

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

SECRET

COUNTRY	USSR	REPORT	
SUBJECT	Background on the Execution of Abakumov and the Leningrad Case of 1949	DATE DISTR.	14 January 1955
DATE OF INFO.		NO. OF PAGES	4
		REFERENCE NO.	RD 25X1
		REFERENCES	

This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

25X1

- Contrary to recent Soviet press releases on the liquidation of Colonel General V.S. Abakumov and other former security officers, [redacted] Abakumov can in no way be held responsible for the fabrication of the so-called "Leningrad case" of 1949, ie., the removal of Petr Sergeevich Popkov, First Secretary of the Leningrad Oblast Party Committee, and Aleksey Aleksandrovich Kuznetsov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the VKP (b), or for direct participation in the Beriya conspiracy. 25X1
- [redacted] the MGB did not have the autonomy or the jurisdiction, especially after World War II and the eclipse of Army General V.W. Merkulov, to make policy or create intra-governmental political situations. [redacted] all high-and medium-ranking members of the MGB had and still have a real fear of the Party, and would never concoct an obvious frame-up such as the Popkov-Kuznetsov affair. The latter two were important Party officials, and any slip in making the charges against them stick would reverberate with too much force to make the risk worthwhile. Abakumov had insufficient courage to attempt to buck the system of Party rule. In addition, the Central Committee has a special section which grants final approval to all recommended appointments of directorate or section chiefs throughout all government ministries. Thus, Abakumov, being aware of this situation, could never have accumulated the proper evidence, even if properly falsified, to convince the Central Committee of the alleged misdemeanors of Popkov and Kuznetsov. 25X1

25X1

SECRET

STATE	EV	X	ARMY	X	NAVY	X	AIR	X	FBI		ASC		OIC	X		
-------	----	---	------	---	------	---	-----	---	-----	--	-----	--	-----	---	--	--

(NOTE: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#")

25X1

SECRET

25X1

-2-

3. The Party organization of Leningrad, which is known as the cradle of the October Revolution in the USSR, has always held a special place among other Party organizations. One of the leaders of the Leningrad Party organization was S.M. Kirov, who had the quality of independence and the ability to protect the interests of his organization. He was not afraid to argue with Stalin himself, who was at that time striving to gather the control of the government in his hands and at the same time destroying his political opponents. Thus, Kirov's behavior and position was naturally in opposition to Stalin's personal plans. Stalin saw in Kirov a dangerous rival, one who had popularity and who exerted influence on the Party. Thus, on 1 December 1934, Kirov was killed by one Nikolayev, who was, as the official press stated, one of the members of an active anti-Soviet terrorist organization. By liquidating Kirov, and by following up on other rivals such as Kamensv, Rykov, Zinovyev, Bukharin, and others, who, in addition to other charges of criminal acts against the Party, were also charged with the terroristic act laid to Kirov, Stalin very successfully liquidated the potential threat against his own dictatorial position in the Party and the Government as a whole.
4. In 1934 A. Zhdanov, an unknown member of the CC at that time, was sent to Leningrad as a replacement for Kirov. Such a selection is explained as follows: Stalin needed an absolutely loyal man who would depend completely on Stalin, and who would, without question, carry out all of Stalin's policies. It is understandable that Stalin did not risk appointing to this post a more distinctive and experienced Party member from among the Politburo members for fear of a recurrence of the Kirov affair.
5. Zhdanov, on whom Stalin immediately showered Party rights and privileges, in a "twinkling of an eye" became an old revolutionist. To the surprise of all who knew him, Zhdanov's name suddenly appeared on the pages of the Short Course of the History of the VKP (b) as one of the revolutionary activists in the USSR. Zhdanov completely justified the trust and hopes of Stalin, who nevertheless considered it necessary to transfer Zhdanov to Moscow to the post of Secretary of the Central Committee, responsible for the theoretical problems of the Party.
6. In 1944, Kuznetsov replaced Zhdanov as Party boss in Leningrad. In 1948, Kuznetsov was transferred on Stalin's orders to the CC as one of its secretaries, and Popkov became head of the Leningrad Party organization on the recommendation of Kuznetsov. As Secretary of the CC, Kuznetsov had direct influence on the external political matters of the Communist Party. Everything which was received from the foreign residency of Soviet intelligence organizations was sent in one copy to Kuznetsov's secretariat, as well as to Stalin, Molotov, Beriya, and Malenkov.
7. In 1949, as a result of the elections which took place in the Leningrad Party organization, Popkov was re-elected as Secretary of the Leningrad Oblast Party Committee. After the secret balloting, the election results were read by the Election Commission (Schetnaya Kommissiya), which stated that without exception all members of the Party conference had voted for Popkov. A few days later, letters began to arrive at the Central Committee, directed specifically to Stalin, from many members of the Party conference, who, it seemed, had voted against Popkov and were very surprised at the peculiar results of the balloting. A special commission, appointed by the Central Committee, was sent to Leningrad to investigate the situation. The commission found that the results of the election had been shuffled with Popkov's knowledge, and that there were all kinds of discrepancies in the work of the oblast Party Committee. Following this, Popkov and some of his responsible assistants who had close relations with him vanished without leaving a trace. Kuznetsov also disappeared at this time. The whole operation of removing the so-called "Leningrad group" was carried out in complete secrecy and was known only to a select number of Party functionaries. By a special decision of the Central Committee, the file on the

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

-3-

"Leningrad group" contains , in addition to the charge of criminal shuffling of ballots, the major charge that the Popkov-Kuznetsov group had attempted to set up the Leningrad Party organization in opposition to the Central Committee of the VKP (b). [redacted] it is doubtful that the shuffling of the election results actually did take place, and that the charges against Popkov of anti-Party activity are utterly fantastic.

25X1

8. By accusing the Leningrad Party group of political anti-Party sins, Stalin evidently pursued two aims: a) to remind his hidden Party enemies and potential rivals, which he saw in each one of his subordinates, what fate awaited them should they attempt to undertake any steps to undermine the dictatorial position of Stalin; and b) by this repressive measure, he sought to re-establish himself in the eyes of the Party for the error of appointing Popkov to such a responsible position, and to mobilize other Party organizations to seek out all types of violators of Party discipline and other traitors within the Party. It was characteristic of Stalin to use such tactics, from time to time, in order to instill fear in his major and minor Party leaders in order to insure unquestionable obedience of his will.

9. Thus, Stalin ruthlessly punished the guilty, regardless of their position or rank in the Party. Other examples of such victims during this period are: G.M. Popov, Secretary of the Moscow Oblast Party Committee, and Lt. Gen. I.V. Kovalev, Minister of Communications (sic; Transportation), who like Popov was charged with moral degeneration, i.e., used Party funds to build dachy for his mistresses, and finally went as far as ordering a spur-line for his villa on the Black Sea. For the same type of sins, Stalin's personal favorite, Rear Admiral I.D. Papanin, Chairman of the Chief Directorate of the Northern Sea Route, was removed from his post. Papanin soon acquired a taste for the pleasures of social life and built a home, also not with his own money, which, in size, surpassed the estates of great pre-Revolutionary landowners. He had for his own use about ten automobiles, including an amphibious vehicle which had been received from the US under Lend-Lease and which he used for duck hunting. To top it all, he ordered the peasants from the nearby collectives to construct a pond for his white swans, for which his wife had a weakness.

10. N.A. Voznesenskiy, Chairman of the Gosplan, his brother, who held a post in the Ministry of Higher Education, and some of their associates were arrested at the time of the Leningrad affair. [redacted] although Voznesenskiy actually had no connection with the Leningrad case, he may have been accused of complicity with the Leningrad group to justify the barbaric repressive measures taken against him and his associates. [redacted] he was arrested because he made major errors in economic planning and disagreed with Stalin's opinions on some of the economic and political problems of the Soviet Government. [redacted] Voznesenskiy may soon appear on the horizon, as another victim of Beriya and Abakumov rescued by Malenkov.

25X1

25X1

25X1

11. Early during World War II, Abakumov became chief of the Counterintelligence Directorate (Smersh) and was in constant contact with Stalin. During this period, his agentura disclosed a network of speculative operations in the Ministry of Aviation Industry, which included the Minister himself, Col.Gen. A.I. Shakhurin, who was later dismissed and arrested. This disclosure reflected directly on the position of Malenkov, who was responsible for this ministry during the war as a member of the State Committee of Defense. In addition, this also undermined the authority of one of Beriya's closest friends, Army General V.N. Merkulov, Minister of Defense, who was removed from his position on orders of the Central Committee. In 1946, on the basis of Smersh documents, many leading generals in the Soviet Army and Air Force, including Marshal A.A. Novikov, were arrested, decommissioned, and sent to concentration camps for detention for various lengths of time, which were specified by a direct order from Stalin. Thus, Stalin, pursuing his goal of keeping Beriya under control, appointed Abakumov Minister of the MGB in 1946,

SECRET


SECRET



25X1

-4-

and felt that since Abakumov was directly responsible for this dismissal of Merkulov he would not have the opportunity to maintain close relations with Berya.

12.  Abakumov was arrested in 1952, chiefly for moral degeneration, mistakes in his work, and for using his position for his personal interests. Abakumov's confiscated personal property, which was looted for the most part in Germany, amounted to between four and five million rubles. Otrashchenko also confirmed current (1953) rumors in the Tokyo residentura that Berya, with whom Abakumov had very close relations during the last few years before his arrest, had a direct hand in looting.

25X1



25X1

SECRET