 percent of the officer corps were party or Komsomol affiliated. More units are now said to have some sort of party-Komsomol

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

organ.* And great numbers of military personnel have been made officials of local civilian party organizations, while top military leaders have been taken into higher party organs. At the last party congress--the 22nd, which was held in October 1961--the military representation in the central committee was increased somewhat over the previous congress--to almost ten percent--but was still smaller as a proportion of the total membership than the military groups elected at the 18th and 19th congresses (in 1939 and 1952). (Marshal Zhukov's stay in the chief policy-making body of the party--the presidium--was brief, and his successor, the more amenable Malinovsky, was not brought into the ruling party circle.)

But what becomes of loyalty, the cement which binds the army leaders to the party leadership, when the party leadership is broken into rival factions? Except in the sense of forestalling a basic change in the established system of rule, loyalty to the party would, as in the past, become irrelevant to the problem of succession; the relevant question would be, loyalty to which party leader or faction?

Party discipline. As members of party or Komsomol organizations, the bulk of the military are also subject to party discipline and directive. In the interest of maximizing military efficiency, however, the party central committee has given the party organizations in the armed forces considerably less authority than that given their civilian counterparts. At meetings of army and navy party organizations, members have the right to criticize any member or candidate, regardless of his position. But they are forbidden to criticize the orders and instructions of commanders and chiefs at the meetings. Also, unlike

*In 1963, party organizations and groups existed in 93 percent of companies and equivalent subunits as compared with 40 percent in 1958. M. Kh. Kalashnik, "Political Organs and Party Organizations of the Soviet Army and Navy," Higher Party School Publishing House, Moscow, 1963.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

civilian party organizations, army primary party organizations do not have the right to check the activities of administrative or command elements. Nor can matters pertaining to misdemeanors of commanders or their deputies be examined in the primary organization of which the individual is a member.* In other words, by this arrangement, party discipline has been tailored to accommodate military discipline and is virtually subordinate to it.

The party discipline to which the army high command itself is subject is exercised by the central committee, of which the leading military figures are members. In times of stable party leadership, this form of control evidently operates very effectively and smoothly. But what becomes of this form of discipline when the central committee itself is turned into an arena of political struggle? Can the military members of the central committee, under such circumstances, avoid becoming embroiled in factional disputes which percolate into that body?

It would seem to us, in short, that party discipline as a form of control over the military will not prevent their becoming involved in a struggle to decide what the complexion of a new party leadership shall be.

The Main Political Administration. The agency responsible for political indoctrination and for controlling the activities of the party organizations in the army is the Main Political Administration (MPA). This organization has evolved from the political commissar

*There has been some zigzagging in respect to the line on criticism of service activities of commanders. Under Zhukov's aegis as Defense Minister, the service duties of the unit commanders, for example, were not permitted to be criticized by his subordinates at party meetings. In the tightening up of party control shortly after Zhukov's removal, this ruling was reversed. But it was reversed once again, perhaps as early as 1958.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

system but is a far cry from its forebear. Until Zhukov was fired, the chief of the MPA was subordinate in the chain of command to both the Minister of Defense and the central committee. Now the office of the chief of the MPA is subordinate only to the central committee, and is said to function with the rights of a central committee department. The chief of the MPA is still required to report to the Minister of Defense on the state of political affairs in the army, but is evidently not subject to his orders, and signs political directives to the troops independently of the Minister of Defense or jointly with him.

Under the office of the chief of the MPA, the political organs are integrated with the military. The embers of the historic conflict between professional and political soldiers are still smoldering. Nevertheless, much has been done since 1957 to improve relations between the two groups, most notably the exchange of command and political positions and the increased requirements for specialized training of both types of officers in the other's sphere of competence.

While it is certainly a very important instrument of party control over the army, the MPA also does not seem to us to have much relevance to the question of army involvement in party politics. The three top army leaders, who are the likely military element to become involved in a party succession struggle--the Defense Minister, the Warsaw Pact Commander and the Chief of the General Staff*--have higher rank in the political hierarchy than the Chief of the MPA and are evidently not personally subject to his directives. Force component commanders, however, are subject to MPA control to some extent; political administrations have been set up in each of the force component headquarters, including that of the Strategic Rocket Forces. But even with respect to force component commanders,

*That is, whoever succeeds the late Marshal Biryuzov in that office.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

the MPA does not appear to have overriding control over their political activities. For example, Khrushchev's hand-picked chief of the MPA, Yepishev, either did not want to or could not prevent the ground forces commander, Marshal Chukov, from publicly opposing Khrushchev's troop cut proposal of last December. There are a good number of other cases in which senior officers carried their policy differences with Khrushchev to the public forum.

The Military Councils. An important but frequently overlooked (in Western analyses) instrument of party control in the armed forces is the military council system. Through the military council system the central and regional civilian party chiefs are brought into direct contact with the senior military commanders and serve as a check on their administrative authority. On the military district and force component levels, the commander serves as chairman of the military council, which has both advisory and administrative responsibilities. The local chief political officer also serves as a member of the military council. Inasmuch as decisions taken on administrative as well as political matters on this level are subject to a majority vote, it would seem that this system has the effect of retaining some aspects of the old commissar system. (A recent article by a Soviet general stressing the importance of one-man command has revealed sensitivity among Soviet officers on this very point, and may indicate that they are trying to have removed the serious liabilities currently imposed by the military council system on the field commander's ability to make independent decisions.*) The military council system, significantly, does not interfere with military discipline; a military council evidently cannot overrule an order from a higher military command.

Khrushchev. The removal of Khrushchev from the scene has complicated the problem of party control over

*General of the Army P. Kurochkin, "Contemporary Combat and One-Man Command," Red Star, 5 June 1964.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

the army. This is because of the central role Khrushchev had played in the control system. He occupied the posts of Chairman of the Higher Military Council and Supreme High Commander of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union, in addition to the powerful offices of Chairman of the Council of Ministers and First Secretary of the Party. As Supreme High Commander, Khrushchev had his finger on the nuclear button, he had direct and exclusive operational control over the Strategic Rocket Forces. In his other governmental posts, he exercised the important powers of promoting, hiring and firing marshals, generals and admirals. Despite the fact that he stacked the high command with men who were closely associated with him during World War II, the members of the high command were not completely docile on policy questions and advanced viewpoints which diverged in some important respects from Khrushchev's own thinking. And, more important, in the final analysis, his Stalingrad comrades let him go down the drain.

Police Elements. There are also police controls which the party exercises through the Administrative Organs (AO) department of the central committee and special sections of the KGB assigned for that purpose. The AO department, the head of which was recently killed in the airplane crash with Biryuzov, evidently has overall control responsibilities in the central committee for security, intelligence, and judiciary matters, both within the military establishment and outside. The KGB provides the watchdogs who perform the expected counterintelligence and police functions in the armed forces, in addition to such special details as guarding nuclear weapons depots.

The operative question, however, is whether and in what ways the established system of police controls would function to frustrate involvement by the military in a political leadership struggle. If used adroitly by one of the rival factions, the secret police could play an important role in controlling the actions of the military high command (by placing them under house arrest, forcing them to issue orders, etc.). But in any direct confrontation between the secret police and army units under orders to act, including in Moscow where a show of

~~SECRET~~

force would be crucial, the army units could quickly overwhelm the KGB. The party in recent years seems to have strengthened the secret police, but, except for the transfer of the police of the border troops, has stopped short of building up the KGB as an armed force which could rival regular army units (as in Beria's time).

In early 1963, the Party-State Control Committee headed by Shelepin extended its tentacles into the armed forces, where "committees" and "groups of cooperation" were established at various command levels. The committee serves as the party's inspector general with authority to make spot checks of virtually any military installation without regard for the official chain of command.

* * *

The party's controls over the army, in short, are extensive and apparently very effective, but they have important limitations: they are not strong enough (or may not be intended) to preclude the military from having an independent and influential voice in policy matters; and they are not sufficient to prevent the army from playing an important role in political struggles.

Moreover, the very fact that Khrushchev concentrated so much control over the defense establishment in his own hands, has laid a serious problem in the laps of the present party leaders. His exit has created a large power vacuum in the military control mechanism which will not be easily filled, short of aggrandizement of these powers by a strong successor, or a major change in the control machinery at the top.

~~SECRET~~

II. THE MILITARY AND A NEW LEADERSHIP CRISIS

A. The Possibilities

Many Western observers (ourselves included) think it very likely that a struggle for power will sooner or later erupt among Khrushchev's heirs. The present collective leadership arrangement, it seems to us, is only a temporary moratorium on struggle, if not a smokescreen behind which a power struggle is already taking place. The system, as nurtured by Khrushchev and Stalin before him, militates toward consolidation of supreme power by one man. Indeed, as Leonard Schapiro recently put it, the system is probably unworkable in its present form without one man at the top. The inherent instability of the present coalition is apparent in the division of power not only between individuals but between institutions as well. The Brezhnev-Kosygin team is a combination of two bureaucracies--party and state--with a history of conflict. There is some question as to whether Brezhnev can preserve the supremacy of the professional party apparatus in controlling the economy in view of the increasing power of the vast planning and management apparatus, captained by Kosygin.

Another factor making for instability at the top is the apparent failure to date of any of the new leaders to decide who among them should fill such powerful posts vacated by Khrushchev as Supreme High Commander, chairman of the Higher Military Council and chairman of the RSFSR Bureau. Who will have his finger on the nuclear trigger, and how will he get it there, are questions that probably will have to be settled before too long. How such questions are decided will go far to answer the basic question, in whose hands will supreme power in the USSR be held?

Assuming that our estimate of the leadership situation is correct, that individual leaders will struggle

-21-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

among themselves to consolidate Khrushchev's dropped powers, what reaction might we expect from the military?

We are inclined to think that the military will in some manner become involved in any struggle to decide who Khrushchev's successor at the helm of power is to be. What kind of role they play will probably depend, among other things, on the intensity and duration of the political struggle itself.

The military probably realizes that the present leadership arrangement is only a temporary and inherently unstable compromise. They are probably also concerned that the absence of a single commander-in-chief, with his finger on the nuclear button, tends to degrade both the Soviet deterrent and the actual ability of the Soviet military establishment to respond decisively in an emergency. They would therefore probably be anxious to see supreme power consolidated in the hands of a single leader in order to restore the strategic military position of the country to its former state.

If, as we think is likely to happen, a period of active struggle follows a holding action by collective rule, the military (as an institution or in the person of the Defense Minister) will very likely enter or be drawn into the dispute in a partisan role. In the first place, the military chieftains might become involved by their own choice. It might appear to them that the security of the Soviet Union is gravely endangered by a deeply divided party leadership and they might, in consequence, intervene in an effort to hasten the settlement of the succession struggle. The possibility of a voluntary military involvement would be greater should the contest involve issues bearing on the future of the Soviet military establishment.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Soviet army leaders are eager to become involved in the leadership problem. Being a conservative, cautious segment of Soviet society, the military as a group may have taken to heart the meaning of the Zhukov ouster, and, hence, will probably be very careful about getting embroiled voluntarily

-22-

~~SECRET~~

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

~~SECRET~~

in party politics. But we would not regard their penchant for caution as a factor precluding a self-initiated intervention in a leadership struggle.

What makes a military involvement in any succession struggle seem to us almost unavoidable is not so much the above-mentioned contingency of willful involvement as the external forces that will work to draw army leaders into the dispute. In the Soviet environment, the army is simply too powerful to be ignored by the factions or individuals contending for supreme power. They will try to gain the backing of the army high command for themselves or at least to deny it to their opponents. In the factional struggles that followed Stalin's death, the military always turned up on the winning side, and historically-minded party chiefs are likely to consider the support of the military essential to the attainment of supreme power. Should the central committee become an arena of struggle, the top military leaders who sit in that body would inescapably be pelted with entreaties for support from the rival factions; they would be forced to choose sides (as on 14 October) should a motion affecting the leadership struggle be put up for a vote.

Not only might the army leaders be forced into a partisan role by circumstances beyond their control; they might also find themselves cast in the role of a reluctant arbiter, provided they were able to act as a bloc. The latter role, which otherwise seems remote, would become a good possibility should the contestants for the party leadership become locked in a stalemate.

Furthermore, a possible breakdown in party discipline--caused by a pernicious, drawn-out struggle at the top--could cause such disarray among the party rank-and-file as to paralyze the political effectiveness of the party as a whole. And if at the same time the army chiefs were to maintain strict military discipline, they would have considerably greater political leverage and maneuverability than the rival party chiefs, and would occupy a more advantageous position from which to influence the outcome of the succession struggle.

-23-

~~SECRET~~

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

~~SECRET~~

We can, of course, only speculate about the form which a military involvement might take. It might, for example, be limited to public or private protestations on behalf of the fortunate contender and the parroting of his statements on policy and ideological matters (as in the first Khrushchev-Malenkov struggle). Or it might even involve the use or threatened use of arms (as in the case of the showdown with Beria).

A decision to move army troops into the streets in Moscow could be taken at the initiative of a party leader, but the operational order would have to come from a senior military officer, notably the defense minister. (Bulganin, then chairman of the council of ministers, apparently tried and failed to move troops on behalf of the anti-party group during the crisis of June 1957.) As far as we can tell, the only armed personnel at the disposal of any of the top party chiefs are the small KGB units assigned to protect them. (Some party chiefs, Brezhnev and Shelepin, might through associations with the KGB be able to marshal the support of various other KGB elements.) We can imagine a situation in which a party leader or faction, either faced with the marshalling by the opposition of secret police units or desperate to make a final bid for supreme power, might urge the Defense Minister to move forces into or around the Kremlin and to apprehend opposition elements.

We think it likely that the military will simply do the bidding of one of the contending factions; yet we would not rule out the possibility of self-initiated actions on their own behalf. They might, although we think it improbable, blatantly play the role of kingmaker, picking their own candidate and foisting him on the party. An even more drastic step would be for the army chiefs to try to capture supreme power for themselves.

One can advance a number of reasons for estimating that a military takeover is not likely to happen. The Soviet officer corps has a strong interest in preserving the existing political order, which even a temporary military takeover would virtually destroy. (It would be extremely difficult for the party to recover from such a

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

failure.) The army leaders are indebted to the system for the lofty positions they occupy and the place the army as an institution occupies in their society. They would have no guarantee that they could fare as well or better under an alternative political system; indeed, they may not even be able to envisage what an alternative system might or ought to be. And their upbringing and sense of tradition would probably make them feel very uncomfortable in the role of political rulers. While they have expressed divergent views on various party policies and have sought greater independence for the army in regard to its internal administration, they have never revealed any desire to become a fully independent political force which would rival the party itself.

Nevertheless, we cannot exclude the possibility of a military takeover. Circumstances might arise during leadership struggles that would give impetus to a military intervention on its own behalf, or on the behalf of a party official of the military's choosing. Such a development might occur:

- (1) if the military high command feared imminent interference in the political struggle by an outside force--say China;
- (2) if a military attack on certain vulnerable outlying Soviet positions by either a Western or a Communist country seemed impending; or
- (3) if there were an internal crisis, such as a public uprising against the party and government.

In the latter event, which is admittedly very unlikely, there would, of course, be no alternative party to take over the leadership of the state. Only the military would be capable of swiftly restoring and maintaining public order and only they could provide a temporary substitute for party rule. Senior professional army officers, while loyal to the party under normal conditions, have a strong professional group identity and might--if they sense mass

-25-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

anti-party sentiment--take over the reins of power themselves, at least for the duration of the emergency.

B. Divisions Within The Military

As there are in any bureaucracy, there are many strains acting as centrifugal forces within the Soviet officer corps. In the current panoply, we can identify such divisive forces as personal antipathies, service rivalries, rival World War II cliques, conservative and modernist thinking on military doctrine, the ameliorated but still extant professional-political dichotomy, and the more subtle but increasingly important rivalries between the combined-arms officers and the advanced weapons technicians, as well as between the old and the young officers. These strains, however, have evidently not undermined the basic cohesiveness of the officer corps, the binding element of which is iron discipline. Some of these strains could perhaps be said to have undercut the military efficiency of the Soviet defense establishment (for example, in the sense that various rivalries have resulted in an unbalanced force structure--a neglected air force and surface fleet). But the important question for our present purposes is whether the divisive factors will affect the ability of the army to intercede in a Kremlin political struggle over Khrushchev's former powers.

Our own study leads us to conclude--tentatively, to be sure--that the divisive strains currently operating on the officer corps will neither lead to a breakdown in military discipline nor be sufficient to thwart a military intervention in a leadership struggle. Senior officers may debate policy and despise one another to their hearts content, but this would not result in contradictory orders for the employment of troops. Although involved in debates on policy matters in the period 1953-57, the senior army commanders did not give the slightest hint of dividing themselves among the factions in the political struggle that took place in the Kremlin over that span of time.

-26-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

This is not to say, however, that the military would necessarily be immune from any acute state of disarray in Soviet politics that might develop out of the current leadership situation. On the contrary, the marshals might find themselves personally divided as to which contender for supreme power to support. Their disagreement could be exploited by the rival party factions and could retard or immobilize a decision to intervene in some fashion. Yet, the marshals would undoubtedly consider the system of unified troop control and strict military discipline as strong reasons to remain united on so important an issue as a leadership struggle, in which a resort to arms could take place. While a temporary breakdown in party discipline would weaken the authority of the party, a breakdown in military discipline could be disastrous for the army, regime and country alike.

The military chain of command, moreover, can tolerate considerable personal differences among the top marshals without being seriously undermined because the operational control of the troops is centered in the hands of one man--the Defense Minister, Marshal Malinovsky. The Defense Minister is all the more powerful with the Supreme High Commander's seat vacant. He may be responsive to the will or divided will, as the case may be, of his staff; he may act according to their wishes or not act until they can reach agreement; or he may disregard their counsel altogether and act on his personal initiative or at the beckoning of a party faction which might own him. In any case, the army troops can move only on his orders; the commanders of all major troop elements--military districts, groups of forces, fleets--are directly subordinate to him. Troop commanders have the choice of resigning their posts but they cannot disobey a higher military order while occupying their posts--except at grave personal risk. Hence, as long as military discipline remains intact, it is ultimately the decision which the Defense Minister makes--irrespective of the manner in which he arrives at that decision--that will determine when and how the army will intervene with troops in a succession struggle. (In the case of Malinovsky, we would estimate that he would act only in concert with his fellow senior officers.) Hence, we would regard troop control and military discipline as the factors that will

-27-

~~SECRET~~

probably discourage the marshals from splintering in any circumstances surrounding the leadership contest.

It follows from this that the aspirant who wins the backing of the Defense Minister (and/or his clique, as the case may be) wins the support of the army. This being the case, other hypothetical considerations come to the fore:

(1) recognizing the critical importance of having a sympathetic man in the post of Defense Minister, a party faction might replace Malinovsky (if he seemed unfriendly to them) with a more amenable officer in maneuvering to build a power base for taking over the commanding position in the party;

(2) alternatively, although less likely, a strong grouping of senior officers--sensing that Malinovsky was about to throw the army's support behind a man whom they despised--might conspire to eliminate him physically and thereby pass the critical command to the next ranking officer, Marshal Grechko, or even to a more junior one.

C. The Army's Candidate

Should the marshals be dissatisfied with the present leadership arrangement, which is divided, which of the party figures would they prefer to see consolidate power in his own hands? Or, put another way, should the principal party leaders compete among themselves for increased powers, which of them would have the greatest advantage with respect to currying the support of the military?

We have no ready answer to such questions. The military would no doubt prefer a man who finds common cause with them on important military-related policy matters. This is not to say, however, they they would necessarily oppose a man because of his policy views. They might feel, for example, that by backing the strongest contender, even though a weaker one was more in

~~SECRET~~

sympathy with their program, they could achieve a quicker settlement of the succession problem and termination of its attendant instability.

Our task is made the more difficult by the fact that we have precious little information on the personal relationships between top party and army people, and we know little about where individual party leaders stand on various policy issues bearing on defense. The evidence which we have been able to accumulate on ties between senior party people and the military--incomplete and inconclusive though it may be--does provide a basis for making some preliminary judgments. (See our Kremlinological checklist at the end of the text.) "Connections" in the military as well as in other bureaucracies in the Soviet Union carry a great deal of weight in the development of personal careers.* Hence, the fact that certain of the party leaders have had or still have ties with the military may give them some advantage over other colleagues in currying the support of the military.

It is plain, first of all, that a number of top party figures have had some connection with the military at one time or another in their careers. The new first secretary of the party, Brezhnev, appears to have had more bases of contact with the military than his probable rivals.

Before Khrushchev's ouster, Brezhnev's name turned up in lists of "outstanding" party officials who served at the front in World War II--along with those of Suslov, Mzhavanadze, Ignatov and Kalnberzin. But neither Brezhnev's

*KOMMUNIST OF THE ARMED FORCES (No. 24, 1963) for example, frankly reported (and criticized) a practice under which "...officers and generals are advanced not in accordance with their political and military qualities, but because of amicable relations with someone higher up, or personal ties, or a working relationship with someone in the past."

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

nor anyone else's war experience was given the singular treatment reserved for Khrushchev. The most lavish tribute paid Brezhnev for his wartime role, curiously, appeared in the MILITARY HISTORICAL JOURNAL on the eve of Khrushchev's ouster.* Since that event, however, the military press available to us has studiously avoided mentioning the names of living political leaders in historical articles on the war.

In any case, Brezhnev's experience with the military to date cannot be said to assure him the backing of the high command. For one thing, it is a question whether

*The JOURNAL was signed to press on 14 October. The author of the memoir-type article recalled that at the time of the 1941 German drive into the USSR Brezhnev was secretary of the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast party committee in the Ukraine. The article said that in August 1941 the fighting had reached Dnepropetrovsk and Brezhnev played a considerable role in recruiting a division to fight the Germans. Thanks to the initiative of Brezhnev and Semen Zadionchenko, another regional party secretary, hundreds of party members were mobilized and a vodka factory was converted to produce Molotov cocktails. In September after the city had fallen, Brezhnev with the approval of Malinovsky--then commander of the Sixth Army--helped set up an assault group for a counteroffensive.

-30-

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

his past military service would necessarily work in his favor since he had been a political officer--on the army level during the war, and later as chief of the naval political department. Indeed, he might, while serving in a political capacity in the armed forces, have antagonized some professional commanders. Also, the fact that Brezhnev was one of the most avid past supporters of Khrushchev's economic policies may have lost him friends among the military. And they will probably remember that he was the first of Khrushchev's associates to endorse the nuclear test ban treaty last year.

The new chairman of the council of ministers, Kosygin, on the other hand, has had hardly any contact with the military, having been a long-time administrator in Soviet light industry. In this respect, he would tend to be at a disadvantage in a possible competition for military backing. However, the fact that Kosygin was outspoken just after the 1957 purge in stressing the party's sustained allegiance to the heavy industry line, may put him in good standing with the military. It may also be reflective of Kosygin's sentiments that Khrushchev's chemicals program, inaugurated in 1958, failed to prosper under Kosygin's direction as planning chief.

Another presumed front-runner, Podgorny, has had fewer ties with the military in his career, but nevertheless may appeal to them as a candidate on the basis of his rather pronounced position (in the past) on priorities for defense and heavy industry. A recent effort was made to contrive a military affiliation for him, also, by including his name in a short list of regional secretaries who served as members of okrug military councils in the late fifties.*

*Yu. P. Petrov, Party Construction in the Soviet Army and Navy, 1918-1961, Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1964.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Both Brezhnev and Podgorny are believed to have had responsibilities in the field of defense industry right up to the time of Khrushchev's ouster, and Brezhnev has additionally been reported to have been a frequent participant in meetings of the Higher Military Council.

All in all, it seems that neither Brezhnev nor Podgorny, nor for that matter any of the principal party figures, can lay claim to the military bureaucracy as his political stronghold. On the contrary, it appears to us that Khrushchev deliberately prevented his colleagues in the ruling party presidium from developing strong ties with the army (even though they may have current responsibilities in the sphere of defense). Khrushchev made the army his personal domain. He surrounded himself with his clique of officers. He donned Stalin's wartime mantle of Supreme High Commander. He plainly dominated the administration of army policy and, until his dismissal, was the only party leader publicly associated with major policy initiatives affecting the armed forces. Finally, he made the Higher Military Council his personal instrument for arriving at policy affecting defense, and used it, evidently, to by-pass the full presidium.

D. Consequences for Policy

Policy affecting the defense establishment is undoubtedly a strong if not the overriding interest of the military in the outcome of the succession problem. There is ample evidence that right up to the time of Khrushchev's ouster, the Soviet leaders were unable to resolve a number of basic, interrelated military questions, such as whether there should be another troop cut, as proposed by Khrushchev last December and whether, for purposes of policy planning, doctrine should prescribe an important combat role for general purpose forces in a nuclear war. Khrushchev's departure from the scene has almost certainly settled the question of whether there should be a reduction in the military's share of resources. However, all the outstanding military policy issues have not been resolved by his removal, even though it has

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

undoubtedly improved the chances of their being settled in favor of the more conservative-minded military leaders. While the military are to some extent divided among themselves over various defense issues, it is also evident that they hold in common some very strong views which they will try to impose on any new political leadership. One such common viewpoint is the need to continue to strengthen the defense establishment. This was forcefully advanced in a RED STAR editorial entirely devoted to that subject nine days after Khrushchev's dismissal. The present leaders have expressed sympathy with that view, but have not indicated how and to what extent they will try to meet specific military demands; their position is made the more ambiguous by repeated allusions to such themes as continuation of the coexistence policy, the keystone of Khrushchev's quest for detente abroad and relaxation at home, and the steady raising of the people's welfare.

The kinds of specific demands that military leaders will probably make on any political leaders are as follows:

Irrespective of the rationale, be it requirements for thermonuclear war or local conventional war, the military will want to maintain large modernized, and versatile armed forces; they will consequently resist any efforts to cut back severely either the size of the army or the military's share of the economy. They may also attempt to recover ground lost under Khrushchev's heavy-handed direction of the military programs--that is, to restore parts of the military budget or production cut away by Khrushchev and to refurbish the prestige of the military establishment--particularly of the older arms of service which Khrushchev had sought to undermine. They appear to be in agreement with Chinese and North Vietnamese critics that Khrushchev dangerously neglected the problem of preparing the Soviet armed forces for limited non-nuclear warfare, and may therefore press with increased force for a basic change in doctrine and the adoption of a costly policy of reequipping and retraining the military for limited actions in both adjacent and distant areas.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

They can always be expected to seek more recognition for the military's contribution to society--such as better pay and retirement programs or the elimination of the shefstvo system, in which military personnel are assigned work in the economy. They may demand more independence for the military with respect to the running of the defense establishment. They may, for example, petition for (a) the curtailment of the military council system, which places an important check on the administrative initiatives of major field commanders; or (b) smaller political incursions into the duty time of professional officers (more combat, less political training and indoctrination). They may ask for a greater say in internal security matters and try to regain control of the border troops which are now under the KGB. And they may seek increased representation in the party central committee, or even the restoration of a military seat in the presidium, in order to protect their professional interests and to have a more direct say in general policy. (A professional military presence in the party presidium would increase not only their influence on policy but their prestige in Soviet society as well.)

The military will probably not want to see either a return to the Stalinist era--under which they suffered greatly--or a radical turn to liberalism. They can also be expected to oppose turns in Soviet foreign policy that seem to them to be prejudicial to the military establishment or the security of the country. For example, they will probably continue to oppose any major Soviet concessions in disarmament. (They had revealed some dismay over the test ban treaty of 1963.)

But some of the major interests of the military and political leaderships are on a collision course. In the policy sphere, the maintenance of general purpose forces at present levels taken together with the huge military R&D effort and the continued buildup of strategic forces, will exert a constant upward pressure on the Soviet military budget and on military manpower. In view of the fact that the strained economic situation will continue to plague Soviet political leaders for some years to come, they will have to return, before long, to policies

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

of restraining the growth of military spending if they hope to make serious progress in general economic development.

In the sphere of politics, we would expect any new political leader in the process of consolidating his power to try, eventually, to subjugate the military to his own authority. This would entail depriving the military of gains they made in the process of the succession struggle at the expense of party authority. Also, any new leader will probably not put his anxieties to rest about a potential military opposition until he builds up his own following in the officer corps. He can only do this by making wholesale changes in the high command. The Stalingrad clique now in power would have to give way to another clique. Finally, the civilian-army relationship might become strained under a new party leadership, the present one included. The older, politically experienced, former combat commanders who now fill the top military posts might be found by the new party leadership to be too strong and obstinate to deal with.

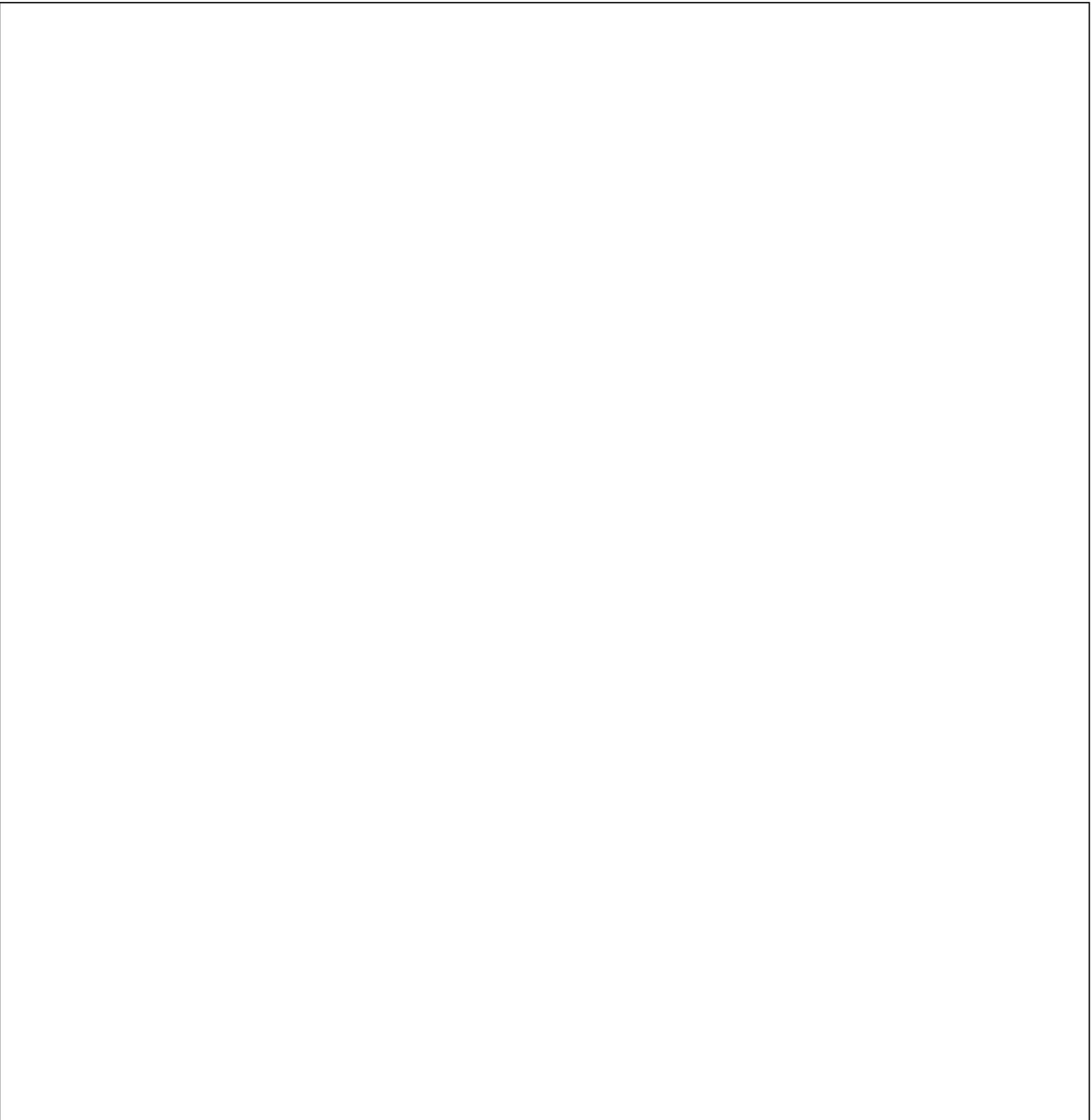
Should a new party leadership wish to replace the older commanders with young blood, it would be necessary to reach far down into the ranks before coming up with a younger generation of officers. This is because not only the high command, but almost all of the next echelon of commanders are men in their sixties. It is rare to find a general officer of any note in his fifties.* The new party leader would also stand to gain from bypassing the whole generation of older officers in filling out the high command posts, for he would make the younger group indebted to him for the sharp advancement in their careers.

*General Yakubovsky, now in command of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, is a rare exception. His age (52); experience (his present post is a springboard to more important jobs and he is already a member of the central committee); and energetic character make him a likely candidate for a leading post in the defense establishment when the present echelon of older men is retired. The fact that he has spent virtually the entire post-Stalin period in Germany in various command capacities suggests that his personal entourage will probably come mainly from the GSFG.

-35-

SECRET

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~



SECRET



~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~