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DEATH OF STALIN

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DEATH OF STALIN

LAST DAYS OF STALIN

This then was the situation in the Soviet Union on 4 March, when Radio Moscow announced that Stalin was in critical condition as a result of a stroke on the night of 1-2 March. The continuing medical bulletins were couched in pessimistic terms. They carefully outlined the nature of Stalin's illness and meticulously described the measures being taken by the doctors who were treating him. These play-by-play accounts revealed concern lest listeners interpret this news as meaning that either the old "doctor wreckers," or a group of new ones, had succeeded in shortening Stalin's life. The eight doctors in attendance were under the supervision of a new Minister of Health, Tretyakov.

Stalin had been last seen by a non-Communist on 17 February when he had given an audience to the Indian Ambassador (who had, however, never met him previously). While it is possible that Stalin's illness had been carefully concealed, and that a double was used for this interview, this is unlikely; it is considered highly doubtful that a double would have been used for Stalin's last interview. Stalin's collapse actually followed several months of what for him was unusual activity. Work on the Party Congress had evidently kept him in Moscow throughout the fall; in addition to this, he had granted at least four interviews to foreigners, had attended the anniversary ceremonies on 7 November and had appeared in the Bolshoi theatre on 12 January. (It is true, however, that Stalin's movements had been somewhat restricted. He delivered only a short speech at the Party Congress, yielding the main address to Malenkov. The 7 November ceremonies had been much shorter than usual, probably out of deference to him.)

The nature of the reporting on Stalin's illness suggested that his final stroke caught the Politburo off guard. There had been no advance warning. An examination of all Soviet radio propaganda from 1 to 4 March yielded no indication prior to the public announcement of Stalin's actual condition. There were no significant differences either in the nature or in the number of references to Stalin, who continued to be presented during this period as the focus of power in the Soviet Union. Similarly, an examination of all the Satellite radio propaganda material from the time of the October Party Congress to Stalin's death revealed no attempt to build up any of his lieutenants in possible anticipation of his voluntary or involuntary relinquishment of power.

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This information is of course far from conclusive. Many hypotheses concerning the circumstances of Stalin's death could be advanced to explain this lack of preparation. Furthermore, the West was completely dependent on the Soviet radio and press for all news on this development. It is impossible therefore to determine whether Stalin had been dead for some time, whether he was murdered, or whether he died in the way the medical bulletins said he did.

#### THE QUESTION OF STALIN'S SUCCESSOR

The announcements regarding Stalin's condition, indicating as they did that the Soviet Union would soon be without its leader and revealing that Stalin's disciples had waited four days before informing the people of their impending loss, immediately focused attention on Malenkov as the most likely successor. His career had moved steadily forward since Zhdanov's death in August 1948. He was the senior member of the Party Secretariat, the position from which Stalin originally consolidated his power. He was the only man other than Stalin who was a member of all three of the highest bodies of the Party and Government--the Politburo, the Secretariat, and the Collegium of the Council of Ministers (Deputy Chairmen). [REDACTED]  
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Ignatiev's appointment in 1951 as MGB Minister was also thought to have had the blessing and approval of Malenkov. The nature of Ignatiev's Party career indicated that he had prospered under, and had possibly been brought along by, Malenkov. Moreover, one curious bit of biographic information suggested that their association may have been of long standing. In 1920 Ignatiev, 16 years old and a Komsomol member, was directed to the political section of the Bukhara Oblast and in the following year he was transferred to the military section of the All-Bukhara Extraordinary Commission. Malenkov was serving as a "political worker" in the military-political administration in the Bukhara region at about this time.

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Malenkov had delivered the key address at the Party Congress, and subsequently, as might have been expected, it had been accorded much publicity throughout the Communist world. The replacement of the Politburo by a Presidium, the composition of which apparently favored Malenkov if it favored any of the old Politburo members, also seemed to contribute to his leading position. This was even more true of the enlarged Secretariat.

Thus it was commonly expected that Malenkov would attempt to fill the void left by Stalin. The official announcement regarding Stalin's illness, however, threw no light on the subject of his successor. It merely placed responsibility in the Central Committee of the Party and in the Council of Ministers, claiming that these two bodies would "take into account all circumstances connected with the temporary withdrawal of Stalin from leading the State's and Party's activity."

The announcement of Stalin's death came on 5 March. It linked his name with that of Lenin in an eulogy of the Party as leader of the people. It underscored the "steel-like, monolithic unity" of Party ranks and defined its task as the "guarding of unity", as the "apple of our eye." Reuters at the time recalled that Malenkov used this phrase in his October Party Congress speech and suggested that he was the author of the document. The same phrase, however, had appeared in connection with Lenin's death. Neither Malenkov nor any other associate of Stalin was mentioned in the announcement. Malenkov had come before the public eye, however, in a 4 March Pravda editorial which quotes from the section of his Congress speech dealing with Party unity.

The announcement affirmed the Soviet Union's peaceful intentions and desire for "business-like" relations. It named the "great Chinese people" first on the list of those people with whom the Soviet Union intended to develop friendship.

Khrushchev was listed as chairman of the Committee for organizing Stalin's funeral. On it were Kaganovich, Shvernik, Vasilevsky, Pegov, Artemev, the Commandant of the Moscow Military District, and Yasnov, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet. The funeral rites were set for 9 March.

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### THE FIRST GOVERNMENTAL REORGANIZATION

On 7 March, Moscow radio announced that in order to prevent "panic and disarray," a major reorganization of the Party and Government had been made at a joint meeting of the Central Committee, the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. This almost unprecedented method of handling business was in keeping with the gravity of the situation and reminiscent of the days of the German attack, when the Soviet leaders had met in a similar joint session and formed the State Defense Council. It strongly suggested that the leaders in this moment of crisis had moved swiftly to show their unity and to gird themselves for any battle that might be coming from either inside or out.

In a complete reversal of the organizational decisions taken by the October Congress, this new decree clearly outlined the spheres of interest and power of Stalin's closest collaborators -- the members of the old Politburo. Malenkov became Premier (Chairman of the Council of Ministers); Beria, Molotov, Bulganin, and Kaganovich became first Deputy Premiers. In addition, Beria returned to direct control of the security forces by becoming Minister of Internal Affairs (MVD), with which was combined the Ministry of State Security (MGB); Molotov returned to direct leadership in Foreign Affairs; Bulganin took over as Minister of War; Kaganovich received no ministerial assignment, but presumably was to be the economic czar. The Party's Presidium was reduced to ten men, eight of whom had been members of Stalin's Politburo. Here, too, Malenkov's name came first, indicating his ascendancy. He was followed by Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Saburov and Pervukhin, in that order. Saburov and Pervukhin were the only newcomers to the group as it had existed before October.

Voroshilov was given the honor of titular head of state. He was "recommended" to become Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Khrushchev was "to concentrate on his work in the Central Committee." Mikoyan took over as head of the new Ministry of Internal and External Trade. Saburov was relieved of his job as head of Gosplan and became the new Minister of Machine Building. Pervukhin became the chief of the new Ministry of Electric Power Stations and the Electrical Equipment Industry.

Thus Party and Government continued to be welded together at the top. Even at this early date, however, there was at least one visible flaw in this attempt at "monolithic unity": the peculiar shuffling of the Secretariat on 7 March suggested that the transition was experiencing difficulty.

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In the 20's, Stalin had been accorded the title of General Secretary of the Party, and from this position he had manipulated its apparatus to the point where it was completely under his control. He had then proceeded to eliminate his enemies, step by step, culminating in the dread purges of the 30's. It is perhaps small wonder that the Soviet leaders were sensitive over the Secretariat and who should lead and control it. The Orgburo had been dissolved and the day-to-day control of Party affairs, as well as the control of Party (and Government) personnel appointments, were recognized as the function of the Secretariat. Most observers had expected that Malenkov would be accorded Stalin's title as "General Secretary" but this was not the case. The new decree did not even mention Malenkov's name in connection with the Secretariat, nor did it mention the names of two other members -- Suslov and Aristov. The Secretariat was reshuffled as follows:

1. Pegov was removed from the Secretariat and appointed Secretary of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, where he replaced Gorkin, who became Deputy Secretary. This appeared to be a demotion for Pegov, an old apparatus functionary who had been chief of the Central Committee's light industry section. In June 1952, he had been identified [redacted]

[redacted] Pegov's career had been climaxed by his appointment to the Secretariat at the 19th Party Congress. [redacted] have taken the view that, like Voroshilov, Pegov was moved over as Secretary to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to help smooth the ratification of the reorganization decrees. Gorkin, whom Pegov replaced, was noted on the downgrade in October when he lost his membership on the Central Committee; he was, however, appointed a member of the Party's Auditing Commission.)

2. Ignatiev, Pospelov and Shatalin were elected Secretaries. This was very unusual: (a) Shatalin was not made a full member of the Central Committee in October, but was listed as an alternate. He had been elected to the Orgburo in March 1946, and had presumably been elevated, at that time, from alternate to full membership on the Central Committee. At any rate he was named only an alternate in October 1952. He had been identified [redacted] as Chief of the Planning, Financial and Trade Organs Department of the Central Committee. [redacted] he was a protege of Malenkov and had been personally chosen by him for service in the apparatus. Shatalin had served as

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Malenkov's deputy in the Cadres Department. Yet the record of the October Congress indicates that he was not regarded as too important at that time. (b) Pospelov, as mentioned previously, had been overlooked in the selection for the Party's Presidium in October, despite his seniority, ability and Party record. He suffered another setback in January when he was replaced as head of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute. [redacted]

[redacted] reports that Pospelov was closely linked with Molotov. There is circumstantial evidence to support this. Pospelov and Molotov were the only two to survive on the editorial staff of Bolshevik in 1934 when it was purged of Bukharin and all his supporters. (c) Ignatiev, as mentioned previously, had been MGB Minister prior to October. The new decree did not spell out Beria's deputy ministers, as it did in the case of most of the other ministers. It nevertheless appeared most probable that Ignatiev had left the MGB.

3. Khrushchev was relieved of his duties as First Secretary of the Moscow Committee of the Party, in order to "concentrate on his work in the Central Committee."

4. Ponomarenko and Ignatov were relieved of their duties as Secretaries and transferred "to leading work in the Council of Ministers."

5. Party "Secretary" Mikhailov was confirmed as First Secretary of the Moscow Committee, replacing Khrushchev in this post.

6. Brezhnev was relieved as Secretary and transferred to the post of head of the Political Department of the Navy.

Thus, of the nine Party Secretaries incumbent when Stalin died, the status of three -- Malenkov <sup>1/</sup>, Suslov and Aristov -- was undetermined; Khrushchev had apparently been upgraded, judging from the phraseology of the decree (quoted above); Pegov, Ponomarenko, Ignatov and Brezhnev were transferred to other duties; Mikhailov was still listed as a Secretary. In addition, three newcomers -- Ignatiev, Pospelov, and Shatalin -- had been added. Clearly the joint meeting which drew up the reorganization decree of 6 March had run into trouble when it came to the Secretariat and had been unable to make up its mind.

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<sup>1/</sup> Malenkov, however, was listed by Pravda as a secretary on 11 March.

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The Central Committee meeting on 14 March was to reduce the Secretariat still further, and eventually it was to become a four-man group. For the moment, however, there was uncertainty. The only things clear were that four of the Secretariat members had been transferred, three had been added and no successor for Stalin's position as First Secretary had been selected.

Returning to the decree itself, there were several other points worthy of note:

1. Top control of the Government was centered, at least formally, in Malenkov, as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and his four deputies. No other deputy chairmen were listed. The decree, however, indicated that two organs had existed in the former Council of Ministers -- a "Buro" and a "Presidium". Presumably the new Presidium was composed of most of the members of the old "Buro", while the old Presidium probably numbered among its ranks the remaining former deputy chairmen who were not in the old "Buro". How long these groups had existed is unknown. It was also revealed that an identical setup had existed in the Party's Presidium, i.e., that it had been composed of a "Buro", presumably including most of the members of the old Politburo, and a Presidium, probably composed of the new blood taken on in October. In effect, therefore, a previous centralization was publicly displayed for the first time.

2. Shvernik, whose replacement by Voroshilov as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was "recommended", was in turn "recommended" as chairman of the Council of Trade Unions, a position he had held in the past.<sup>1/</sup> V. V. Kuznetsov, the incumbent chief of the Trade Unions, was relieved and made a Deputy Foreign Minister, while Vyshinsky and Malik were named First Deputy Foreign Ministers under Molotov. Vyshinsky, in addition, was appointed permanent USSR delegate to the UN.

3. Marshals Vasilevsky and Zhukov were named as Bulganin's deputies in the War Ministry. Vasilevsky had been War Minister prior to Bulganin, while Zhukov had been in semi-obscurity since 1946, serving as a military district commandant. His return to this position had been ascribed to (a) a desire to restore this key general to an authoritative position in time of stress, (b) a plan on Malenkov's part to secure the support or at least the

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<sup>1/</sup> This play on words was necessary on legalistic grounds; the Supreme Soviet is supposed to choose the chairman of its own Presidium

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neutrality of the professional military, (c) the need for a counter to Bulganin,<sup>1/</sup> and (d) a desire to reduce the panic of the people.

4. I. G. Kabanov was appointed Mikoyan's First Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Domestic and Foreign Trade, and Kумыkin and Zhavoronkov, Deputies. The latter two had been the ministerial incumbents of the merged trade ministries. Kabanov had been identified as Chairman of Gosstab in January. His new job suggested that Mikoyan's ministry would take over some of Gosstab's functions.

5. No deputies were listed for Beria's Ministry of Interior, Saburov's Ministry of Machine Building, Malyshev's Ministry of Transport and Machine Building, or Pervukhin's Ministry of Electric Power Stations and Electrical Industry.

6. Kosyachenko became the new chief of Gosplan. A controversial figure, as recently as February 1952 he had recanted in Planned Economy for his support of Voznesensky's economic views. He had become a Deputy Chairman of Gosplan in November 1940 and was raised to First Deputy Chairman in May 1941 shortly after the Chairmanship passed to Saburov. He remained in this position when Voznesensky returned in 1943. He edited Planned Economy from at least March of 1945 until June of 1951. [REDACTED]

7. With regard to Party affairs, the decree also named four alternates to the Party Presidium -- Shvernik, Ponomarenko, Melnikov and Bagirov.

(a) Shvernik had been a perennial alternate before his elevation to the enlarged Presidium in October.

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<sup>1/</sup> Zhukov's relations with Bulganin are a matter of some interest but there is no firm evidence on this point. At one stage during World War II, Bulganin served as political commissar to Zhukov. This may have engendered some friction and there are several reports indicating that this was the case. Bulganin, of course, is strictly a political administrator.

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(b) Ponomarenko was at the same time relieved of his position on the Secretariat. Along with his running mate, Suslov, he had long been thought to rank just below the Politburo level. (Most observers associate Ponomarenko with Malenkov because of the fact that he became Minister of Procurement in 1950. [REDACTED])  
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(c) Melnikov, First Party Secretary in the Ukraine, had also been elevated to the Presidium in October. His retention as an alternate was viewed as a move to keep some regional Party representation on this body. He had served as Second Secretary to Khrushchev in the Ukraine from 1947 to 1949 and succeeded Khrushchev when the latter moved to his Secretariat assignment in Moscow in December 1949.

(d) Bagirov's appointment was unusual. A senior Party regional leader, he had been overlooked in the October promotions for some unknown reason. He now superseded twenty-two members of the October Presidium. He had worked with Beria in Transcaucasus security affairs and at one point had been Beria's superior. Yet his writings on Party affairs in the Transcaucasus had paid little lip service to Beria. While both Melnikov's and Bagirov's appointments were interpreted as a maneuver to retain some regional figures on the top Party organs, it soon became evident that both these men were to continue in their regional jobs and hence would not be physically present in Moscow most of the time.

#### STALIN'S FUNERAL - REACTION TO DEATH

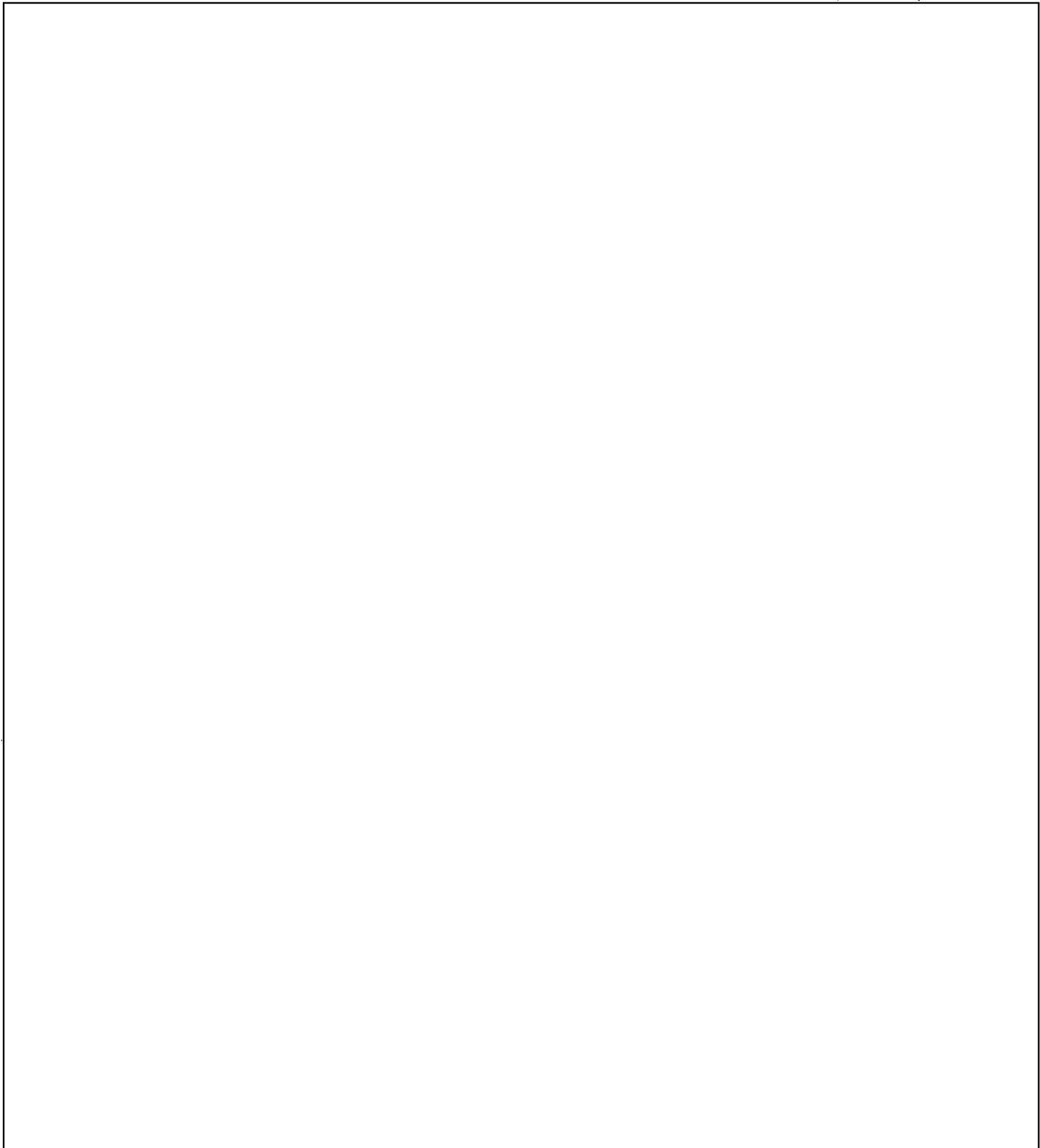
Following publication of the 6 March decree, attention was once more centered on Stalin's funeral, which was scheduled for the 9th of March. Presumably fear of disorder had been reflected in the swift moves of the Soviet leaders to set their house in order. Some part of this atmosphere had crept into the language of the decree itself which talked of "panic and disarray." 1/

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1/ On 1 April the US Naval Attache in Helsinki [REDACTED] [REDACTED] stating that when a Finnish Border Guard officer attempted to offer condolences on Stalin's death to a counterpart in the Porkkola Guard, the latter broke into tears and said they were all worried about their future and feared military purges in a struggle for power. Yet reports from Moscow indicated that in general the militia handled itself with normal effectiveness.

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Western press reporting from the Soviet capital drew attention to the vast wave of mourners who came to view Stalin. In contrast to this, the US Embassy in Moscow found little evidence of extreme grief in the capital over the death of Stalin. On 8 March it noted that the atmosphere in Moscow was calm, that markets were open and business was conducted as usual. The Embassy in fact reported that an American who had been in Moscow in 1945 recalled more evidence of grief over Roosevelt's death than there was over Stalin's.



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The official reaction of the European Satellites to Stalin's death was expressed in propaganda reaffirming unity and gratitude toward the USSR, and in increased internal security precautions. Reports of unusual security measures came from various sources -- in Czechoslovakia and Rumania from US officials; [redacted] in Bulgaria and Albania, Belgrade Radio broadcasts concerning them. Such a tightening of security is fairly standard practice on occasions which might elicit unexpected reactions from the public. In this case, non-Communist response to the news was generally a mixture of hope and despair, with optimism reportedly more prevalent in Poland.

It seems to be the consensus of most Western students of Soviet affairs and propaganda that the deification of Stalin was so all-pervasive in scope, so penetrating, as to have had a profound effect on the Russian people, particularly on the uneducated. Stalin was portrayed as a god, who of course could do no wrong. His goodness was unbounded. The bureaucratic level between Stalin and the people was blamed for anything reflecting negatively on Stalin's divinity. Between the lowly peasant and the great god Stalin, there was a vast middle ground wherein lay responsibility for all ills affecting the Soviet Union. Stalin prevented those ills from becoming worse and was responsible for all good in the USSR. No other Soviet leader had ever been allowed to achieve independent stature.<sup>1/</sup>

When Stalin died, therefore, it was necessary to fill the tremendous void with secondary figures. All of the important ones were apparently employed to fill the breach, at least as a holding operation, to calm the people and keep them under control until a more permanent setup could be worked out.

The Soviet leaders also began what in retrospect appears to have been a very clever and intelligently-conceived de-emphasis of Stalin, imperceptible at first but one which was eventually to make itself apparent to the entire world. A Western survey of Soviet propaganda

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<sup>1/</sup> In World War II, the pattern had been interrupted, but only briefly, by the attention given such men as Zhukov and Zhdanov.

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in the period following Stalin's death revealed that a two-week period of idolizing Stalin had been followed by an apparently deliberate de-emphasis, and concluded that the "progressively but still only partially eclipsed god-head is being replaced only by the impersonal concept of government and Party."

This change took the following forms: (a) avoiding or minimizing the use of Stalin's name in connection with his hitherto heavily publicized contributions to communism, such as the Soviet nationalities policy and the 1936 constitution; (b) utilizing quotations from Stalin without attributing them to him; (c) avoiding or minimizing the use of his name in connection with several measures apparently intended to woo Soviet public opinion -- the price reduction, the amnesty, the release of the accused doctor plotters, the Pravda answer to Eisenhower; (d) paying tribute to the Communist Party leadership rather than to Stalin as being responsible for victory in World War II (Bulganin's speech of 1 May); and (e) failing to award the annual Stalin prizes for literature and science.

The de-emphasis apparently moved from the Moscow center out to the provinces gradually. A Department of State survey was to conclude in May that Soviet propaganda media had achieved a basic uniformity in the treatment of Stalin. Both the central and provincial press continued to refer to him regularly, but not nearly as frequently as during his lifetime. References were always made with respect and admiration, however, and nothing suggestive of criticism of Stalin appeared. In many cases, Stalin was referred to jointly with Lenin.

Stalin lay in state for four days, the key Soviet leaders serving as honor guards. On the day of Stalin's funeral, the US Embassy commented that, considering the facilities available, the rites for Stalin were unspectacular. The embassy found particularly incongruous the fact that Stalin's body was placed in a narrow aisle on the side of Lenin's bier, and that it was poorly lighted. [redacted]

[redacted] commented that the decision to hold the burial only four days after Stalin's death, "contrary to conjecture and without allowing the public sufficient time to view the bier, is interpreted as meaning that the present high ranking officials do not eye favorably the continual demonstrations of affection accorded the former dictator by the people."

Of the three funeral speeches delivered by Malenkov, Beria and Molotov, only Molotov's was regarded as a real funeral oration by the American Embassy. The embassy noted that while Molotov's voice was shaken in delivery, Malenkov and Beria remained in complete con-

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trol of themselves. Malenkov and Beria devoted most of their attention to the future. Malenkov's speech was non-belligerent in tone, and in general indicated that the same policies would be carried on.

Beria's speech was in a similar vein, with the curious exception that it did not refer once to Stalin as Comrade Stalin, and that it rarely mentioned Stalin except in conjunction with Lenin's name. In addition Beria emphasized that the Party's policy would brook no interference, that the Party's organs had decided to continue national policy without interruption, and that one of the decisions taken in this connection was the appointment of Stalin's comrade-in-arms, Malenkov, as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.<sup>1/</sup>

All three speeches paid special deference to the Chinese,<sup>2/</sup> and in every reference to the Satellites, China came first. None of the speakers specifically mentioned the US, UK or the Western nations.

A close re-reading of all three speeches was to provide Western observers with much food for speculation, perhaps more valid than usual, since the speeches were delivered in a rather unique situation. For example, Malenkov, who had been placed at the top of the list of the new Party Presidium, did not once refer to the Central Committee; Beria, on the other hand, referred to it five times, suggesting that perhaps, in contrast to Malenkov, he was making a bid for its support. Beria, in a curious message, alluded to the Government's regard for the rights of its citizens. This was later to take on added significance.

#### THE ABORTIVE MALENKOV BUILD-UP

The funeral ceremony presented the Soviet leadership to the world as a triumvirate: Malenkov, evidently the primus inter pares; Beria, close behind and giving Malenkov a sort of half-hearted blessing; and Molotov, running a relatively poor third. A survey of

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<sup>1/</sup> Various observers differed in interpreting this passage in Beria's speech. Some thought it to be laudatory of Malenkov; others thought the praise extremely reserved, since Beria had said Malenkov's appointment was one of the most important decisions and that responsibility had now fallen on "leaders" trained by Stalin.

<sup>2/</sup> Chou En-lai was granted the unusual honor of marching third in Stalin's funeral procession.

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official comment in the Western world on the personal power relationships within the Soviet Union shortly after Stalin's death found general agreement that no single leader of sufficient stature was available to assume the position and role of Stalin. Most of the individual estimates concluded that political power would be distributed among several of the top Soviet leaders. There was some difference of opinion as to whether a harmonious relationship would prevail, and predictions varied as to the strength of the individual power positions.

Many Communist and non-Communist observers had predicted that Molotov would return to his old job as Chairman of the Council of Ministers and that Malenkov would become Party Chief and possibly inherit Stalin's title of General Secretary of the Party. There are, in addition, [REDACTED] reports indicating that various Communist leaders in Western Europe thought Molotov would become *Stalin's successor*.

Malenkov had already begun to capitalize on his position as apparent head of the triumvirate. On 5 March, the day after Stalin's death, Pravda singled out Malenkov for special attention by quoting from his speech to the Party Congress. This was the first reference to any individual leader, except to Stalin, since the Soviet Premier's illness had been announced. On 7, 8 and 9 March, Pravda again featured quotations from Malenkov's report to the Congress, beginning at this time to use the heavy black type previously reserved for quotations from Stalin. The 8 March issue also contained a picture of Malenkov delivering the Party Congress report in which Stalin was the only other person visible. On 9 March Pravda again gave Malenkov a heavy play and Izvestia printed a picture of Malenkov and Stalin taken on May Day 1952. On 10 March, Pravda and Izvestia both reported that Khrushchev had called on "Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, G. M. Malenkov", to speak, the first indication that he had remained on the Secretariat following the 6 March reorganization.

On 10 March Pravda printed the much-publicized picture of Stalin, Mao and Malenkov at the 1950 signing of the Sino-Soviet treaty. The picture had been retouched to place Malenkov next to Mao by eliminating three persons who had been standing between them. The picture also eliminated Molotov, who had been at Stalin's right hand, and Vyshinsky, who had been seated in front of Mao. The newspaper also published an article by Mao Tse-tung referring to the Central Committee and the Soviet Government headed by Comrade Malenkov.

Stalin had waited five years after the death of Lenin to usher in his own deification campaign in 1929; Malenkov made his bid even

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before Stalin's funeral. In the days immediately after the funeral, Malenkov's funeral speech was rebroadcast almost more times than Beria's and Molotov's together, and began to be referred to in editorials in the provincial press. This effort to build up Malenkov was also evident in Radio Kiev broadcasts on 11 and 12 March stating that the local city and oblast Soviets had enthusiastically dispatched letters of greeting to the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and the Secretary of the Party's Central Committee, Comrade Malenkov. An effort to model Malenkov after Stalin was also apparent in another Radio Kiev broadcast, which quoted the chief Ukrainian-language newspaper to the effect that "Comrade Malenkov made an oath on behalf of the Party over the coffin of Comrade Stalin to serve the people faithfully." Stalin had made a similar oath at Lenin's funeral.

The Malenkov buildup was short-lived, and in the ensuing days of March his prominence was sharply cut back. An outside observer, Solomon Schwartz, was to note that the buildup had cost Malenkov a great deal. Upon checking the Soviet press, he found that from the 11th of March to the end of the month, Pravda did not once quote Malenkov in its editorial articles and only infrequently (on the 11th, 12th, 18th, and 24th) made any reference to the funeral speeches of Malenkov, Beria and Molotov. He noted that "only in its editorial of 17 March, devoted to the Supreme Soviet session did Pravda refer to the speech of the new Chairman of the Council of Ministers, but in this case the editor hastened to underscore the confidence of the Soviet peoples in the 'Government headed by the faithful pupils and comrades-in-arms of great Stalin,' not by a pupil and a comrade-in-arms but by 'pupils and comrades'."

A Bulgarian Communist travelling in the West is alleged to have stated that following Stalin's death, the Bulgarian Government ordered substitution of Malenkov's portraits for Stalin's. Later the Soviet Embassy in Sofia ordered Malenkov's picture removed and replaced by Stalin's.

This initial buildup of Malenkov threw some Satellite and Communist publications off the track. Bertram Wolfe has pointed out that the April issue of the American Communist journal Political Affairs, which was prepared in early March, published Malenkov's funeral speech and not those of Beria and Molotov, and a lead article by William Z. Foster entitled "Malenkov at the Helm." However, in the May issue which was prepared in early April, Foster dealt with Stalin and co-existence, not even referring to Malenkov's remarks on this subject in his funeral oration.

On 12 March an article by Alexeyev in Izvestia, entitled "The Great Stalin is the Creator of our Five Year Plans," contained a

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substantial quotation from Beria and ended on the note that Party and State leadership was in the reliable hands of the Great Stalin's faithful "companions-in-arms."

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During the period from 14 to 16 March, articles by regional Party leaders Patolichev (Byelorussia) and Kalnberzin (Latvia), as well as by Party theoretician Chesnokov, made no mention of Malenkov, but stressed the leading role of the Central Committee. On 16 March Pravda referred to the leading role of the Central Committee. The same issue described the Big-Three -- Malenkov, Beria and Molotov -- as "faithful comrades-in-arms of Stalin."

There were some indications in the immediate period following Stalin's death that the Satellites were not clear on the leadership in the USSR, but leaned a little toward Malenkov. A survey of Satellite propaganda up to 15 May found that Malenkov, as well as other Soviet leaders, was mentioned only sparingly after Stalin's death. On the few occasions that Malenkov was mentioned, it was in connection either with his speech at Stalin's funeral or with his speech at the 19th Party Congress. Malenkov, however, was mentioned more than Beria and/or Molotov, and these latter two were not mentioned independently of Malenkov.

This braking of the Malenkov buildup was to be paralleled in the action taken by the Central Committee meeting of 14 March, an action that was not publicly revealed until six days later.

#### THE SECOND GOVERNMENTAL REORGANIZATION

Meanwhile the Supreme Soviet meeting scheduled for the 14th was postponed one day, obviously to allow the Central Committee meeting to take place. When it met, the Supreme Soviet approved with its customary unanimity the appointments of Malenkov as Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Voroshilov as Chairman of its own Presidium. In addition, it ratified a sweeping reorganization of the Government which went far beyond the changes proposed at the joint session on 6 March. By 15 March, it looked as though the earlier changes had lacked unity and had been hastily put together in a disorderly compromise arrived at under considerable pressure and tension during the days of Stalin's illness.

At the 15 March meeting, Khrushchev gave the nominating speech for Voroshilov as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Beria gave the nominating speech for Malenkov as Chairman of the Council of

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Ministers. [redacted]

[redacted] Mr. Beam, the Counsellor of the American Embassy in Moscow at the time, observed that of all the Soviet leaders, Molotov received the warmest applause.

Malenkov presented the composition of the new Government, stating that the measures for amalgamating the ministries were worked out over a long time during Stalin's lifetime and that their adoption had been "merely hastened." Some of the highlights of the additional reorganization measures follow:

1. The decree represented a sweeping reversal of the administrative policies followed since 1948. It reduced the number of Soviet ministries or organs of ministerial level from 57 to 27, placing control of this simplified structure in the hands of men who were for the most part experienced.

2. The Ministry of the Navy was merged with the War Ministry and became the Ministry of Defense, under Bulganin. (On 6 March Bulganin had received control of the Ministry of War only).

3. A. I. Kozlov received control of the newly-merged Ministry of Agriculture and Procurement, formed out of five related ministries. Kozlov's appointment was quite a surprise. He was a relatively young Party functionary who had been chief of the agricultural section of the Central Committee, and had been identified there as late as 14 March [redacted] Yet at the October Congress he had been made an alternate member of the Central Committee. In getting this position he moved ahead of two full members of the Central Committee, whose ministries were merged under his control. [redacted] the Council of Collective Farm Affairs under Andreev was later abolished, giving Kozlov complete control of agriculture.

4. P. K. Ponomarenko received control of the new Ministry of Culture. Ponomarenko, in addition to being a member of the Secretariat, had been Minister of Procurement since 1950. The 6 March decree had slated Ponomarenko for "leading work in the Council of Ministers," and Western observers thought that he might

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become a Deputy Chairman of that body or receive control of agriculture. His new Ministry of Culture was formed out of the Ministries of Higher Education, Cinematography and Labor Reserves, the Committee on Affairs of the Arts, the Radio Broadcasting Committee, and the Chief Administration of Printing, Publishing and Bookselling.

5. The State Committee of Material and Technical Supply of the National Economy (Gossnab) and the State Committee on Supply of Food and Industrial Goods (Gosprodsnab) were merged with the State Planning Committee (Gosplan). This gave Gosplan the supervision over allocations of materials, food and industrial products, thereby greatly increasing its importance. Kosyachenko, the new Gosplan chief appointed on 6 March, was not even a member of the Central Committee. At that time it was thought that Mikoyan's Ministry of Domestic and Foreign Trade would receive at least some of Gossnab's functions since its Chief, Kabanov, had become First Deputy Minister under Mikoyan.

6. Mikoyan, who on 6 March had been named Minister of Internal and External Trade, was appointed on 15 March a Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. His stature was thus increased in a curious way. Since Mikoyan was now the only Deputy Chairman, he occupied a niche by himself, presumably below the Presidium of the Council of Ministers composed of the five First Deputy Chairmen yet above the ordinary ministers comprising the full Council of Ministers.

7. N. G. Ignatov who, like Ponomarenko, had been marked for "leading work" in the Council of Ministers on 6 March, did not receive a ministerial assignment. His status was not determined until 2 April when Leningrad Pravda announced his selection as a Party Secretary in Leningrad.

8. The Supreme Soviet failed to ratify either the Fifth Five-Year Plan or the 1953 State Budget, both of which were already in effect, suggesting that a review of existing plans by the reorganized government was underway.

9. Malenkov, in submitting the nominations of the government appointments, referred to the principle of collective leadership. He stated that "the strength of our leadership rests in its collective, cohesive and moral-ethical nature. We regard strictist observance of this supreme principle as a guarantee of correct leadership of the country and a most important condition of our further successful progress along the path of building communism in our country." He said that the USSR would follow

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the policy elaborated by the Party, and that this policy had been stated by himself, Beria and Molotov at Stalin's funeral on 9 March. He elaborated further to say that there was no question that could not be "settled peacefully by mutual agreement of the interested countries. This applies to our relations with all states, including the United States of America."

10. V. V. Kuznetsov was released from his duties as a member of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet in connection with his appointment as USSR Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. On 10 March Kuznetsov had been assigned as Ambassador to Peiping. In contrast to previous Soviet practice, he evidently did not relinquish his title as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs upon receiving a diplomatic post in a foreign country. Malik, for example, who replaced Gromyko in London, was relieved of his title of First Deputy Foreign Minister upon receiving this assignment. (An exception to this is the USSR permanent ambassadorial post at the UN, which in recent years has been held by men of Deputy Foreign Minister rank. Vyshinsky, the present incumbent, is a First Deputy Minister).

11. A. A. Andreyev, the ex-Politburo member and ex-Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, was elected a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. (This automatically excluded him from any ministerial position; as mentioned above, [redacted] the Council of Collective Farm Affairs, which he headed, has been abolished). N. M. Shvernik, deposed as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, was nevertheless elected a member of that body.

The complete reorganization was presented to the Supreme Soviet in about an hour's time. It was revolutionary and hence bound to cause much confusion in the country as a whole. [redacted]

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In addition, [redacted] revealed at least one major reorganization not spelled out in the official decrees, which basically altered the structure of an important sector of Soviet society, the economic organs of the MVD. The foundation on which that structure had been built, the Chief Directorate of Camps of the MVD,

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was transferred to the Ministry of Justice, which thereby inherited control of the USSR's vast forced labor supply. Furthermore, the special Chief Directorates of Camps for Mining and Metallurgy of the Far Northern Construction (Dalstroy), and possibly the Chief Directorate of Special Non-Ferrous Metals, were shifted to the Ministry of Metallurgy. The Hydrological Projecting and Exploring Directorate was moved to the Ministry of Electrical Power Stations and Electrical Industry, and the Chief Directorate of Railroad Construction Camps of the MVD was transferred to the Ministry of Land Transportation.

In some cases the chiefs of these directorates as well as the personnel moved with them. [REDACTED]

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Curiously, this breakup of the self-sufficient MVD empire has not yet been revealed by [REDACTED] Soviet sources, although it was later reflected in the ramifications of the amnesty decree. Since the separations of the MGB from the MVD in 1943, the police functions of the MVD had all gradually been absorbed by the MGB, and the MVD's interest had become primarily an economic one. Now that the MVD was merged again with the MGB it was losing its economic role completely.

Interest in this development was heightened because of Beria's accession to control of the reorganized MVD. He had held sway over the economic functions of the MVD through his old deputy, Kruglov. These functions, incidentally, included a great deal of the construction work for the Soviet atomic energy program, which Beria administered. It seemed at first glance hard to believe that Beria would preside over the liquidation of his empire; possibly Beria had to sacrifice these economic functions in the give-and-take atmosphere preceding 6 March in order to regain control of the police, which had previously slipped from his grasp.

This atmosphere must have also affected another rival for power -- G. M. Malenkov.

As mentioned previously, a meeting of the Central Committee had been held on 14 March, resulting in a day's postponement of the Supreme Soviet meeting. Undoubtedly, it was called to work out the reorganization which Malenkov was to present to the Supreme Soviet. The results of this plenary session of the Central Committee, unlike those of the 15 March Supreme Soviet meeting, were not made public until 20 March,

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six days after the Central Committee meeting. The Soviet press then published a list of three decisions taken:

- (a) To accede to the request of Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, G. M. Malenkov, for his release from the duties of Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU.
- (b) To elect a Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU to consist of the following: Comrades N. S. Khrushchev, N. A. Suslov, P. N. Pospelov, N. N. Shatalin, S. D. Ignatiev.
- (c) In accordance with paragraph 32 of the Communist Party Statute, to transfer Comrade N. N. Shatalin from candidate to member of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

Thus a five-man Secretariat was named with Khrushchev listed first. Among other things, Suslov, who was not mentioned in the 6 March decree, was retained; Aristov, also unmentioned on 6 March, was dropped; Mikhailov, identified as being in the Secretariat on 6 March, was also dropped. The ranking of the three newcomers was reversed: on 6 March Ignatiev was listed first, then Pospelov, and Shatalin; on the 20th, Shatalin was listed first among the newcomers, followed by Pospelov and Ignatiev.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF REORGANIZATION OF PARTY SECRETARIAT

Malenkov thus abandoned direct control of the Party Secretariat -- something which Stalin in his lifetime had never done. Stalin had used the office of General Secretary to achieve absolute dictatorship. In later years he had delegated considerable authority to the ranking secretary, a position held by Malenkov at the time of Stalin's death.

The presumption of the authors of this paper has been that Stalin had allowed Malenkov's influence to grow, that Malenkov had achieved predominance by capably handling the intricate affairs of the apparatus in the name of Stalin, and that Malenkov's influence had become quite strong in the last two years of Stalin's life. Stalin, despite whatever infirmity may have gripped him, must have been aware of and allowed this personal rise to take place, a rise which culminated in Malenkov's leading role at the Party Congress. Stalin therefore appeared to approve of this Malenkov preeminence and had done nothing to stop it.

It is the author's contention that Stalin was unable to contemplate anyone succeeding him. Perhaps in the doctors' plot the evil genius of Stalin, as has been speculated earlier, was moving against

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all his enemies, and perhaps he had planned to use Malenkov for this purpose and then discard him. If this supposition is valid, it would appear to have been only a question of time before Stalin, realizing Malenkov's independent power position would have set about to destroy him.

At any rate Stalin's death prevented this, and left Malenkov with his power intact. This power evidently was not great enough, however, to withstand the pressure of the other Soviet leaders, who apparently moved at an early moment to restrict it. It appears reasonable to assume that Malenkov gave in to their pressure -- whether direct or indirect, spoken or unspoken -- and withdrew from the Secretariat. It is probably true that in so doing he immediately began to take steps to minimize the role of the Secretariat. There is some evidence that this has been the case. It is also probably true that the other Soviet leaders wholeheartedly approved of these attempts.

Malenkov's withdrawal, thus does appear to stand as a sign of weakness, a sign that he was not able at the outset to inherit all the trappings of Stalin's power. He appeared to have some supporters left in the Secretariat, and his influence and power would undoubtedly continue to be felt there. But this was not the same as being in it himself. Malenkov, the first ranking member of the Party Presidium, but not officially its Chairman, would still have to accede to the desires of others. Stalin also was never formally a "Chairman" of the Politburo, but he had certainly acted in this capacity and had done more than break tie votes. In Stalin's absence from the Politburo sessions before the war, reliable Soviet defectors have reported, Molotov chaired the meetings.

Krushchev's rise in the Secretariat, first indicated in the 6 March decree, was confirmed by this announcement. He was listed first in the rankings of the Secretariat, and hence took over the day-to-day control of party affairs previously performed by Malenkov.

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Much speculation immediately centered on the political orientation of Khrushchev and the other members of the Secretariat, especially their relations with Malenkov. As has been previously noted, Khrushchev and Suslov figure prominently in the vigilance campaign. While this was not unusual in light of their positions and the Party's role in the campaign, it did seem to align them in this instance with Malenkov. In addition their careers were not such as

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to indicate that they were anti-Malenkov. The biographical evidence on the men does not add much further in this respect.<sup>1/</sup>

Various biographic appraisals of Khrushchev lay stress on his ability to hew a center line, his opportunism and his blind obedience to Stalin; yet such appraisals are common to most Soviet leaders. Suslov's orientation had come in for a good deal of attention at the time he entered the Secretariat in 1947 when Zhdanov was in ascendancy. He remained prominent, however, after Zhdanov's death, suggesting that he had been able to overcome any stigma that may have been attached to him in this regard. His attack on Fedoseyev had also served to array him against Voznesensky, a Zhdanov adherent.

With regard to Ignatiev, the authors had previously assumed him to be a Malenkov man. The fact that he was listed after Shatalin and Pospelov, rather than before them as had been the case on 6 March, was perhaps an omen of his later downfall. Shatalin was only an alternate Central Committee member in October, possibly indicating a falling out with Malenkov. Pospelov, although an old time Bolshevik and Party theoretician, had declined in stature prior to Stalin's death. There is some indication that he is on close terms with Molotov.

The braking of the Malenkov propaganda buildup, and the withdrawal of Malenkov from the Secretariat, was to be followed in the ensuing months by stress on the collegial nature of the leadership; it is perhaps reasonable to assert that this concept received the Central Committee's formal support in its 14 March meeting. This stress on collegial leadership is best documented in Soviet and Satellite propaganda media of the period. The concept has also been used in several other contexts.

[redacted]

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<sup>1/</sup> As far as can be determined, the rumor that Khrushchev's sister or daughter was Malenkov's second wife is false.

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