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PURGE OF L. P. BERIA

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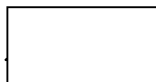
Central Intelligence Agency
Office of Current Intelligence
13 August 1954

MEMORANDUM

This paper is the tenth chapter of the CAESAR series, and is devoted to the purge in 1953 of the Soviet Minister of Internal Affairs, L. P. Beria. This paper, as all other chapters of the CAESAR series, is a working paper, intended to assemble pertinent information from all sources in a retrospective analysis of developments affecting the Soviet leadership. The reader is again reminded that the views expressed are those of the authors, and do not represent official views of the Central Intelligence Agency.

- i -

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THE BERIA PURGE

Table of Contents

	Page
Summary and Conclusions	iii
I. The Beria Purge.	1
Immediate Background	1
The Official Record.	1
Pravda's Amplification	2
Aftermath.	3
The Indictment of Beria.	4
The Trial Announcement	5
Review of Beria's Position in the Hierarchy.	6
The Arrest	8
Possible Military Involvement.	9
Examination of the Record.	9
The Official Communiques.	9
The Pravda Editorial.	10
The Indictment	13
The Party Indictment	15
Beria's Co-conspirators.	16
The Court's Findings	17
II. Some Consequences of Beria's Fall.	19
Personnel Changes in the MVD	19
Regional Changes in the MVD.	21
Personnel Shifts in the Party and Government	23
Regional Party and Government Shifts	26
Georgia	26
Azerbaijan.	28
Armenia	30
Rehabilitations.	30

THE BERIA PURGE

Summary and Conclusions

Beria's star, which had been declining since mid-1951, rose to an extraordinary height following Stalin's death. At that time he again took over the direct control of the USSR security forces and carried out a number of moves of the greatest importance. He attempted to purge the Soviet apparatus of those who had opposed him or had been used by others to oppose him. He appointed some trusted followers to positions in the MVD. He apparently initiated and promoted a de-Russification policy, and used this policy to oust some important local officials. He also carried through an extensive purge in Georgia and restored his followers to office in that republic. Beria thus appeared to be forging to the front in the leadership race.

Many of Beria's actions in this period appear to have been unilateral and as such to have threatened the method of leadership which had been established after Stalin's death. The presidium had been acting collectively and stressing the principle of collegiality since Stalin's death. This compulsion for collectivity apparently arose originally from the lack of any overwhelmingly strong individual heir apparent for the dictator's mantle and from distaste at the summit of the hierarchy for the consequences of a one-man rule of the Stalinist type.

Realizing that unquestioned supremacy for any one of their number would soon lead to the liquidation of at least some of the remainder as potential rivals, the ruling group apparently determined to prevent the assumption of Stalin's power by any one individual. It must have appeared to the other leaders that Beria was making his bid for this power; or possibly, someone was able to convince the others that this was so. The development which goaded the party presidium to act against him may have been his moving two MVD divisions into the Moscow area, an action that has been reported or rumored by at least four different sources. This move, if it occurred, was undoubtedly too much for Beria's fellow leaders to take even if they had previously agreed with some of the policies he had sponsored.

The charge that Beria had attempted to place the MVD above the party and government received primary attention in Soviet propaganda and contained elements of truth. The allegation that he had "impeded important decisions," particularly in agriculture, may date back to the agrogored controversy of 1950. The accusation that Beria attempted to undermine the friendship of the peoples of the USSR tends to confirm the view that he was behind the de-Russification policy, while the charge that he followed a "capitulatory" policy may also be a reflection on his "de-Russification" policy and on his much quoted statement on "the constitutional rights of Soviet citizens." The allegation that he "distorted" important party and government orders may have been connected with the implementation of the Soviet amnesty program.

Finally the charge that Beria attempted to weaken the defensive capacity of the USSR may have related to his previous responsibilities in the field of atomic energy.

All of Beria's co-defendants were either MVD officials or had worked previously with Beria in the security forces. Furthermore, Dekanozov and Meshyk were MVD ministers in important republics at the time of their arrest and had apparently carried through Beria-inspired purges in those republics. Merkulov had previously headed the MGB under Beria, had been in charge of the Chief Directorate of Soviet Property abroad, and since 1950 had headed the Ministry of State Control. Beria may have used Merkulov in this last named post to influence the Soviet economy.



As a consequence of Beria's purge, a number of personnel changes were made in the party and government apparatus. Beria had begun to restaff the central and republic MVD organizations with his followers shortly after he resumed direct control over the MVD in March 1953, but was not able to accomplish this in one sweep. On Beria's dismissal, a few of his MVD appointees, notably Meshyk and Dekanozov, were also removed from office. In most cases, however, replacements for Beria appointees were not made for several months, and virtually no effort was made to link those replaced with Beria. Some, in fact, continued to occupy important state and party positions in February 1954. Replacements for Beria's followers in the central and republic MVD organizations were drawn largely from old MVD officials who had served under the present MVD minister, S. N. Kruglov.

Party and government personnel shifts following Beria's ouster do not appear to have been extensive, except in Georgia. As in the MVD changes, the party and government shifts were carried out rather slowly and with little attempt to relate the changes to the Beria case. The purge of Arutunov in Armenia in December 1953 is the last important regional party purge which can be related to the Beria case.

The reticence over relating the regional purges to Beria may be part of a general policy of playing down the whole episode and confining the case to the MVD. Such a policy is also reflected in the official indictments and in propaganda treatment of the whole episode. Failure to play up the case and make a real propaganda scapegoat of Beria and his followers plus the limited nature of the post-Beria purge may be due to the continued presence within the hierarchy of important officials who had co-operated with Beria, particularly in the period between Stalin's death and his ouster.

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It may also be due to an understandable fear on the part of at least some of the collegial leaders that an extensive purge might jeopardize their power and their lives. However, the fact that the case has several loose ends makes its reopening a definite possibility should the Soviet leaders find it expedient as an adjunct to the implementation of their policies.

It is most probable, however, that, unless some other leader moves in the same direction as Beria and attempts to usurp power for himself, the episode is closed. The caution with which the purges in the MVD and the Transcaucasian area were carried out and the lack of publicity concerning them is consistent with the policies that have been developed since Stalin's death. Open terror and coercion have been played down in the Soviet press and the ubiquitous police power has been minimized. The concept of collective decisions has been expressed with the heaviest emphasis on the operation of this concept at local levels, and criticism from below has been stressed. An attempt to improve morale throughout the Soviet Union has been evident. All of these moves would have been jeopardized by purges of the scope of the 1930's, or purges that were highly publicized. The leaders clearly were against this. Their interest appears to have been to continue to rule collectively and to control the MVD so that it could never be used as an instrument to ensure the rule of one man. In this, they appear to have been successful.

- v -

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I. The Beria Purge

Immediate Background

On 27 June 1953, the presidium of the party, attending its first social function as a group, appeared at the Bolshoi theatre for a performance of the opera "The Decembrists." Missing from the ranks were Beria and alternate members Bagirov and Melnikov. Beria's absence was both significant and inexplicable. Earlier on the 27th, unusual military movements had been noted in Moscow; several dozen tanks and military vehicles arrived by rail and proceeded through the city to an unknown destination. Additional movements of military vehicles were observed during that night and these movements continued until 30 June. On 6 July, US ambassador Bohlen reported a Moscow rumor that Beria was in difficulty because of the security breakdown in East Germany where unprecedented riots had broken out on 17 June.

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On 4 July, an anonymous Pravda article had made some pointed remarks about party unity and discipline. Pravda claimed that "the party removes with determination any appearance of petit bourgeois individualism." It quoted Stalin as saying that the Russian Bolsheviks would have ruined the cause of the revolution "had they not known how to subordinate the will of individual comrades to the will of the majority, had they not known how to act collectively." Continuing in this vein the article said: "The person who lags behind in an ideological political respect is not able to understand correctly the internal and external situation and cannot fulfill the role of a political leader." On 7 July, an Izvestia editorial carried this theme further. Calling Stalin's Economic Problems of Socialism a striking example of a creative attitude and a "brilliant development" of Marxist theory, it stated: "A leader who neglects theory, who does not raise his ideological-political level ... inevitably lags behind life. He is unworthy of being a leader and life will sooner or later strike him off the list." On 10 July, Beria was "struck off the list."

The Official Record

TASS published on 10 July the texts of communiques on Beria's ouster issued by the central committee of the party and by the presidium of the Supreme Soviet:

The central committee communique--"After listening to and discussing the report of the presidium of the central committee by G. M. Malenkov as regards the criminal antiparty and antistate actions of L. P. Beria intended to undermine the Soviet state in the interest of foreign capital and

manifested in the perfidious attempts to place the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs above the government and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the plenum of the Soviet Communist Party central committee decided to remove L. P. Beria from the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party, and to expel him from the ranks of the party as an enemy of the Communist Party and the Soviet people."

The communique of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet--"In view of the fact that criminal antistate actions of L. P. Beria intended to undermine the Soviet state in the interest of foreign capital have been brought to light, the presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, having considered the report of the Council of Ministers of the USSR on this question, has decided: (1) to remove L. P. Beria from the post of 1st deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and from the post of minister of internal affairs of the USSR; (2) to refer the case of L. P. Beria's criminal actions for the consideration of the USSR Supreme Court. The presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet has appointed Sergei Nikiforovich Kruglov minister of internal affairs of the USSR."

Pravda's Amplification

The case against Beria was spelled out more fully in an accompanying Pravda editorial on the day the news broke. Pravda said that Beria's "criminal, antiparty and antistate activity was deeply concealed and masked, but lately, having become impudent and letting himself go, Beria started to disclose his real face." According to Pravda, the "intensification of Beria's criminal activities can be explained by the general intensification of the undermining, anti-Soviet activities of international reactionary forces which are hostile to our state." The editorial specifically accused Beria of the following:

1. "Attempting to put the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs before the party and the government, and, by using MVD organs in the center and local bodies against the party and its leadership, and against the government of the USSR, by selecting workers for the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs of personal loyalty to himself."

2. "Beria under various invented pretexts ... impeded decisions on most important and urgent items concerning agriculture. It was done with the view to undermining the collective farms and creating difficulties in the country's food supply."

3. He "strove to undermine the friendship of the Soviet peoples ... to disseminate hostility among the USSR peoples and to activize bourgeois-national elements in union republics."

4. "Being compelled to carry out direct orders of the party central committee and the Soviet government regarding the strengthening of the Soviet legislation and liquidation of some facts of lawlessness and arbitrary action, Beria intentionally impeded the implementation of these orders, and in several cases attempted to distort them."

5. "He hatched plans to grab the leadership of the party and country with the aim of actually destroying the Communist Party and of changing the policy elaborated by the party by a capitulatory policy which would have brought about ultimately the restoration of capitalism."

Pravda said that the necessary conclusion to be drawn from the case was that "the strength of our leadership lies in its collectivity" fully corresponding to the statements of Marx "on the harm of the cult of personality." The paper added that party organizations must systematically check the work of all organizations and of all leading workers, particularly the activities of the MVD, and that this was not a right but a duty.

Aftermath

This bombshell of 10 July which blasted out of the party's ranks its second most important figure was followed by a series of meetings all over the USSR staged to demonstrate loyalty to the regime and to excoriate Beria. Perhaps the most interesting of these was that held by the "aktiv" of the Ministry of Defense on 16 July when the prominent military men in the USSR, less Vasilevsky and Konev, pledged allegiance to the "collegial" leadership. References to meetings supporting the leadership subsided after a few days as did references to the case in Soviet propaganda media. This blackout gave rise to rumors in the West that Beria had escaped his tormentors and was seeking sanctuary.^{1/} The next official word on the case came on 8 August when the Supreme Soviet, meeting after an unexplained postponement of eight days, confirmed the earlier decree of its presidium removing Beria from his government post and revealed that the said decree had been dated 26 June, thus fixing the timing of Beria's arrest as

^{1/} These rumors were given some credence by journalists because nowhere in the early official texts was it ever stated that Beria had been arrested. The announcement of the results of Beria's trial published on 24 December stated that the accused had again admitted their guilt "in court" and that the sentence--death by shooting--had been carried out on 23 December. However, as in the case of Stalin's death, we are completely dependent on official Soviet sources for this information.

occurring on or about that date. Again, a long blackout ensued until 16 December, when it was officially announced that the Prosecutor's office had completed its case against Beria.

The Indictment of Beria

The prosecutor's statement of 16 December alleged that the following had been established:

1. Beria had collected a group of plotters and the group had aimed to use the MVD against the government and party in the "interest of foreign capital," striving to place the MVD above the party and government, to grab power, liquidate the regime, restore capitalism and revive domination of the bourgeoisie. After Stalin's death Beria intensified his criminal actions "primarily by using MVD organs for the seizure of power, which made it possible in a short period of time to lay bare the true face of the traitor of the motherland and to take decisive measures to put an end to his hostile activity." The plotters "subjected to persecution ... honest workers of the MVD who had refused to carry out the criminal instruction of Beria."

2. "In order to subvert the collective farm system and to create food difficulties ... Beria by all manner of means, sabotaged and interfered with the implementation of most important measures ... directed toward an upsurge of the economy of collective and state farms and toward a steady improvement of the well being of the people."

3. "Beria and his accomplices carried out criminal measures in order to resuscitate remnants of the bourgeois nationalist elements in Union Republics, sow hatred and discord among the people of the USSR and primarily to undermine the friendship of the peoples of the USSR with the Great Russian people."

4. Beria had established contact through "planted spies" and through secret contact with counterrevolutionary Georgian mensheviks and "agents of a number of foreign intelligence agencies."

5. Beria had made his career by "slander, intrigues and various provocations against honest party and local government workers who stood in his path"--a whole series of such "machinations" were uncovered; for example, Beria had waged a criminal campaign against Sergo Ordzhonikidze, who had distrusted Beria. The plotters also murdered people from whom they feared exposure; for example, M. S. Kedrov. Other facts relating to terrorist murders were also uncovered.

6. "As established by the investigation Beria and his accomplices committed a number of treacherous acts, endeavoring to weaken the defensive capacity of the Soviet Union."

7. Other crimes committed by Beria were also uncovered, testifying "to his profound moral depravity" and in addition facts regarding "criminal mercenary actions" were also established.

Having been exposed by "numerous witnesses" and "true documentary data the accused admitted their guilt of having committed a number of most serious state crimes." They were charged with high treason and tried according to the law of 1 December 1934.^{1/} The accused, besides Beria, were: Merkulov, minister of state control; Dekanozov, MVD minister in Georgia; Kobulov, deputy minister of MVD; Goglidze, chief of one of the MVD departments; Meshik, MVD minister in the Ukraine; and Vlodzimirski, chief of the MVD Department of Special Investigations.

The Trial Announcement

On 24 December the Moscow press published the findings of the Supreme Court, its sentence and the notice of execution of Beria and his six co-defendants. The special session of the court was chaired by Marshal Konev and included the following members: Shvernik, alternate presidium member and trade union chairman; Zeyin, first deputy chairman of the Supreme Court; General Moskalenko, commander of the Moscow Military District and

^{1/} See footnote 1, page 3 to the effect that the Beria group had been "in court" at the time of their trial. The law of 1 December 1934 (promulgated immediately after Kirov's assassination) provides that "cases must be heard without participation of the parties." This has been interpreted by legal experts to mean that neither the defendants nor their counsels can participate in court during consideration of the case, and thus leaves inexplicable the reference to a further admission of guilt by Beria and his cohorts in court.

It should be noted that in the Soviet Union it is extremely rare that laws are publicly ignored or tampered with. It is possible that this provision of the law was ignored so as to make it clear that Beria agreed that his guilt was absolute and concurred in the sentence, since, under present conditions, the new leadership apparently wished to avoid a public trial comparable to those of the 30's in which this could have been brought out.

The law also provides that investigation of such cases must be terminated during a period of not more than ten days; that appeals against the sentence and petitions for pardons are not to be admitted; and that sentence of death is mandatory and must be carried out immediately. These provisions appear to have been carried out to the letter as well as in the spirit of the law.

garrison; Mikhailov, secretary of the Moscow oblast committee; Kushava, chairman of the Georgian trade unions; Gromov, chairman of the Moscow court; and Lunev, first deputy minister of the MVD. The court confirmed the evidence of the preliminary investigations and the accusations laid down in the prosecutor's indictment. The court established that Beria:

1. "acting in the interest of foreign capital ... set up a treacherous group of conspirators." They intended to use the organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs against the Communist Party and government, to place the MVD above the party and government in order to seize power, restore capitalism and restore the control of the bourgeoisie.

2. The beginning of the treasonable activity occurred in 1919 and lasted up until Beria's arrest. After Stalin's death, these activities were intensified, bringing about the exposure. After Beria became MVD minister he promoted his conspirators in the movement and persecuted honest workers.

3. The group carried out a number of criminal measures "to activize remnants of bourgeois nationalist elements in the union republics to sow hostility between the peoples of the USSR."

4. Beria, "with the aim of creating food difficulties ... sabotaged and hindered the carrying out of the most important measures on the part of the government that were directed toward the raising of the economy of the collective and state farms."

5. "Beria and his accomplices committed terrorist acts against the people whom they feared would expose them"; "the crimes committed by L. P. Beria that testified to his deep moral corruption" were also established.

The guilt of the accused was "fully proved in court by genuine documentary data, personal notes of the accused and evidence of numerous witnesses." The accused were sentenced to "the highest measure of criminal punishment--shooting--with confiscation of their personal property and with the stripping of all their military titles and rewards. The sentence is final and there is no appeal. The sentence has been carried out."

Review of Beria's Position in the Hierarchy

What can be said of this official record of Beria's purge? Before such an examination, it may be worth while briefly to consider again Beria's position in the hierarchy prior to Stalin's death.

The replacement of MGB Minister Abakumov by party official S. D. Ignatiev in August 1951 was taken as a sign that Beria's power was

slipping, particularly since it was followed by the ouster of at least eight and possibly eleven republic MGB officials. Another suggestion along this line occurred in September 1952 when Kochlavashvili, a newly appointed Georgian MGB minister, publicly criticized that ministry's operations and claimed it needed more party control. Then, at the party congress in October 1952 and later at the 7 November anniversary celebrations, there were slight hints that Beria's star was dimmer in the fact that his relative ranking had dropped. The "doctors' plot", publicized in January 1953, added further fuel to this argument.

Stalin's death, however, abruptly reversed this decline of Beria, and he shot up to new heights by becoming second only to Malenkov. He also regained control of the MGB, which was merged with the MVD, under Beria as minister. Ex-MGB chief Ignatiev, the interloper, joined the party secretariat for a brief period but fell into disgrace in April when the doctors' plot was reversed.

The reversal is believed to have been instigated by Beria. There were at least two other developments in the period following Stalin's death that also appeared to be Beria-instigated. The first was the movement of some long-time associates of Beria back into key MVD positions, and the second was a de-Russification policy which had as its offshoot the removal of some outspoken supporters of Stalin's nationality policy such as Melnikov in the Ukraine. A new housecleaning was accomplished in Georgia, and, though leaving a few loose ends, it clearly proclaimed that Beria was the man running that particular political machine. These developments marked Beria as a powerful figure in the hierarchy,^{1/} and suggested that he had probably been in agreement with, if not the primary sponsor of, the "new look." From all outward appearances, therefore, Beria was at the height of his power on 27 June when he did not show up

^{1/} [] reported that while in Warsaw a few weeks after Stalin's death, he met a party member fresh from a provincial party meeting who related that a "big" official told the meeting that the political unrest in Moscow would be over very soon and that "Mr. Malenkov will be replaced by Mr. Beria who is very strong, very intelligent. Mr. Beria will be the dictator and a very fine ruler."

at the opera party. His was no gradual decline, but a precipitous one.^{1/}

The Arrest

The pressing questions among Western observers at the time of Beria's arrest were: how was it actually brought about and how could the arch-conspirator have failed to know about the plot against him? Little evidence has been unearthed on this point. However, Beria was neither omniscient nor all powerful. Other security chiefs had been purged before him, although they admittedly did not rank so high in the Soviet hierarchy at the time of their disgrace. He was at the height of his power and possibly less wary than usual. Beria's ranking associate was named as his successor and may well have had a part in his detention. This, too, is not unusual in Soviet history.

The logic of the situation would seem to point to an "inside job" rather than a pitched battle, and the arrest probably took place before 26 June. This timing is arrived at by noting that the Supreme Soviet meeting in August which confirmed the decree of its own presidium regarding Beria reported that the subject decree had been dated 26 June. How long before 26 June the event occurred is not known.

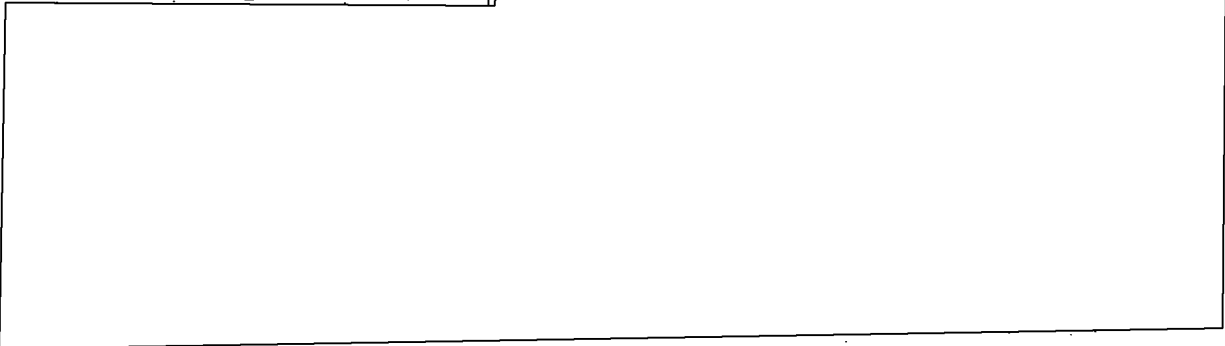
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Some propaganda after the public announcement of Beria's ouster associated his "becoming impudent" with the "imperialist adventures" in Berlin and Korea, which would place the crisis some time after 17 June.

^{1/} One flaw mars this picture. After the formation of the new MVD under Beria, some of the economic functions which had been the primary mission of the old MVD passed to the corresponding government ministries handling these problems. Even slave labor control appears to have been taken away from the MVD and given to the Ministry of Justice.

The reason for this action is not clear and there appear to be only two possible explanations: either Beria deliberately acceded to the breaking up of his empire in a bid to shake off the dread stigma of "policeman" attached to his name, a bid also manifested in the doctors' plot reversal and the nationalities policy, or this economic empire was being taken from him in the give-and-take atmosphere attendant on the division of spoils following Stalin's death.

Possible Military Involvement

More important than the establishment of the precise time that Beria was cut down is the determination of the reason behind the action at such a crucial period in Soviet history when the party was still reeling from the departure of Stalin. On this point there is rather curious and somewhat surprising information.



The actual details of Beria's arrest and whether or not this show of force actually occurred may never be known. It therefore seems particularly advisable to review in detail the official Soviet record of Beria's perfidy in a search for clues as to the meaning and significance of the purge.

Examination of the Record

The Official Communiques: The communique of the central committee issued on 10 July said that it had been decided to expel Beria from the party as an enemy of the party and of the people after listening to and discussing the report of its presidium given by Malenkov. The report said that Beria's nefarious activities in the interest of "foreign capital" were manifested in his attempts to place the MVD above the government and the party. The communique of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet said that in view of the fact that traitorous actions of Beria had been brought to light, it was decided to relieve him of his government posts, refer his case to the Supreme Court and appoint Kruglov as MVD minister.

The central committee communique thus indicated that the primary charge being levied against Beria, at least for public consumption, was

this alleged attempt to place the MVD above the party and the government.^{1/}

The fact that Malenkov presented this case to the central committee was not unusual. As the ranking presidium member he was the logical candidate to defend the party and the government. The fact that Beria was acting so "wickedly" in the interest of "foreign capital" was also a standard and a necessary insertion; since he was not conducting himself in the interests of the party, he had to be conducting himself in the interests of its enemies.

With respect to the communique of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the important thing was that S. N. Kruglov was named Beria's successor. The choice was a curious one,^{2/} implying that he had conspired against Beria. Two reasons have been advanced in explanation of this appointment: (a) with Kruglov at the helm, at least temporarily, the MVD careerist security elements would probably raise little opposition to Beria's ouster and might even imagine that individually they could ride out the storm; (b) Kruglov was acceptable to the majority of the collegial leadership as a neutral official who was not predisposed to assist one of their number to become another Stalin.

The Pravda Editorial: The Pravda editorial accompanying the communique provided interesting additional details. Although Beria's criminal activity had been "deeply concealed," after Stalin's death he became "impudent" and started to disclose his real face by "letting himself go." This would accord with rumors reported in the press that Beria had been preparing a coup. The phraseology gives one the impression that the Soviet leaders at Stalin's death had picked up one end of a rope, had given the other end to Beria and had played out enough length for Beria to hang himself. The charge of placing the MVD above the party and

^{1/} This charge remained paramount throughout all the official Soviet statements on the case, and may have had some factual basis. For example, in the period following Beria's arrest, newspapers in Azerbaijan contained numerous references to party-MVD rivalry in that republic, and it appeared that numerous MVD officials had "broken loose" from party supervision and either ignored or overridden party decisions in many instances.

^{2/} Kruglov is known to have occupied a high post in the MVD after Beria became minister. [redacted]

government was clarified somewhat by the statement that Beria had attempted to select MVD workers "of personal loyalty to himself." Beria actually had not brought any new personnel into the apparatus. He had, however, reinstated and promoted some old officials like Dekanozov who had fallen into disfavor, presumably without clearing it with the party. It must have been obvious to the other Soviet leaders at the time of Beria's appointment as minister that he would return some of his former lieutenants to power.

The second charge levied against Beria by Pravda was that he had impeded (past tense) decisions on important items concerning agriculture in order to undermine the collective farms and create difficulties in the country's food supply. This charge served as a forerunner for the startling admissions about agricultural failures that Khrushchev was to make in September 1953. Yet strangely this sin of Beria's was not pressed too strongly in propaganda and not referred to by Khrushchev in his unusual agricultural report to the central committee. Perhaps the reason for overlooking this ripe propaganda plum was the controversial nature of agricultural policy itself. Beria had never directly taken a public position on this policy as had, for example, his fellow politburo members Andreev and Khrushchev. It has been speculated earlier that Beria's side in this dispute, the anti-Khrushchev side, was made known through his two Transcaucasus satraps, Bagirov and Arutinov, and that it was Beria who caused the abandonment of Khrushchev's radical agrogorod policy in 1950.^{1/} This speculation received some credence when both Arutinov and Bagirov were deposed following Beria's arrest.

Beria was also accused of undermining the friendship of the peoples of the USSR, disseminating hostility among them and activating bourgeois nationalist elements. This appeared to confirm suspicions that Beria had been behind the new nationalities line evident in the USSR since Stalin's death, a line which was sharply curtailed following his arrest. It raised the unanswerable question of Beria's motivation in this regard. Although a Mingrelian (Georgian) himself, it seems doubtful to the authors that Beria had any particular concern about the inequities of Great Russian chauvinism. Conceivably, his experience in security matters may have convinced him of the impracticality of such a policy.

^{1/} There is no known basis for press reports that the Machine Tractor stations had "been turned into bases for the secret police and a weapon of political power."

Another and stronger possibility is that Beria, by becoming identified with a policy of this sort, may have hoped to build up wider support in non-Russian republics and areas and to pose as a liberal humanitarian rather than a hard-hearted security officer.^{1/}

The Pravda editorial then raised a point which was never again to be reiterated--that Beria intentionally impeded and in some cases "distorted" orders regarding strengthening Soviet legislation and "liquidation of some facts of lawlessness and arbitrary action." While it is perhaps unnecessary to comment on the legitimacy of such a charge, it is nevertheless conceivable that it was directly connected with the case. It is known, for example, [redacted] that there was a rather noticeable upsurge in crime, particularly in the Moscow area, following the amnesty of 27 March. This amnesty [redacted] resulted in the release of criminal elements in the camps and did not appreciably affect political prisoners. There was also a report [redacted] which said that prior to the arrest of Beria there had been some relaxation of coast guard patrols along the shore. Individuals were allowed access to the beach without special document checks and it was rumored that "one could fish where one liked." After Beria's removal, however, the security measures in the area reverted to their former standards. These examples are cited not as proof that Beria was encouraging illegality, which would be a rather foolhardy move on his part, but as possible support for the thesis that his co-leaders were using the damaging effects of his "capitulatory" policy to round out the case against him.

Pravda lastly accused Beria of attempting to grab the leadership of the party in order to destroy it, change its policy into a "capitulatory" one and bring about the restoration of capitalism. It must be borne in mind of course that when a decision to purge a key official is taken in the USSR, that official is usually found guilty of every crime in the book. Nevertheless, some of these charges had a ring of truth

in them. This "capitulatory" policy idea must have been a delicate one

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Pravda concluded its case against Beria by stressing the necessity for collective leadership and pointing out that it was not a right but a duty for party workers to check the actions of the MVD.

The Indictment

The indictment of Beria, which was not published until 16 December, five months after his arrest, named six co-conspirators who had plotted with him through the years. It repeated most of the charges made in the original Pravda article with two noticeable exceptions, and it added several more. The two charges dropped were those dealing with Beria's failure to carry out orders to liquidate lawlessness and his pursuit of a "capitulatory policy."

The first additional charge was that Beria had started his nefarious career as early as 1919 when he was engaged in undercover work in Georgia. In 1920 he was said to have established contact with the Menshevik secret police in Georgia who were allegedly in league with British intelligence. This accusation involved some rewriting of history, because Beria had been officially praised for his great success in carrying out the orders of the central committee in that area. This particular charge was the only one that impinged on any of the other Soviet leaders in a direct manner. For example, A. I. Mikoyan's career had closely paralleled that of Beria in 1919 and 1920, both having been engaged in the same work in the same area for the party. Both had been captured and had spent time in Georgian jails.^{1/}

Another new charge was that Beria had intrigued against various "honest" party workers such as Ordzhonikidze who had stood in his way. Ordzhonikidze was thus being held up to those who might be tinged with

^{1/} It is obvious, however, that any of the Soviet leaders could be tied to Beria's clique of conspirators if there had been any desire to do so. All of them had worked closely with Beria. To take one example, Malenkov had been nominated for the premiership by Beria slightly over three months prior to his arrest.

"bourgeois nationalism" in Georgia, as an example of a good Bolshevik. ^{1/} Ordzhonikidze may well have died an unnatural death. Kravchenko claimed, "That he died by violence, that his end was not natural, my sources have not the slightest doubt." ^{2/}

Of perhaps even more importance in this additional charge was the allegation that the plotters had actually murdered people from whom they feared exposure. "Terrorist" murder seems to be a common thread running through the great purge trials. This accusation against Beria implicitly drew attention to other so-called "murders" in recent Soviet history, particularly those of Zhdanov and Shcherbakov. Their actual instigators, unlike those of Kirov, for example, had not been brought to trial. Only the "intermediaries" and their hirelings the "doctor-wreckers" had suffered. The "doctors' plot" reversal set the accused free and it was a reversal in which Beria is believed to have had a direct hand. The charge that Beria had actually murdered to achieve his ends raised the possibility that it someday might be alleged that Stalin himself had fallen victim to Beria. Such a charge, it must be said, has indeed never been hinted, but it is one that could be formulated without difficulty if a future need should arise. In this connection it should be noted that the indictment is open-ended enough to provide for the "discovery" of more conspirators if necessary.

A third new element which appeared in the indictment was that Beria had "committed a number of treacherous acts, endeavoring to weaken the defensive capacity of the Soviet Union." It is difficult to determine whether this was merely a way of rephrasing the other charges or whether it was designed to cover another area of crime. It may be that Beria

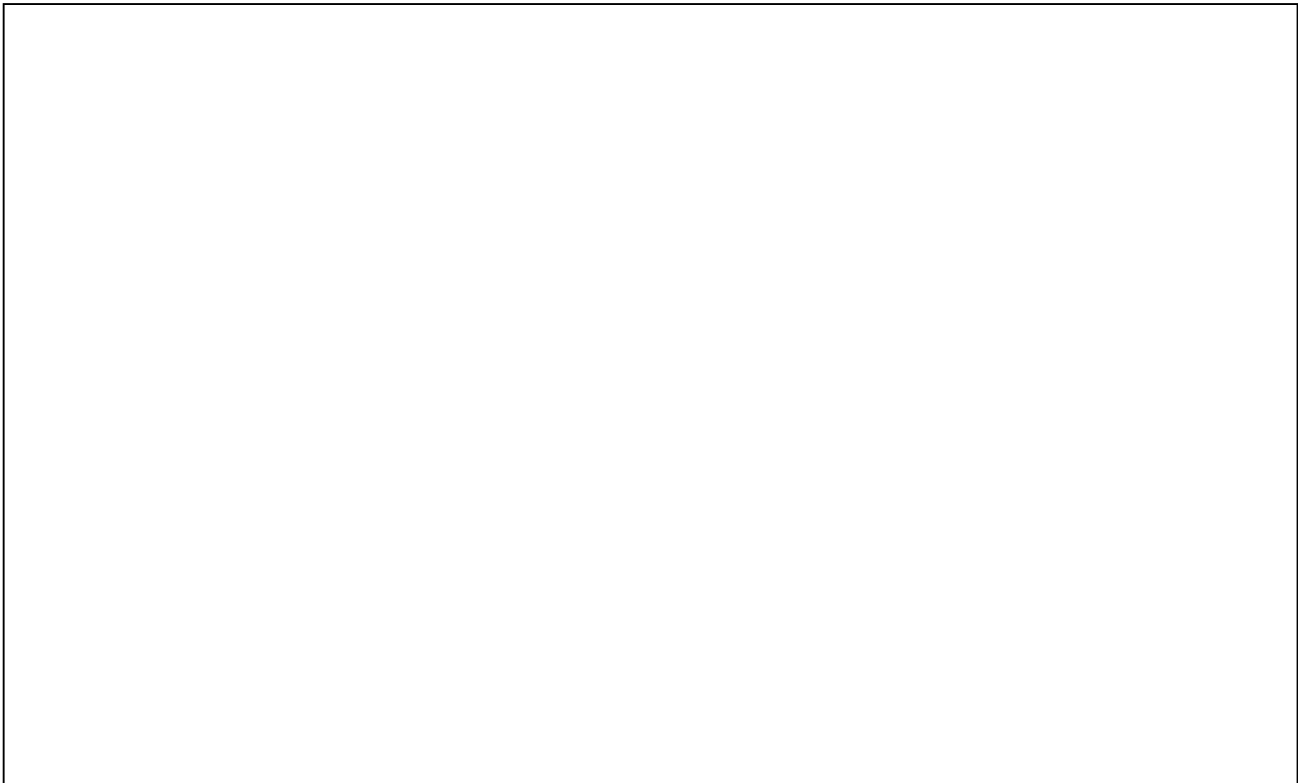
^{1/} Pravda on the 30th anniversary of Ordzhonikidze's death in February 1950 quoted him as saying that the "party attitude" is the main thing. "He who is distracted from this path with perish ... the party attitude comes first and foremost." A further posthumous honor was paid to Ordzhonikidze in early 1954, when a town at the northern end of the Caucasian military highway was renamed for him. The town had previously borne his name from 1932 to 1944.

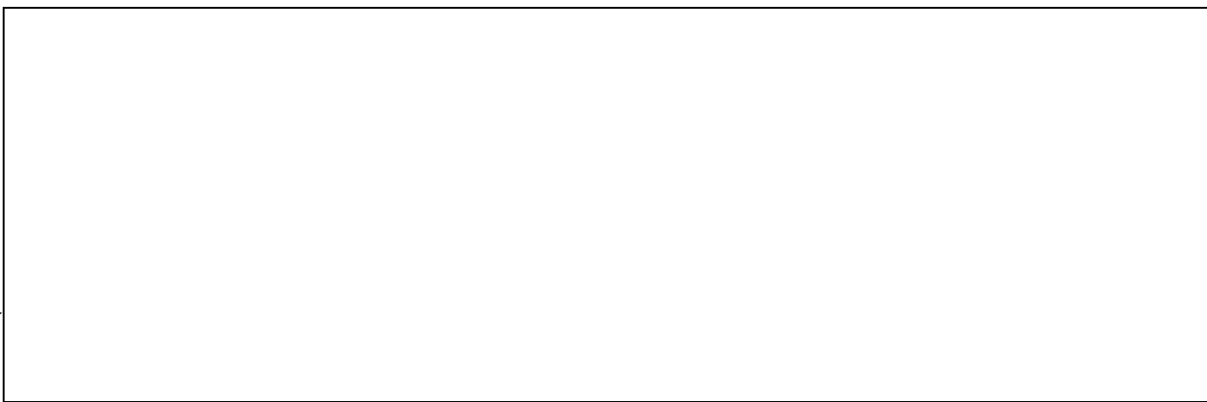
^{2/} This, incidentally, was not the first time that Ordzhonikidze's name had cropped up in a purge trial. One of the accused members of the "anti-Soviet Trotskyite Center," the chauffeur Arnold, testified that he had been commissioned to kill Ordzhonikidze in an automobile wreck, but did not have the courage to go through with it.

manipulated his control of the atomic energy program for his own advantage and may have differed with other Soviet leaders on the program. Ironically enough, less than two months after his arrest, Malenkov declared that the US "hydrogen monopoly" no longer existed, and on 12 August the Soviet test of a thermonuclear device occurred. Beria was thus ill rewarded for his efforts. His detention meant that someone else would have to be called in to head this program; that individual has yet to be identified. There is some evidence to suggest that the military has a larger role in the program than previously, but this is by no means firm. There have also been persistent rumors that the Ministry of Medium Machine Building, which was formed on the same day that the Supreme Soviet passed its decree regarding Beria's arrest, and is now under Malyshev, has taken over the problem.

The indictment, in conclusion, lumped one final set of charges together, presumably to take care of anything that might have been overlooked. It alleged that "other" crimes of Beria were uncovered, testifying to his "profound moral depravity," and in addition facts regarding his "criminal mercenary action" were established. The accused were said "to have admitted their guilt of having committed a number of most serious state crimes."

The Party Indictment



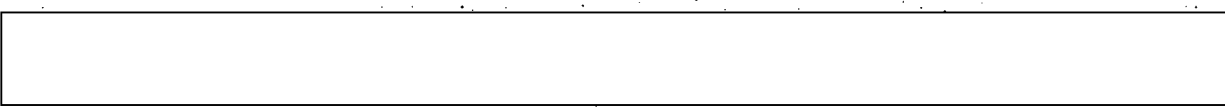


In short, the party indictment differed from the published indictment only in providing more details rather than in developing any new charges.

Beria's Co-conspirators

A word is necessary here about those accused with Beria. All were former security officials. Meshik, as MVD minister in the Ukraine, was probably involved in the post-Stalin purges there, including that of Melnikov. The same can be said of Dekanozov, who presumably carried out the spring housecleaning operation in Georgia. Merkulov had not been directly connected with the MGB since June 1946, at which time Abakumov relieved him as MGB minister. He had been minister of state control since October 1950 and had been confirmed in that post by the March 1953 Supreme Soviet meeting which ratified the post-Stalin government organization.^{2/}

Merkulov, Dekanozov, Kobulov, and Vlodzimirsky were all key figures in the postwar Chief Directorate of Soviet Property Abroad (SUSIMZ) which played an important role in implementing Soviet economic policy in the Satellites. This Chief Directorate was peopled with security personnel.



^{2/} Further research is needed on the job of the minister of state control, particularly during Merkulov's tenure. The official Soviet announcement stated that Merkulov had been relieved of his appointment on 17 September. [redacted]



Although nominally attached to the Council of Ministers, its personnel were presumably close to Beria and possibly subject to his personal direction. The linking of these four men with Beria suggested that the bugaboo of Soviet policy toward Germany was being raised and that Beria's role in this policy, particularly with respect to GUSIMZ, was being attacked.^{1/}

It will also be recalled that Dekanozov had been ambassador to Germany at the time of the Soviet attack and had later reached the level of deputy foreign minister.^{2/} With respect to Vlodzimirsky, the fact that he was called "the former head of the Investigation Department for particularly important matters" suggested that he had been the "Ryumin" of the doctors' plot reversal and provided yet another indication that Beria had been responsible for this action. Lastly, the fact that only these six of Beria's associates were selected to stand trial with him bore out other indications that the main target in the purge was the MVD and control of this organization.

The Court's Findings

On 24 December the press published the findings of the Supreme Court, its sentence, and the notice of Beria's execution all at the same time. The guilt of the accused had been "fully proved." They had been sentenced

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- ^{1/} Research is also needed on the role and function of GUSIMZ. There were numerous rumors and reports that Beria supported the so-called "soft" policy toward Germany and/or that he was held responsible for the security debacle which followed the institution of this policy. We have been unable to shed any light on these rumors except to point to previous reports regarding the dispute over the postwar dismantling policy in Germany reportedly supported by Malenkov and reportedly opposed by Mikoyan, Kaganovich and Beria, inter alia.
- ^{2/} Dekanozov was also a key figure in the contacts which the USSR is reported to have attempted with the Germans in 1942-3. According to these reports, the USSR made contact with the chief of the Ostland Branch in the Main Political Directorate of the German Ostministerium, in an effort to arrange meetings between German and Soviet officials in Sweden. One of the Soviet officials was to be Deputy Foreign Minister Dekanozov, and the object of this meeting was said to be the arranging of a separate peace between Germany and the USSR. There were other reports from Georgian refugees to the effect that Beria and other Georgian leaders sent a representative to Berlin in 1943 to approach Hitler about the possible creation of an independent state of Georgia.

to death and their execution had been carried out. While the court allegedly confirmed all the accusations of the prosecutor's indictment,^{1/} the one charging Beria with weakening the defenses of the USSR was not reiterated in the release of the court's findings, as were all the others.

The selection of Marshal of the Soviet Union Konev as chairman of the special session of the Supreme Court which conducted the trial and passed sentence was partially explained by reason of protocol, since he held the same rank as Beria. The question arose as to why Marshal Konev was singled out for this dubious honor (there are about 12 other Marshals of Soviet Union). He had been one of the three marshals mentioned as intended victims of the doctors' plot and on this ground the choice might be said to have a certain peculiar logic--an alleged victim sitting in judgment on his implied attacker. A surprise member of the court was K. F. Lunev, whose rank was given as first deputy minister of the MVD. Lunev was a second level party official of the Moscow Oblast with no known security experience.^{2/} His appointment to this post recalled the parallel of Ignatiev's assignment to the MGB in 1951.

^{1/} Presumably the prosecutor was Procurator General Rudenko who had been appointed after Beria's arrest. Rudenko had previously been public prosecutor in the Ukraine for a number of years, and since he has never been relieved may now be holding both positions.

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II. Some Consequences of Beria's Fall

Personnel Changes in the MVD

As has been pointed out, the manner in which the Beria case was handled indicated that a determined effort was being made to confine both the blame and the consequences of the "conspiracy" to the security forces alone. The indictment, trial documents and propaganda surrounding the case gave primary emphasis to the charge that Beria had attempted to build up a conspiratorial group within the MVD in order to usurp power from party and state organs. No party or state officials other than Merkulov were publicly implicated in the "conspiracy," and even in the case of Merkulov, neither his Ministry of State Control nor any of its officials were accused of complicity in the case.

The propaganda potential contained in the accusations was not intensively exploited. A virtual silence in the Soviet press regarding Beria set in a few days following his arrest, and the propaganda campaign at the time of his execution was silenced also within a few days of the event. No real attempt was made to make the Beria "conspirators" responsible for current shortcomings, such as those in agriculture, in spite of the fact that the indictment would have provided ample ammunition for such a campaign.

Beria's arrest was followed by the replacement of his followers in Moscow and in the regional republics. In the republics, however, most of his appointees were not removed for a number of months after his detention and their removal is not known to have resulted in their arrest. Some, in fact, continued to enjoy responsible posts in both the party and government apparatus of their respective republics.

The extent of the Beria purge may have been partly conditioned by the extent to which Beria had been able to place his men in the MVD apparatus between March and June 1953. His resumption of direct control over the security forces in March had been followed by a number of organizational and personnel changes in Moscow and in the republics, and it became apparent, as the charges against him were to specify, that Beria was attempting to place his adherents in positions of importance in the new MVD. It was equally apparent, however, that Beria had not been able to complete the restaffing of this organization and that the MVD still contained a number of non-Beria or anti-Beria officials at the time of his arrest.

As has been noted, in the March reorganization, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) under Minister S. N. Kruglov and the Ministry of State Security (MGB) under S. D. Ignatiev were merged into the new Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) under Beria. Kruglov was retained in the new

organization as a deputy minister, but Ignatiev was reassigned to the party secretariat. Upon reversal of the "doctors' plot" in April, however, Ignatiev was dismissed from the secretariat for "gullibility," which he had allegedly displayed as MGB minister.

The deputy ministers who had served under Kruglov and Ignatiev were not identified in the new organization, and it is probable that Beria carried through a thorough restaffing of the new MVD on this headquarters level with men whom he could trust more fully. I. I. Maslennikov and I. A. Serov, deputy ministers of the old MVD under Kruglov, were not known to have retained their posts under Beria, and the same was true of men who had served as deputy ministers of the MGB under Ignatiev. A. A. Epishev, who had been deputy minister of the MGB for personnel, dropped from sight.^{1/} The other deputy MGB ministers under Ignatiev, Stakhanov and possibly Voronenko, were not identified as deputy ministers of the new MVD, and it is possible that they were either demoted or ousted when Beria reorganized the ministry in March.

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[] Ryumin, deputy minister for investigations under Ignatiev, was arrested and charged with responsibility for the fraudulent "doctors' plot." His replacement appears to have been L. B. Plodzimirsky, one of Beria's co-defendants. The trial proceedings disclosed that Beria had also brought in B. Z. Kobulov as deputy minister and S. A. Goglidze as head of an unspecified directorate in the new MVD.

Beria's arrest was followed by that of three close associates in the MVD apparatus in Moscow; Kobulov, Vlodzimirsky and Goglidze were all tried and executed along with him. [] have reported that N. N. Shatalin, a member of the all-Union secretariat, was placed in the MVD for a month after Beria's arrest as a first deputy minister to insure that Beria's influence was erased and that orders from the presidium were being carried out. In addition, the party's control of the MVD was apparently assured through the appointment of K. F. Lunev, a party careerist, as first deputy minister. Public identification of Lunev in this position came in December when he served on the Beria trial board, but defectors report that he was appointed in September.

^{1/} Epishev has subsequently been identified as first secretary of the Crimean Oblast party organization.

Regional Changes in the MVD

A study of appointments and dismissals in the republican MVD organizations after Stalin's death and Beria's purge strongly suggests that while Beria made great efforts to restaff these organizations, presumably with his own men, he was not able to complete the process in the four-month period during which he again occupied the post of USSR security minister. It is also interesting that, with a few exceptions, most of these appointees were not removed from office immediately after his arrest. Several were elected to important posts in the republic party organizations in February 1954, and some of those who were replaced, rather than suffering arrest, were simply demoted to lesser positions. By the end of April 1953, 15 of the Union Republics had followed Moscow's lead in merging their MVD-MGB organizations into the new MVD.^{1/} In 12 out of 15 cases, the former MGB ministers of the republics were named to head the new MVD; in one case, a new minister was brought in from another area; and in one case a former MVD minister was named as minister of the new MVD.

All of these former MGB ministers had either been appointed under Ignatiev, or had served under him for nearly two years. It is possible that Ignatiev may have represented a faction in the Soviet party opposed to Beria, and that a few of these republic ministers may have been supporters of Ignatiev, even though some of them had at an earlier date served under Beria in the security forces. This contention is borne out by the fact that a number of these ex-MGB ministers were replaced by Beria subsequent to their appointments as MVD ministers in April. In addition, those former MGB ministers who survived the Beria period as heads of the local MVD organizations are still in office. This is true of N. P. Gusev in the Karelo-Finnish SSR; A. V. Tereshenko, Kirghiz SSR; I. L. Mordovets, Moldavian SSR; and V. T. Vaskin, Turkmen SSR. M. I. Baskakov, former Belorussian MGB minister, who was appointed to head the new MVD in April, was replaced in this post by his deputy, M. F. Dechko, on 29 June, but was restored as head of the Belorussian MVD in late August. Beria apparently brought about the ouster of new MVD ministers who had previously headed the republic MGB organizations in Estonia and Lithuania. In Estonia, V. I. Moskalenko was replaced as MVD minister by M. K. Krassman on 29 May. After Beria's arrest, Krassman was replaced by J. K. Lombak, the former MVD minister of Estonia.

^{1/} Fifteen of the 16 Union Republics have their own Ministries of the Interior. No MVD minister or MVD organization has ever been identified in the RSFSR, and although the RSFSR constitution lists an MVD among its other ministries, it is assumed that the all-Union MVD apparatus fulfills this function.

In Lithuania, P. P. Kondakov, former MGB minister in that republic, was replaced as MVD minister by I. L. Vildzhyunas, a native Lithuanian, on 18 June. This action closely followed a meeting of the Lithuanian central committee, which scored the old leadership of that republic for mistakes in agricultural policy and for "distortions" of the Soviet nationalities policy. These "distortions" consisted principally in neglecting the appointment of native cadres to important posts in the republic and overenthusiasm in forcing the use of the Russian language on Lithuanians. The charges closely resembled those made at the Ukrainian central committee meeting earlier in June which resulted in the ouster of Ukrainian first secretary L. G. Melnikov.

It is believed that the line regarding "distortions" of the nationalities policy is traceable to Beria and was used by him to get rid of Soviet officials whom he desired to unseat. K. F. Lyaudis, former second secretary of the Lithuanian party, was identified as Vildzhyunas' replacement in February 1954. Vildzhyunas, however, was identified as chairman of Vilnius city executive committee when he was elected to the USSR Supreme Soviet in March 1954. Before his appointment as MVD chief, Vildzhyunas was a rather obscure Lithuanian party official, with no known background in the security forces. P. P. Kondakov reappeared subsequent to Beria's fall as the UMVD chief of the important Vladimir Oblast near Moscow. Lyaudis, however, appears to have been a career party official, and his appointment would suggest that in the republics the party is closely supervising the work of the MVD.

The post-Stalin MVD minister in Azerbaijan, S. F. Yemelyanov, had previously been the MGB minister in that republic and had survived all of the republic's MGB changes since 1946. Since he survived the Beria period, only to be replaced in August after Beria's fall, it is likely that he was one of the few former MGB ministers who had remained loyal to Beria during the Ignatiev period. It is also possible that he was closely associated with M. D. A. Bagirov, the top man in Azerbaijan, whose fall also followed that of Beria. There is virtually no biographical information currently available on the new Azerbaijan MVD minister, A. M. Guskov.

V. G. Dekanozov, an early associate of Beria, replaced A. I. Kochlavashvili, the former MGB chief, as Georgian MVD minister in April 1953, and Kochlavashvili became deputy MVD minister in that republic. Following Beria's arrest Dekanozov was replaced by an army officer, A. I. Inauri, and later appeared as a co-defendant of Beria's in December, and was executed along with him.

In the Ukraine, P. Y. Meshyk, who had been appointed as MGB minister in the middle of March 1953, was confirmed as minister of the new MVD in April after the republic's MVD and MGB had been merged. Like

Dekanozov in Georgia, Meshyk was removed from office almost immediately after Beria's arrest, and was tried and executed along with him. Meshyk's replacement in the Ukraine, T. A. Strokach, was another former minister of the old MVD under Kruglov and had been Ukrainian MVD minister before the April reorganization.

Following the merger of the Latvian MVD and MGB, N. K. Kovalchuk, who had been appointed Latvian MGB chief in early March was confirmed as MVD minister in that republic. Prior to his assignment in Latvia Kovalchuk's official post had been that of Ukrainian MGB minister.^{1/} On 3 June, however, Kovalchuk was replaced as Latvian MVD minister by I. D. Zuyan, possibly in accordance with the "native cadres" program initiated by Beria. Although Zuyan was not nominated to the Supreme Soviet in early 1954, no replacement for him has been identified and it is believed that he still holds the post.

A. P. Byzov, who was appointed MVD minister of the Uzbek SSR in April 1953, had previously been Kazakh MGB minister under Abakumov, but was demoted to the post of deputy MGB minister of the Uzbek republic in 1950. Byzov seems to have survived Beria's decline since he was re-elected to the Uzbek central committee in February 1954.

In the one case where the minister of the previous republican MVD organization was named to head the new MVD in April 1953, that minister has remained in office. V. V. Gubin, the Kazakh MVD chief prior to the April MVD/MGB merger, took over the new MVD in that republic, has remained in office, and was elected to the USSR Supreme Soviet in March 1954.

Personnel Shifts in the Party and Government

In the six-month period following Beria's arrest, a number of important personnel shifts were made in the Soviet party and state apparatus. Some of these shifts were clearly related to the Beria case, while others related to the implementation of the "new course" in agriculture and industry. A third factor, which may have been operative in all of the personnel changes, seems traceable to the differences of opinion and

^{1/} [] has reported that Kovalchuk was serving as senior Soviet adviser to the Polish security forces in 1952 and early 1953.

jockeying for position among the post-Beria Soviet leaders.^{1/}

In some cases, the post-Beria personnel shifts may be related to the Beria case with relative assurance. This is true of a few changes in Moscow, but more particularly of those in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. These party and government changes generally followed the pattern observed in the MVD replacements which followed on the purge of Beria: the shifts were not very extensive, except in Beria's native state of Georgia; but there, as well as other places, most of the replacements were not made immediately, but extended over a period of months. No indication was given that those replaced were arrested; little publicity attended the changes and in almost all cases there was a general reluctance to propagandize the link between these regional purges and that of Beria.

In Moscow, the most important government official known to have been purged as a Beria associate was V. N. Merkulov, minister of state control, and an old associate of Beria's in the USSR security apparatus. [redacted]

[redacted] The date on which Merkulov's successor, V. G. Zhavoronkov, was appointed is not known; as late as mid-October, [redacted]

[redacted]

Merkulov had served as USSR MGB minister in the postwar period,^{2/} and later headed the Chief Directorate for Soviet Property Abroad. In 1950 he had taken over the Ministry of State Control and during the period of his tenure in that office began to enlarge the checking and control functions of that ministry. It is possible that Beria had used him both to influence Soviet policy in Germany through the Chief Directorate of Soviet Property Abroad (which contained a number of Beria followers other than Merkulov) and to extend his control over Soviet internal affairs

^{1/} Beginning in late November 1953 a number of provincial and republican party secretaries and state officials were replaced, usually on charges of inadequate implementation of the new economic course. These changes will be discussed more fully in a later study.

^{2/} Merkulov was head of State Security at the time that Shcherbakov was allegedly murdered by the participants in the "doctors' plot."

through use of the Ministry of State Control. The latter was apparently done by changing the responsibility of the ministry under Merkulov from one of checking to one of supervising various operational aspects of the state organizations under its cognizance.^{1/}

In the official charges, however, it was not mentioned that Merkulov and the Ministry of State Control were guilty of an abuse of power, nor was it indicated that the ministry would undergo a purge similar to that of the MVD. Although state control ministers in some republics were removed following Merkulov's disappearance, there is no indication that the purge was very extensive, and there is no information available on removals in the central apparatus of the ministry.

The replacement of V. G. Grigoryan as head of the Foreign Ministry's Press Department is the only other change in Moscow which can be linked with any degree of assurance to the Beria case. Grigoryan had worked closely with Beria in Georgia in the 1930's and had later moved to central committee work in Moscow. He was appointed to this press post and to the Collegium of the Foreign Ministry in May during the period of Beria's ascendancy. His replacement by L. F. Ilychev was announced on 9 September.

Between the time of Beria's arrest and the 1953 October Revolution celebrations, a number of important changes in military positions were noted. At least three of these may have been related to the Beria purge. In Moscow, Col. Gen. P. A. Artemev was succeeded as commander of the Moscow Military District by Gen. K. S. Moskalenko, and Lt. Gen. K. R. Sinilov, Commandant of Moscow City, was replaced by Maj. Gen. I. S. Kolesnikov. Both appear to have been primarily military rather than security officers, although the new edition of the Large Soviet Encyclopedia states that Artemev had commanded "state security" as well as army troops in the past. Both officers had held their posts longer than any of their counterparts in other military districts and may have been due for transfer. However, Moscow rumors associated these shifts with Beria's purge.

The replacement of Lt. Gen. N. K. Spiridonov by Lt. Gen. A. Ya. Vedenin as commander of the Kremlin Guard seems more closely related to the Beria affair. The Kremlin commandant has traditionally been a security officer and the troops under his command have been drawn from the security forces. Spiridonov was appointed Kremlin commandant sometime between

1/ CF. Soviet State and Law, June 1952.

November 1938 and May 1939, around the time Beria came to Moscow to take command of the security forces from Yezhov. Lt. Gen. Vedenin, who replaced Spiridonov, is a career army officer, but there is as yet no indication that the Kremlin security function itself has been completely taken over by army troops.

Regional Party and Government Shifts

Georgia

The results of the Beria purge were most strongly felt in the Transcaucasian republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. In these areas, however, the replacement of the majority of Beria's followers was a prolonged process, with little propaganda relating the personnel changes to complicity in the Beria case.

In the Soviet republic of Georgia, the home state of Stalin and Beria and long a jungle of political intrigue, a joint plenum of the Georgian central committee and Tbilisi town party committee was held on 13-14 July to discuss the ouster of Beria. His activities were strongly condemned by Georgian party leaders whom he had apparently placed in office in April 1953. Beria was accused of giving harmful advice to the Georgian leaders and trying to sow the seeds of bourgeois nationalism in that republic. A number of individuals were criticized for giving assistance to Beria in his efforts to seize power. Among these were V. G. Dekanozov, Georgian MVD minister who was tried and shot with the Beria "conspirators;" B. Z. Kobulov, USSR deputy MVD minister who shared the same fate; A. M. Rapava, Georgian minister of state control, who had held a number of important posts in the MGB under Beria; N. M. Rukhadze, former Georgian MGB minister who had been purged in 1952; S. S. Mamulov, a member of the Georgian party buro, who had formerly held important posts in the MGB; and S. R. Milshtein, who formerly headed a directorate of the MGB, but whose whereabouts had been unknown for several years. Two former first secretaries of the Georgian party, Charkviani and Mgeladze, were criticized on the same grounds. All of these officials cited as Beria adherents are believed to have been so, with the possible exceptions of Rukhadze, Charkviani and Mgeladze.

A curious feature of the July meeting in Georgia was that it was conducted by Georgian party leaders who owed their positions to Beria. These were the men who headed the group which came to power in April 1953 in a reorganization which replaced virtually every important Georgian party and state official in office at that time. V. M. Bakradze, Georgian premier, A. I. Mirtskhulava, first secretary of the Georgian party, and V. M. Chkhivadze, third secretary of the party, are examples of this group and were among the principal speakers at the July meeting.

With the exception of Dekanozov, Rapava and Mamulov, most of Beria's appointees continued in office and were active in Georgian affairs until late September, when a plenum of the Georgian central committee was called to consider the implementation of the "July plenum of the central committee of the CPSU." This was the USSR central committee meeting which had dismissed Beria, and which apparently passed a decision regarding the manner in which Beria's followers were to be handled throughout the USSR. This oblique reference to the July plenum of the USSR central committee was the only way in which the republican purges were officially related to that of Beria. Failure to implement the decisions of this plenum (and other shortcomings) were the official charges leveled at outgoing leaders not only in Georgia, but also in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The September Georgian party plenum was attended by N. N. Shatalin, a member of the USSR party secretariat. This fact tended to underscore the role of the secretariat, headed by N. S. Khrushchev, in party personnel replacements, and the attendance of a party secretary at local party purges became a common feature of these purges. At this Georgian plenum, most of the Beria-appointed members of the party buro were dismissed, and it was "recommended" that the premier also be replaced. Party Secretary Mirtskhulava was supplanted by V. P. Mzhavanadze, a native Georgian. The latter's last post was that of deputy political officer of the Kiev Military District, and he had served in this post and on the Ukrainian orgburo during N. S. Khrushchev's tenure as first secretary of the Ukrainian Party. V. M. Bakradze, the Georgian premier, was subsequently replaced by D. D. Dzhavakhishvili, who had previously occupied a post of secondary importance in the Georgian republic.

Although most of Beria's appointees were replaced at the September plenum, some remained in office until early 1954. I. S. Zodelava, who had been released from imprisonment by the Beria forces in April to take the post of first deputy premier of Georgia, was not replaced in this post until January 1954.^{1/} The second and third secretaries of the Georgian party, D. Z. Romelashvili, and V. M. Chkhivadze, who had assumed their posts in April, did not decline in status until February 1954 when they were elected to the Georgian central committee, but not to the buro or secretariat. Romelashvili, however was elected to the USSR Supreme Soviet.

^{1/} More than a year earlier, Zodelava and a number of other Georgian officials had been purged on charges of embezzlement and other crimes. In April, three of these men including Zodelava were exonerated and restored to high offices in the Georgian party and government. This was the Georgian version of the doctors' plot reversal and, like it, a deliberate slap at the previous regime.

Azerbaijan

The purge of M. D. A. Bagirov in Azerbaijan may also be related to that of Beria, although certain aspects of this case remain obscure. On the basis of his background, Bagirov would appear to have been an important and close associate of Beria. Both had worked together in Transcaucasian security and political affairs since the 1930's, and there are some reports of friendship between the two. There is reason to believe, however, that Beria and Bagirov may have had differences of opinion over the Soviet nationalities policy. Both had earlier been ardent advocates of the "Russification" line and Bagirov continued to associate himself with the "Russification" approach in the period immediately prior to Stalin's death. Beria, as we have seen, apparently took an opposite tack. Further, Bagirov paid his allegiance to Malenkov in the period after Stalin's death rather than to Beria.

In any event, the announcement of Beria's arrest was closely followed by the purge of Bagirov in Azerbaijan. In mid-July a joint plenum of the Azerbaijan central committee and the Baku city party committee met to discuss the Beria case. The meeting was attended by a member of the USSR party secretariat, P. N. Pospelov. At the plenum Bagirov was stripped of his party posts and it was "recommended" that he also be removed as chairman of the Azerbaijan Council of Ministers.^{1/} The specific charges against Bagirov did not include collaboration with Beria; instead, it was stated that he had ignored the "party principle of collective leadership." He was accused among other things of having adopted a "vicious style of leadership" over a long period which had resulted in "serious violations of party principles of the selection of cadres."

Formal action on the central committee's "recommendation" that Bagirov be removed as Azerbaijan premier did not come until a month later. His replacement, T. I. Kuliev, was the man Bagirov had supplanted the previous April. Six days earlier, on 11 August, N. T. Amiraslanov had been appointed first deputy chairman of the Azerbaijan Council of Ministers and A. M. Guskov named to replace S. F. Yemelyanov as MVD minister in that republic. A reported Beria associate, Y. D. Sumbatov-Topuridze, was also removed as deputy chairman of the Azerbaijan Council of Ministers.

^{1/} In mid-April Bagirov had "voluntarily" given up his post of first secretary of the Azerbaijan party to former Azerbaijan MVD chief T. A. Yakubov, and assumed the post of chairman of the Azerbaijan Council of Ministers. Bagirov may have been removed from his post and the all-Union party's presidium prior to 27 June. Like Melnikov and Beria, he was absent from the opera party on that date.

As previously indicated, the reasons for Bagirov's purge are somewhat obscure. A factor of importance may have been his open opposition to Khrushchev's "agrogorod" policy in 1951. The latter hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that the only other Soviet official to voice similar opposition was also purged in December 1953.

The situation with regard to Bagirov's replacement was quite striking. As previously stated, when Bagirov shifted from his position of first secretary of the Azerbaijan party, a position which he had held since 1933, to that of chairman of the Council of Ministers, Ta. A. Yakubov replaced him. Yakubov had worked under and with Bagirov since 1934, both in the central committee's apparatus and as a secretary of that organization. After Bagirov's purge, Yakubov remained as first secretary, and T. I. Kuliev, who had been replaced by Bagirov as chairman of the Council of Ministers, returned to this position. Thus, two men who had worked for many years with Bagirov were kept in important positions in the republic even after he was purged.

Both remained active in Azerbaijan affairs until February 1954. Kuliev was nominated as a deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet in that month, and Yakubov delivered the accountability address to the Azerbaijan party congress in late February. At the congress, however, both were singled out for severe criticism. While working with Bagirov they were said to have agreed "in a cowardly manner with his unparty type of work and to have been obsequious to him." Kuliev was removed from the Supreme Soviet electoral list, and both were subsequently replaced in their posts.

There are two possible explanations for this peculiar action. It is possible that, because Bagirov had held this post for an inordinate time, possibly through Beria's protection, an advanced form of provincial dictatorial rule developed which stifled the vitality of the party. The post-Beria Kremlin leadership, therefore, was concerned not only with weeding out Beria's associates but also with correcting the damage done by them to active party control over all branches of Soviet life. The long delay in removing the remaining members of the Azerbaijan leadership suggests that they may have been granted a chance to reform but failed to respond. Apparently, the simple removal of Bagirov was not sufficient to correct the situation in the republic and the Kremlin then recognized the necessity for further purging in order to bring about a revitalization of the Azerbaijan party.

On the other hand, it is possible that these men were left in control during the six months which elapsed between Bagirov's purge and their removal because the Kremlin could not agree on either their guilt nor the extent of their association with Bagirov. The presidium may have been split into factions concerning the removal of these men and the weight of opinion fell to keeping them. By February, however, a shift in the balance

of power conceivably could have taken place, and those that wished to remove these men may have prevailed.

Armenia

A third republic in which the Beria purge had profound repercussions was Armenia. Here too, the purge of Beria's followers was long in coming. On 4 December, at a plenum of the Armenian central committee called to discuss the July (Beria) and September (agricultural) plenums of the USSR central committee, the entire Armenian secretariat, headed by G. A. Arutinov was dismissed and the membership of the party buro was thoroughly revamped. The meeting was attended by USSR secretariat member P. N. Pospelov, who had attended a similar session in Azerbaijan in July. As in Azerbaijan, the new Armenian leaders headed by S. A. Tovmasyan had previously occupied positions of secondary importance in the republic.

Arutyunov's ties with Beria extended back to the 1930's when both he and Bagirov had been closely associated with Beria in Transcaucasian affairs. Mention of the "July plenum of the CPSU" at the Armenian party meeting which dismissed Arutyunov indicated that his dismissal was related to the Beria purge. As in the case of Bagirov, an additional factor may have been Arutyunov's criticism of Khrushchev's "agrogorod" program.

Although the Armenian purge was indirectly tied to the Beria case, official Soviet propaganda did not stress the point nor accuse the former Armenian officials of implication in Beria's alleged plot to take over the Soviet party and government. Principal stress was laid on violations of the principle of collective leadership, on the dictatorial attitude of the old secretariat and buro, and on a "bureaucratic" approach to problems of agriculture and industry. These charges were again stressed in late February by the new Armenian secretary, Tovmasyan, at the republic party congress.

Rehabilitations

In the period following the arrest of Beria, two prominent officials apparently purged by him were partially rehabilitated. L. G. Melnikov was appointed Soviet ambassador to Rumania on 26 July, and S. D. Ignatiev was identified as first secretary of the Bashkir ASSR party organization on 17 February 1954.

Melnikov had been first secretary of the Ukrainian party organization and an alternate member of the USSR party presidium at the time of his purge in early June 1953. At that time he was accused of mistakes in agriculture and of violations of the Soviet nationalities policy, particularly in the western Ukraine. These charges, believed to have been

instigated by Beria, resulted in the removal of Melnikov from his party posts by the Ukrainian central committee and presumably in his dismissal from the USSR party presidium, although no official announcement was made to this effect.

S. D. Ignatiev had occupied a number of important party and state posts prior to his ouster in April 1953. He had served in regional party organizations such as those of the Bashkir ASSR and the Belorussian SSR, and had also held important posts in the USSR central committee apparatus. As is well known by this time, he replaced V. S. Abakumov sometime in 1951 as USSR minister of state security, and removed several Beria appointees in that organization. At the 19th Party Congress in October 1952 Ignatiev was elected a member of the central committee and of the enlarged party presidium. In March 1953 he was removed from the party presidium and appointed to the secretariat, at the same time that the old MGB was merged in a new MVD under Beria. The following month Ignatiev was publicly criticized for "political blindness and inattentiveness" in connection with the reversal of the "doctors' plot" and was removed from the party secretariat. Since his original appointment to the MGB was believed to have been engineered by a faction in the party hierarchy hostile to Beria, and since the "doctors' plot" was apparently directed at Beria, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Ignatiev's ouster was due to the influence of Beria. Speculation to this effect by Western correspondents was passed by the Soviet censors. Following his removal, Ignatiev was not identified in another post until February 1954 when he appeared as the first secretary of the Bashkir ASSR party organization, a post which he had held some years previously.

While it is difficult to follow the thread back through the labyrinth of these post-Beria purges, the following seems to emerge from the exploration. There has been a general reluctance in propaganda and in official statements to implicate anyone in the Beria case other than those tried and executed in December. Little publicity surrounded the dismissals of MVD, party and government officials associated with Beria, and few were charged with actual complicity in his "conspiracy." The purge of his associates proceeded rather slowly. In considering the seriousness of the charges, the purge was limited in its scope and mild in its consequences, and there is no indication that the majority of those dismissed were subsequently jailed. Some, in fact, continued to occupy responsible party and state posts in the republics. There were also elements of indecision regarding replacements for some of these appointed to posts held by Beria's followers in the republics, since at least two of these were in turn replaced by new men several months later.

This indecision may be due to the continued presence within the hierarchy of a number of officials who co-operated with Beria during his bid for power. It is obvious that he needed at least the formal approval of a number of party and state officials for several moves made between

March and July 1953. These would include:

- The dismissal of S. D. Ignatiev from the party secretariat in April, which would have required the approval of members of the party presidium and/or the central committee.
- The appointment of V. G. Grigoryan to the Collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as the Foreign Ministry's press chief, which would have required at least the formal approval of important state officials.
- The June press campaign regarding "distortions" of the Soviet nationalities policy, especially in the Ukraine and Lithuania.
- The Ukrainian central committee's dismissal of its first secretary, L. G. Melnikov, and his presumed removal from the USSR party presidium.
- The numerous personnel changes on the republican ministerial level which required at least the formal approval of the republican State apparatus.

If it is true that there are important officials still in the Soviet hierarchy who had co-operated closely with Beria, it would help to explain some aspects of the case for which there is currently no other satisfactory explanation. It would explain why there was a deliberate attempt to confine the blame for Beria's activities solely to the security forces, and why those of his followers who remained in office at the time of his arrest were removed only slowly and apparently suffered no drastic retaliation for their co-operation. It would explain the rather curious propaganda handling of the Beria case--the fact that virtually no publicity was given to it between the announcement of his arrest and the trial, and the swift termination of the propaganda campaign following each of these events. This was done, in spite of the fact that Beria and his followers would have made excellent scapegoats for past and present shortcomings in the USSR which have received a great deal of publicity within the last year. In the important sphere of agriculture, for example, Beria had been accused of impeding important decisions but there was virtually no attempt to follow up this point. Treatment of the case contrasts strongly with that of the "doctors' plot" which featured an intensive, sustained propaganda campaign. Failure to accord similar treatment to the Beria "conspirators" and their collaborators is difficult to understand unless there are important people within the Soviet hierarchy who have good reason to want the Beria case forgotten.

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