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c. He denied the possibility of a rift within the Politburo, pointing out that once the majority reaches a policy decision, the decision is accepted without dissidence. The four members who are "above criticism" are Stalin, Molotov, Beria, Zhdanov.

d. He characterized as American propaganda the alleged existence of a Paulus army, but conceded that Soviet charges on the militaristic character of the industrial police (in the Western Zones of Germany) may be unfounded.

e. He considered a quadripartite currency reform understanding possible on the basis that the currency be printed in Berlin and in Leipzig and both printing establishments made 4-power enclaves.

Malinin offered the following items of information on Stalin, Molotov, and Beria:

a. Stalin has had three serious attacks (of a nature not specified) within the past year.

b. Molotov is certain to succeed Stalin if the latter "should retire from active life within the next few months".

c. Beria has been only nominally concerned with NKVD affairs during the last seven years. During the war he was in charge of the Army supply system and is now in charge of heavy industries. Recurrent rumors of his visits to Germany are entirely unfounded; in view of his prominence such visits would have become known to many.

Malinin indicated that, although social contacts between Soviet and U.S. officials were strongly frowned upon by the Politburo, he and Sokolovsky share the conviction that many controversial Control Council issues are susceptible of settlement "sitting around the table drinking cocktails. Obviously if you and I agree, the British and French will not object afterwards." He declared to Belic his willingness to arrange further informal meetings, but requested that future invitations be extended to him privately and not through official channels since further official contact with Ambassador Murphy might result in his recall to Moscow.

Our Berlin station is in a position to continue informal contacts with Malinin, and if called upon, to initiate exploratory contacts in Marshal Sokolovsky's direction.

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## II: The March Crisis and the Berlin Airlift

