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"THE DOCTORS' PLOT"

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Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Central Intelligence Agency
Office of Current Intelligence
14 July 1953

MEMORANDUM

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The attached article, "The Doctors' Plot, is the first in a series of working papers prepared by the staff [Redacted] [Redacted] was established by the Director of Central Intelligence to study all available information on the members of the Soviet hierarchy, the middle ranks as well as the higher.

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On the whole, [Redacted] information under scrutiny, like most categories of information on the Soviet Union, is inconclusive and frequently contradictory. The work [Redacted] has served, however, to stimulate reconstruction of developments and events affecting the Kremlin hierarchy, of which the first to be issued is "The Doctors' Plot". It will be followed by articles dealing with both the subsequent and preceding periods.

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The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not represent official views of the Agency.

It is suggested that recipients retain their copies of the various chapters as issued, for later binding in chronological order into a loose-leaf book.

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THE DOCTORS' PLOT

The 13 January Pravda article disclosing the doctors' plot must have had a shattering effect on the citizens of the USSR. It set the stage for what was probably anticipated in many quarters as a repeat performance of the devastating purge that shook the Soviet Union from 1934-1938.

The announcement singled out nine doctors -- most of them Jewish -- as part of a ring of spies working for a "Jewish-bourgeois nationalist group," which in turn was sponsored by the American and British intelligence organizations. They were accused of murdering by mistreatment two former Soviet leaders -- A. S. Shcherbakov, who died in May 1945, and A. A. Zhdanov, who died in August 1948. In addition to other leaders, the doctors were further specifically accused of attempting to murder five military figures: Marshals Vasilevski, Konev and Govorov, General Shtemenko and Admiral Levchenko.

The "plot" had clearly anti-Semitic overtones. The observation was made at the time that since no Jews had attended Zhdanov and Shcherbakov, it was necessary to include among the participants the names of three non-Jews who had. In addition, it represented a new stage in the fierce propaganda war, the "hate-America" campaign, which Ambassador Kennan had found so virulent upon his arrival in Moscow. Inter alia, it brought proof of US hostility directly to the Soviet people by proving that this country had many agents inside the USSR.

The leaders of the US and UK were in effect accused of having assassinated two prominent Soviet government officials and of conspiring to assassinate more, in particular, these five military leaders of the USSR. Shcherbakov's "murder" was committed at a time when the US and UK were allied with the USSR in a war against Germany and were awaiting Soviet participation in the war against Japan. Shcherbakov, a Colonel General, at the time of his death was Chief of the Army's Political Administration, Deputy Commissar of Defense, Secretary of the Moscow City and Oblast Committees, and alternate member of the Politburo.

The wording of the announcement carried the clear suggestion that the doctors might have succeeded either in murdering others not specified in the announcement or at least in reducing their life span. Yegorov, one of the accused, had actually been Chief of the Kremlin's medical directorate, and hence had probably treated at one time or another all of the Politburo members, including Stalin

himself. It is known, for example, that Yegorov treated Kalinin, Dimitrov, and Choibalsan. The French Communist press had reported that Vinogradov and another of the accused doctors, Grinstein, had treated Thorez.

Singled out as the doctors' intermediaries were A. B. Shimelevich, last identified as head doctor at the Botkin Hospital in Moscow in 1947, and Solomon Mikhoels, Chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee during World War II. Mikhoels had died in Byelorussia in 1948 under somewhat mysterious circumstances.

This particular part of the announcement appeared purposefully open-ended. Few people in the USSR would be ready to accept the fact that only these two relatively minor figures were to be accused of handling the purported plot inside the country. The last time doctors had been accused of medical murder in the USSR, the head of the secret police (Yagoda) had allegedly prompted them and he in turn allegedly had been directed by a Politburo member -- Abel Yenukidze; both had paid with their lives. The stage was set, therefore, for more arrests and more disclosures and by directly censuring the MGB the Pravda article had suggested that history might repeat itself.

Abakumov, the MGB Chief in 1948 when Zhdanov died, had already been ousted as Minister (August 1951) although his removal had never been publicly announced. The plot could serve as a good reason for justifying this earlier removal if one were needed. His link-up with US "espionage" could have been well documented. To take one example, Ambassador Kennan was visited in July 1952, almost a year after Abakumov's replacement, by a provocateur claiming to be Abakumov's son.

Abakumov, however, was not the only MGB chief involved. V. N. Merkulov had been head of the Commissariat of State Security in 1945 when Shcherbakov died. At the time of the plot's announcement he was serving as USSR Minister of State Control. Merkulov had suffered a setback at the October Party Congress when he was dropped from a full to alternate status on the Central Committee. He is listed [redacted] as having been a close associate of Beria. [redacted] he was among those who accompanied Beria to Moscow when he was called by Stalin to take over Yezhov's job and end the purge. Abakumov also had been associated with Beria and he, of course, did not figure at the Party Congress at all.

The implication that both Abakumov and Merkulov were involved cast a shadow on one of the big luminaries in the Kremlin itself, L. P. Beria. There are other suggestions with regard to Beria and the purge: Beria had been universally regarded as retaining Politburo

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level responsibility for security affairs. [REDACTED]

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There were a few straws in the wind in the fall of 1952 indicating that Beria had slipped among the ranks of Stalin's favorites. He was listed as the sixth Politburo member to enter the Hall of Columns at the opening of the Party Congress, when previously he had ranked as number four. This lower ranking was later repeated in the order in which the pictures of the Politburo members were hung on 7 November, the anniversary of the October revolution. (Beria later regained his number four spot on 21 January.)

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Beria had been in charge of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs from 1937 to 1947. In 1943 the Commissariat of State Security had

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been formed out of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs and Merkulov had been given charge of it. All the Commissariats were renamed Ministries in March 1946, and Merkulov continued to head the Ministry of State Security (MGB) until some time in the middle of that year, when he was replaced by Abakumov. The indirect implication of Beria was modified by the fact that on 12 January, the evening before the announcement, Stalin and five of his biggest lieutenants -- Molotov, Malenkov, Beria, Voroshilov and Kaganovich -- attended a concert at the Bolshoi theatre. There is little doubt that this appearance was intended to avert the panic which was expected with the announcement of the doctors' plot the following day.

Beria was probably not the only Soviet leader concerned about the outcome of the doctors' plot. Certainly the anti-Semitic nature of the affair caused concern among those of Jewish background. L. M. Kaganovich is Jewish and so, too, is the wife of V. M. Molotov.^{1/} In addition, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, N. M. Shvernik, has been reported to be Jewish.^{2/}

The question which immediately arose with regard to the startling announcement was who had started it and why. Something big had been brewing since Suslov's 24 December attack on Fedoseyev for daring

1/ The status of Kaganovich at the time of the plot was unclear. [redacted]

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[redacted] in Kiev Kaganovich was referred to as "our father" by the Jewish residents there. Several Jews in Kiev were arrested in the wake of the vigilance campaign. The American Jewish Yearbook for the year 1948-49 quotes a Jewish writer from Wilno as stating that the poet I. Fefer and the theatre director S. Mikhoels interceded in 1945 with Kaganovich who in turn interceded with Zhdanov to license a Yiddish daily paper in the USSR. The license was refused (Fefer, incidentally, had toured the US with Mikhoels in 1943.) Fefer was arrested in 1948 but Soviet authorities never gave any reason for this action.

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to write about Stalin's opus without previously confessing to the sins of Voznesenskyism. This in turn had been followed by the mass recantation of economists on 8 January. Yet the timing of the decision as well as its perpetrators were difficult to fix.^{1/} It was necessary to go back to the October Party Congress to find anything concrete and even then the evidence was slight. What evidence there was pointed to Malenkov, Khrushchev, Suslov, and Poskrebychev.^{2/}

Malenkov in a paragraph of his report to the 19th Party Congress had referred to "the enemies of the Soviet State who are working persistently to smuggle their agents into our country" and had warned against "the remnants of bourgeois ideology and relics of private property, mentality and morality" still prevalent in the Party's ranks. Suslov had said a little more along this line. Soviet domestic propaganda following the Congress, however, had echoed Soviet strength and was characterized by a tone of confidence and assurance as was exemplified, for example, in Pervukhin's speech on 7 November. Thus, there had been no real effort after the Congress to prepare the people for the doctors' plot or the heightened vigilance campaign set off by its announcement.

One of the few harbingers was seen in the December 1952 Agitators Notebook, which attacked Zionism as a "reactionary nationalist current of the Jewish bourgeoisie." This was in contrast to the line of Moscow radio which during the Slansky trial in November had

1/ Some of the principals in the plot were apparently still free men as late as October 1952, even though the 13 January announcement had indicated that the plot had been uncovered "some time ago". On 23 October an institute of the Academy of Science in the Georgian SSR congratulated Vinogradov, one of the nine doctors involved, on his 70th birthday, indicating that he had probably not been arrested by that date. On 3 November a laudatory article on Vinogradov appeared in Evening Moscow.

2/ Most of the principal lines which were utilized by Soviet propaganda media during the vigilance campaign were mentioned in Party Congress speeches by Malenkov, Khrushchev, Moskatov, Suslov, Fadeyev, and Poskrebychev. Curiously, Stalin, Molotov, Beria, and Kaganovich did not mention any of these lines. For example, while Malenkov, Khrushchev, Suslov, and Poskrebychev spoke of the dangers of "capitalist encirclement" and admitted the existence of "hostile elements" within the USSR, neither of the points was mentioned by Stalin, Molotov, Beria, or Kaganovich.

played down the Zionism issue. Something may have happened in the period between October and January to cause the "doctors' plot" decision or affect its timing, but whatever it was it remained under the surface.

One probable clue was the curiously belated announcement on 30 October that Marshal Govorov had been elected an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Party at the Congress, but had been erroneously left off the lists. Obviously something very strange was going on and great pressure must have been exerted to get Govorov on the Central Committee. It has been speculated that Malenkov, who apparently dominated the October Congress, had for one reason or another begun to have trouble with the Central Committee and that some elements in it were rebelling against him.

Govorov was one of the military men allegedly marked for death by the doctors. This was of some interest because Govorov had links with Zhdanov. He had served with him in Leningrad and had delivered one of the eulogies at his funeral. In a Pravda article on 27 January 1949, Govorov had praised Zhdanov for his role in the defense of Leningrad. Here again the reasons why precisely these five -- Vasilovsky, Konev, Govorov, Shtemenko, and Levchenko -- were singled out for notoriety and other military leaders, such as Zhukov, Sokolovsky, and Timoshenko were not, is unknown. Another curious note regarding the selection of the five military leaders was that they did not include an Air Force representative.

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In addition, amid the mass of speculation regarding the purpose of the doctors' plot no clear reason for the inclusion of the five military figures stood out. Speculation at the time ranged from (a) an effort to bolster morale of the military by putting them on the side of the vigilantes, to (b) a warning to precisely these five and others of their ilk to remain passive in the events which were to transpire. It seems hard to visualize the military, with the experience of the 30's still in their minds, as looking with favor on any purge. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that the announcement was intended as a warning -- a warning against individuals or a group of individuals unknown to the West, who were contesting the status quo. This opposition may have been real or it may have been imagined. The Govorov appointment to the Central Committee suggested that it was real.

THE INTENSIFIED VIGILANCE CAMPAIGN

At any rate, once the original announcement of the plot was made there was little time lost in building on the symbolism of the purges of the 30's. An article in the 14 January issue of Kommunist linked the "Kostovs, Rajks, and Slanskys" with the "Trotskyites and Bukharinites" of the 30's and the timing suggested that all would be linked to the doctors' plot. The magazine also charged that many Party cards had been acquired by "alien enemy elements" in Leningrad. This effort to re-create a situation allegedly existent at the time of the Kirov assassination in 1934 appeared to be an obvious attempt to connect that earlier situation with the present.

In addition, the Pravda editorial which accompanied the announcement had referred to "right wing opportunists who held an anti-Marxist position regarding the extinguishing of the class struggle," thereby adopting a line which had run through the previous trials in the Satellites and which had been levied against Pauker in Rumania and Gomulka in Poland. The fact that representatives of the accused Jewish agency "Joint" were still present in Hungary indicated that the Satellites were not to be spared further purging.

In connection with his statements regarding "capitalist encirclement" and the existence of "hostile elements" in the USSR, Malenkov in his speech at the Congress had also mentioned the purges of the 30's. The purge of "all kinds of enemies of Marxism-Leninism, Trotsky-Bukharinite degenerates, against capitulators and traitors who endeavored to lead the Party off the correct path and to split the unity of its ranks" said Malenkov made it possible for the USSR to be sure there were no internal traitors when the Germans attacked it. In this connection, some observers have inferred that one of the purposes of the vigilance campaign was to root out all potential forms of opposition within the USSR in expectation of a war with the United States.

On 15 January Izvestia ran a lead article entitled, "Increase Political Vigilance," which did not mention the plot but appeared to associate Malenkov with the general idea of it. The American Embassy in Moscow noted at the time that the article presented an unusual example of quoting from Malenkov in as great a length as from Stalin. This pattern was to be followed throughout the remainder of the vigilance campaign. Malenkov was to be the only Soviet leader other than Stalin cited in the vigilance literature, although these citations were usually with reference to his speech at the Party Congress.

As mentioned previously, a survey of major themes in Soviet broadcasts between the 19th Party Congress and the subsequent reversal

of the doctors' plot indicated that there was no effort to prepare the Soviet people for the doctors' plot and the vigilance campaign. The broadcasts during this period did not appear to be based on the directives set forth by Malenkov in his report to the Congress. However, the survey noted that the announcement of the doctors' plot set off an extremely intense "vigilance campaign," with the main emphasis on eliminating "the remnants of bourgeois ideology, relics of private-property mentality and morality" which Malenkov had warned the Party against in his speech to the 19th Party Congress.

Later material in the "vigilance campaign" stressed the need to "end the self-satisfaction, infatuation with achievements, smug complacency, and inattentiveness" in the ranks of the Party. Again, the elimination of these "evils" had been cited by Malenkov, in his report to the 19th Party Congress, as one of the basic tasks of the Party.

Other second flight Soviet leaders took an active part in the campaign. On 3 February Vyshinsky excoriated leaders of Soviet law for their "serious mistakes." In his speech at the Congress Poskrebyshev had specifically singled out the jurists as needing some self-criticism and he had done so in roughly the same language now employed by Vyshinsky. He called on Soviet jurists to direct their attention to exploding "bourgeois principles" of international law that served the American and English "war mongers." Bagirov, Melnikov, Mikhailov, Patolichev, Yudin, and Alexandrov were all publicly associated with the campaign. Malenkov was also quoted with reference to the "capitalist encirclement" idea which was to accompany the vigilance campaign, a theme which had not been dominant in Soviet propaganda for some time but one which had been stressed by Malenkov, Khrushchev, Suslov, and Poskrebyshev at the Congress.

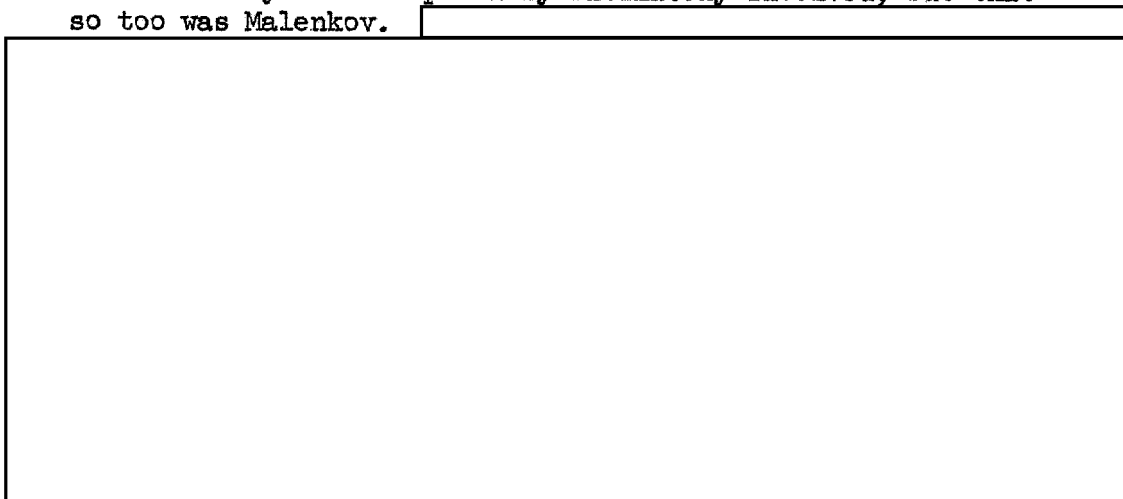
Since both Stalin and Malenkov were employed as oracles of the "vigilance campaign" in the days following the "doctors plot" announcement, and since Malenkov had been linked in Soviet propaganda with the hard line on "class-warfare" (he had been quoted by Ulbricht to this effect in a December speech), it is most probable that both were closely connected with its origins. In retrospect the theme would seem particularly adapted to the picture of an aged Stalin verging on senility, mistrustful of his doctors and darkly suspicious of a new administration in Washington. His lieutenants of the earlier days of purging --- Malenkov, Poskrebyshev and Shkiryatov were still with him and perhaps it was one of them who had planted the seed. Vyshinsky too was still in the foreground. In this connection, certain items are worthy of note:

1. Ambassador Kennan has stated his view that Malenkov during 1951 had succeeded in securing predominant influence over Stalin, had misinformed Stalin about Western intentions, and was in fact largely responsible for preventing Kennan from seeing Stalin during his Moscow tour. Mr. Kennan also identifies Malenkov with the hate-America line.

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2. The view [redacted] that Poskrebyshev and Stalin ran the whole show seems most unlikely. We believe that Poskrebyshev was probably intimately involved, but that so too was Malenkov. [redacted]

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4. There was later to be one rather curious statement by a foreign Communist explicitly associating Stalin with the doctors' plot. The Indian Communist Party's parliamentary leader, A. K. Gopalan, held a press conference in New Delhi on 19 May after returning from Moscow and declared that Stalin, as Premier at the time, must have shared in the responsibility for the arrest of the accused doctors. This statement brought immediate protests from other top Indian Communists at the Conference. It is the only known statement of this sort by a Communist source.

The doctors' plot announcement was shortly followed by a major campaign for the intensification of security measures. On 16 January, Pravda demanded increased vigilance from Soviet scientists and members of the intelligensia. Yuri Zhdanov, Chief of the Science Section of the Party Central Committee and son of the late Andrei Zhdanov, named a number of scientists who were guilty of subjectivistic distortions. This, of course, reminded observers of his recantation in 1948 after his father's decline and shortly before his father's death, when Yuri had to grovel before Lysenko.

At the same time certain leading Soviet historians, including Maisky, the former Ambassador to Great Britain, were criticized for their "bourgeois" thinking, while Kiev radio attacked individuals in the Ukraine who had not been sufficiently vigilant, particularly in light industry and the meat and dairy, food and timber industries. The next day Trud reached new heights of invective in an attack on "American and British war-mongers and their weapon -- Zionism." On 20 January a newspaper in the Lithuanian USSR admitted that some organizations there had been penetrated by "bourgeois nationalists" and Jewish Zionists, while Red Fleet charged that Western powers were utilizing diplomatic representatives and newspaper correspondents for "undermining" the USSR. Papers in the Ukrainian and Latvian SSR's accused specific individuals, mostly Jews, of criminal activities.

On the eve of the 21st, the Lenin day address was given by N. A. Mikhailov, the ex-Komsomol chief, who had been made a secretary of the Central Committee at the Party Congress. He stressed Party vigilance in the class struggle and denounced complacency in Party ranks as "counter-revolutionary". Stalin was quoted as holding that "such people...are turncoats or hypocrites who should be chased out of our Party." Curiously enough, this quote as well as most of the others attributed to Stalin during the campaign were taken from his writings of an earlier period. He had said nothing at the Congress usable for these purposes.

On 21 January New Times appeared with a strong attack on Zionism and on Israeli government officials who were called the executors of a US State Department spy ring in the USSR. Israel was attacked for racial bigotry. As was the case in the doctors' plot, most of the individuals cited after 13 January in the vigilance campaign as being harmful to Soviet security bore Jewish names.

The vigilance drive was also vigorously pushed in the European Satellites. In Hungary, Jews were arrested for their association with "Joint." In Rumania the party press warned that the deviation exemplified by former Finance Minister Luca had not been eliminated and that it would be "dangerous opportunism" to say that it had. In Bulgaria, ten members of an "espionage and plotting" organization guided by the "American intelligence in Turkey" were arrested, tried, and convicted between 18 and 20 January. In East Germany Georg Derntinger, the CDU Foreign Minister, was arrested on charges of treason and the anti-Zionist campaign which developed there resulted in the flight of numerous Jews to West Berlin, who were apparently under no illusion as to what the future would hold for them. In Poland the government continued its campaign against alleged US espionage and on 16 January delivered a note to the US protesting such activities.

In Austria, the Communist Party conducted a purge related to the Slansky trial. It was in Austria, also, that a Soviet-sponsored broadcast suggested that the principal reason for the Satellite trials was to be found in the policy of Secretary of State Dulles, who sought separation of the Satellites from the Soviet Union.

Elsewhere throughout the world, the various Communist parties were attempting with some difficulty to hew to the new line, particularly in France and in Italy where the damaging effect was noticeable.

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Within the USSR, the campaign continued in full swing. On 6 February Pravda announced the arrest of four persons on espionage charges. On 8 February Izvestia stated that Soviet security agents had liquidated a nest of American spies established in 1947 by a former US assistant naval attache in Vladivostok. The American Embassy in Moscow observed at that time that the Pravda article of 6 February had gone beyond previous press statements in its revelations of disputes over theory and in its citation of names and details of alleged espionage. The article had stated that "certain rotten theories" were still in existence among which were the beliefs that capitalist encirclement no longer existed and that the capitalist world would renounce its attempts to harm the increasingly stable Soviet Union. The class struggle was said to remain one between capitalism and socialism, and hence the capitalists would continue their attempts to overthrow the USSR.

In the face of this threat, Soviet foreign policy was described as "firm" and one which "admits of no concessions or little concessions to the imperialist aggressors." Stalin had not touched on capitalist encirclement in either his Bolshevik article or his short speech at the close of the Congress. His point in Economic Problems of Socialism that wars between the capitalist states were more likely than wars against the Soviet Union was not in keeping with the propaganda line. Louis Fisher, viewing this part of Stalin's article as a tension-relaxing device, has pointed out that the Soviet people may have taken it too seriously and hence provided another contributory cause for the vigilance campaign. Pravda's admission that "hostile elements" existed in the USSR indicated that the purge would definitely continue.

A new height in invective was reached on 8 February when an Izvestia book review attempted to rewrite history to put the United States on the German rather than the Soviet side during World War II. The article accused the United States and American espionage of trying "to facilitate military actions of the Hitlerite Army against the

Soviet Union." The vigilance theme remained the most dominant topic in broadcasts to the Russian people, and while the US and UK were cited as the chief external enemies, much emphasis was given to internal enemies as well. Two types of crimes were emphasized: political and economic. Specific accusations were made against the managerial class and petty Party and government officials. Most of the managers charged with security violations were in charge of consumer goods enterprises. The charges against Party officials emphasized malfeasance in the selection of cadres.

Yet the world was never to learn just who had been marked for purging, if indeed the Soviet leaders themselves knew. Most of the actual cases cited were small ones; most of the crimes were petty. The biggest official implicated was one S. M. Petrov, a Deputy Minister of Non-ferrous Metallurgy, who was said to have lost a number of secret documents through negligence and laxness. The provincial areas seemed to be waiting for the final word from Moscow. Yet possibly in the scramble to predetermine the arty line, hackneyed cases, some of which had been aired before, were once more dragged into the open. This same pattern seemed to be aired by the Moscow propaganda media also. All the old standard cases against the West were reproduced, but few new ones were created. This dearth of major culprits also appeared to enhance the theory that the initial announcement had been intended as a warning rather than a direct accusation.

FURTHER INDICATIONS OF TENSION

Meanwhile, another event had transpired which proved to be of more than marginal interest. On 27 January the candidate lists for the approaching elections to the local Moscow Soviets were published in the Moscow Pravda. Several members of the Council of Ministers were given no place on this list, which is actually a Who's Who for the City of Moscow, numbering as it does more than fifteen hundred leaders.

Among those not listed were I. A. Benediktov, Minister of Agriculture; U. Yu. Yusupov, Minister of Cotton Growing; D. G. Zhimerin, Minister of Electric Power Stations; I. K. Sivolap, Minister of Food Industry; I. A. Bovin, Minister of Forest Economy; P. A. Zakharov, Minister of Geology; Ye. I. Smirnov, Minister of Health; N. S. Kazakov, Minister of Heavy Machine Building Industry; P. I. Parshin, Minister of Machine and Instrument Industry; N. V. Novikov, Minister of Maritime Fleet; P. F. Lomako, Minister of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy; I. Ye. Voronov, Minister of Paper and Wood Processing Industry; N. A. Skvortsov, Minister of State Farms; V. S. Abakumov, Minister of State Security; S. A. Stepanov, Minister of Agricultural Machine Building.

The fate of these men was later to be reflected in the March decrees consolidating the Soviet Government, indicating that at least some of the changes wrought by the decrees had been under active consideration during the period between the October Congress and Stalin's death. Another interesting development was the nomination of S. D. Ignatiev by a group of Moscow workers of the MGB. This was the first time that he had been publicly identified with the MGB. Evidently, now that the doctors' plot had broken, the time was considered ripe to reveal Abakumov's replacement and explain why Ignatiev had been accorded high honors at the October Party Congress, where he had been made a member of the Party's Presidium.

Also significant was the fact that the name of A. A. Andreev appeared. He was listed as a Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. This was the first indication since October that Andreev, who had been left off the Party's Presidium, was still relatively prominent. Smirnov, the Minister of Health, who had been directly censored in the original announcement of the doctors' plot, failed to make an appearance on the list. It had been rumored in Moscow that he disappeared about six weeks before the announcement. Smirnov's fall, however, had been presaged at the October Party Congress, where he was not listed as a member of the Central Committee in spite of the fact that the Minister of Health in the RSFSR was named. This suggested that the doctors' plot was under consultation at that time.

A further significant fact noted in the lists was the position of P. N. Pospelov, who was listed as deputy editor of Pravda. He had been removed on 19 January from his position as Director of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute and had failed for the first time in five years to give the annual Lenin anniversary address on 21 January, which was delivered by Mikhailov. This indicated that Pospelov was not completely in disfavor, although he had definitely suffered a loss of prestige. It was thought significant at the time of the October Congress that Pospelov had not been named to one of the leading Party organs in spite of the fact that other Party theoreticians, such as Mitin, Yudin, and Chesnokov, had been. Interest in Pospelov's case was heightened by the fact that he had been reliably reported to be Jewish.

The vigilance campaign tapered off somewhat near the end of February, which was marked by very few significant events. Nevertheless, there were certain noteworthy events during the month. Three foreigners had interviews with Stalin -- on the 7th, the Argentine Ambassador, and on the 17th, both the Indian Ambassador and a representative of the Indian peace movement, Kitchlew, who had won a Stalin prize. In his interview with the Argentine Ambassador, Stalin discussed trade in political terms. This was in keeping with the remarks

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in his Economic Problems of Socialism, where he had indicated that the Soviet Union would sooner or later move into an offensive economic policy of competing with the West for markets in underdeveloped areas. This was in contrast to the defensive policy of the post-war period which was directed primarily at the acquisition of critically needed goods from Western countries. 1/

Two other events suggested that all was not well within the Soviet Union. On 14 February the death of L. Z. Mekhlis once more gave evidence of the tension that was in the Moscow air. Mekhlis was a leading Soviet official who had retired from Soviet life in 1950, when V. N. Merkulov replaced him as Minister of State Control. [redacted]

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[redacted] this retirement was due to ill health. Mekhlis was elected to the Central Committee of the Party in October 1952 and had appeared on the lists of candidates to the Moscow Soviets published on 27 January. He was also a Jew. Soviet propaganda treatment of his death strongly suggested that it was necessary to taper the anti-Semitic aspects of the internal security drive, lest the death of Mekhlis be taken as another example of murder perpetrated by a new group of "doctor-wreckers."

Although Mekhlis had been an important Soviet official in earlier years, his death announcement was made in a form usually reserved for only the very highest Soviet leaders; condolences were received from the various top Soviet organizations as well as Party and State leaders.

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A relatively detailed medical report on Mekhlis attributed his death to heart failure, due to general arteriosclerosis affecting primarily the heart and brain. The fact that Soviet authorities took such pains to describe precisely how Mekhlis died was an indication of their fear that the Soviet people as well as the rest of the world would assume that this prominent Jew had been murdered. The signatures of the medical report identified I. I. Kuperin as the new Chief of the Kremlin medical directorate.

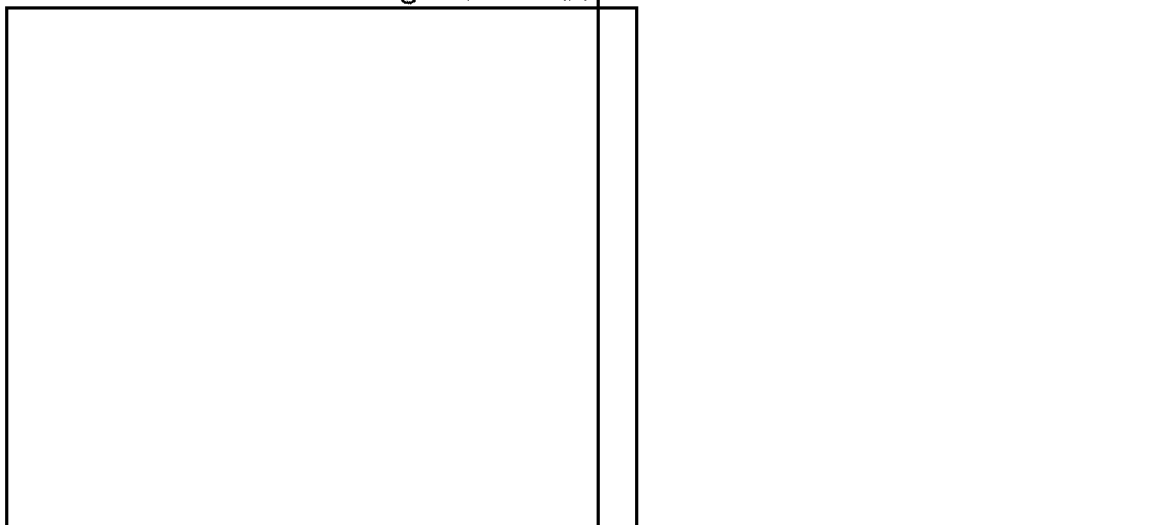
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[redacted] He apparently had replaced Egorov, who had been one of the accused doctors, as Chief of the Kremlin medical staff.

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On 17 February, Izvestia carried another curious death announcement -- that of General Kosynkin of the Kremlin guard. It noted that the death had occurred two days earlier and had been "sudden". This unusual announcement, coming at the time that it did, was another indicator that something was amiss.

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The only other occasion of note in February was the annual Red Army day ceremonies on the 23rd, when the usual line that the Soviet Army was defensive in nature was replaced by one stressing its role as one of liberation.

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