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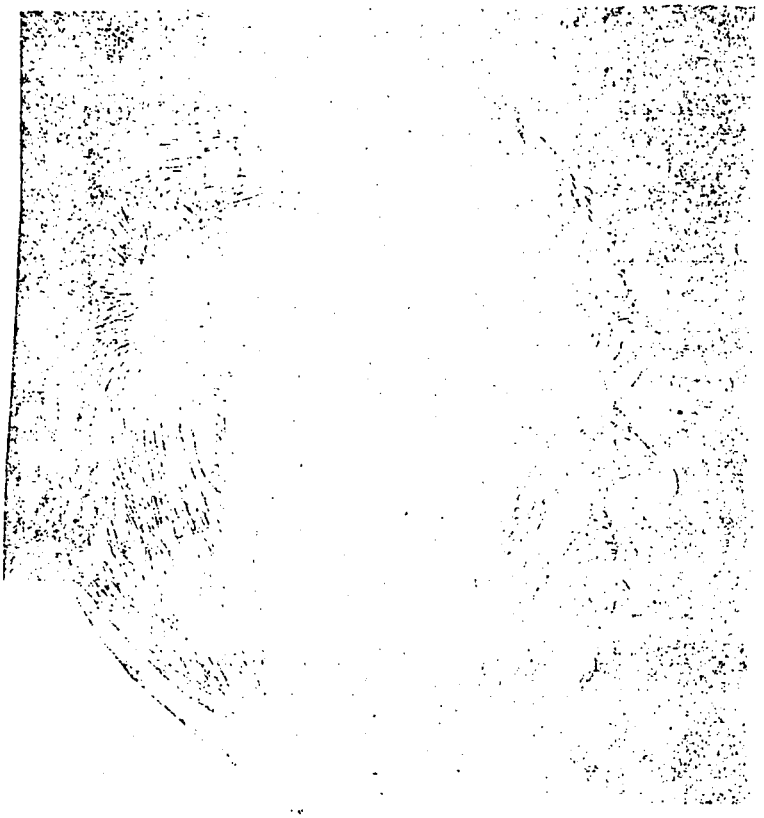

and the anti-party group

CAESAR XV

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OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Agency

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KHRUSHCHEV AND THE "ANTI-PARTY GROUP" (1953-1957)

This is a working paper, a reconstruction of the challenge to Khrushchev by the "anti-party group" led by Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich.

This paper represents one of the two principal types of papers which appear in the CAESAR, POLO and ESAU series. One type, which now comprises the bulk of our papers, deals with important current intelligence problems such as the present state of the Sino-Soviet dispute, or of the Chinese Communist leadership, or of Soviet military thinking--the subjects of three of our five papers thus far in 1962. The other type, represented by this paper, offers a reconstruction of an important period in Communist history when enough information has come to hand to provide a good account. We believe that this effort to get history into place is also of value to the analysis of current problems.

This paper was written by Avis Bohlen of the Soviet Internal Affairs Branch of General Division of the Sino-Soviet Bloc Area of OCI. We would welcome comment on the paper, addressed to Miss Bohlen at Ext. 7415 or to the coordinator of the Sino-Soviet Studies Group [redacted].

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Very shortly after the defeat of the anti-party group in June 1957, enough became known about their attempt to oust Khrushchev to put together a fairly coherent picture of events. Within a matter of weeks, it was fairly clear that Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich had forced a showdown in the presidium, and that Khrushchev at one point had found himself in a minority but had nonetheless managed to defeat his opponents by summoning the central committee for a plenum. Much new information has come to hand since then--most of it consisting of details which clarify the incomplete version available in 1957.

The reconstruction of events offered in this paper differs from previous versions in that the addition of this new material has filled in many important gaps; but the basic outline remains the same. A summary, which by definition omits details, would reflect the similarities rather than the differences. For this reason, we make no further summary of the June 1957 events. We offer the paper to those who are interested in as nearly complete an account of the June 1957 events as we are now able to construct.

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KHRUSHCHEV AND THE "ANTI-PARTY GROUP" (1953-1957)

The attempted coup against Khrushchev in June 1957 had its antecedents in the struggle for power which had been taking place in the presidium since Stalin's death in 1953. All the four principals in the June events--Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and Khrushchev--were deeply involved in this struggle and, at first, independently of one another; but as Khrushchev continued to rise at the expense of the other three, the lines of the conflict came to be drawn between the first secretary, on the one hand, and Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich on the other.

Over the past four years, much new data on the June 1957 attempt of Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich to oust Khrushchev has come to light, and it is now possible to offer a detailed account of what happened. It should be recognized, however, that even this version cannot be considered definitive. The information provided by official Soviet sources is filled with distortions and omissions, and gives only one point of view: that of the victor, who is always right and becomes more so as time goes on. Although Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich are usually portrayed as greater villains than their five allies, the difference in treatment is quantitative rather than qualitative. This has tended to obscure the divergencies between the eight members of the group which unquestionably existed, and to oversimplify the substantive problems in dispute in 1957 and before. In addition, the issue of the anti-party group, artifically kept alive since 1957, has often been used for purposes which have no relevance to the June 1957 events per se. At the 22nd Party Congress, Khrushchev used the anti-party group to attack Stalin on the one hand and the Albanians and Chinese on the other.

Official sources have been supplemented by the many rumors to which any political event in the Soviet Union gives rise. The only criterion for judging the reliability of these reports, which are often vague and contradictory, is the extent to which they conform to verifiable facts. Such corroboration is available for most of the reports used here. However, the account of the June presidium meeting is primarily based on unofficial sources, and hence is more open to question than the rest of the paper.

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Malenkov and the New Course

There were indications of a rivalry between Malenkov and Khrushchev at least as far back as 1949 when Stalin brought Khrushchev from the Ukraine to reorganize the Moscow party organization and to join the central committee secretariat. The rivalry was intensified after Stalin's death in March 1953 when political maneuvering within the presidium began in earnest and Malenkov was forced by his colleagues to share the powers bequeathed him by Stalin. Malenkov took over the premiership, leaving Khrushchev the most powerful member of the secretariat. During the next two years, the first secretary moved constantly to the front at the expense of Malenkov. He built up his strength in the party apparatus, garnered more and more public attention for himself, became the major spokesman on agriculture and set up the virgin lands program, the initial success of which strengthened his hand politically. As Khrushchev's prestige mounted, Malenkov's correspondingly seemed to decline. Undoubtedly, as Stalin's heir, Malenkov was regarded by many of his colleagues as the main political threat, and their fear of his ambitions may have indirectly helped Khrushchev, who was in any case the more skillful politician. Aimed primarily at producing more consumer goods, Malenkov's New Course became one of the focal points in the general debate on the allocation of economic resources. In addition, it encountered serious economic difficulties and was held responsible by many for the disarray in the industrial sphere. Malenkov's consumer goods program ran into conflict with Khrushchev's virgin land development over investment priorities and set up a competition for resources which did little to diminish the rivalry between the two men. Another area of disagreement appears to have been the issue of government-versus-party control.

In any event, Malenkov was no match for the first secretary, and in February 1955 Khrushchev forced him out of the premierhsip for the ostensible reason that Malenkov's consumer goods program had threatened the primacy of heavy industry. On this issue, Khrushchev probably had the support of Molotov and Kaganovich, as well as other members of the party presidium. At the same time, the policy debate provided Khrushchev with a useful weapon for removing his chief political rival, of which he took full advantage. Although the policy shift may in itself have called for a high-level scapegoat, the fact remains

that Malenkov, Khrushchev's chief opponent, was demoted, while Mikoyan, also an advocate of increased consumer goods, was not. And after 1955, Malenkov, who held the less influential position of deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers, clearly had lost most of the power he once had.

Molotov Versus Peaceful Coexistence

Since Stalin's death, Molotov had undoubtedly been uncomfortable with the forms and intent of the "peaceful coexistence" line which had dominated Soviet foreign policy. He was uneasy even over the relatively cautious démarches initiated by Malenkov, and, after the latter resigned in 1955, Molotov made a "tough" speech to the Supreme Soviet which seemed to presage a return to a harder line. However, when Khrushchev not only returned to but expanded the policy of peaceful coexistence, Molotov's reluctance to go along turned into stubborn opposition.

The particular issue which brought him into direct conflict with Khrushchev was the proposed reconciliation with Tito. Throughout the spring of 1955, he apparently kept up a stubborn resistance to this policy and even after the Khrushchev-Bulganin trip to Belgrade in May and June 1955, he continued to regard Tito as a heretic and the concessions made to him a mistake. For his position, Molotov was censured by a plenum of the central committee in July 1955. With the possible exception of Voroshilov, he seems to have been alone in his defiance, for official accounts indicate that he got no support from either Kaganovich or Malenkov.

Thereafter, as Khrushchev assumed a firmer direction of foreign affairs, and as the policy of peaceful coexistence began to be applied more and more boldly, the disapproving Molotov was consistently pushed into the background. One reason for this was Molotov's obvious incompatibility--both by personal inclination and because of his close identification with Stalin's foreign policy--with the new Soviet image in foreign affairs. Moreover, the frequent clashes between Khrushchev and his foreign minister appear to have provoked a personal animosity between the two men which may also have been a factor in Molotov's loss of influence. Khrushchev at any rate

seemed to take great pleasure in reminding Molotov that his voice was no longer as powerful as it had once been, and frequently made fun of him in public.

In addition, Khrushchev's domestic policies undoubtedly caused Molotov much uneasiness, and he was no more receptive to the first secretary's virgin lands program than he had been to Malenkov's policy of increased investments for consumer goods. In general, he maintained a stubborn resistance to any major changes aimed at partially liberalizing the regime, and he dragged his feet whenever possible. His opposition to liberalization at home and peaceful coexistence abroad probably resulted not only from a conservative "Stalinist" mentality which saw in all change a form of revisionism, but also from apprehension that such measures as Khrushchev was implementing might lead to instability at home and to a serious weakening of the party's hegemony.

Molotov's continued intransigeance apparently convinced Khrushchev that his wings would have to be clipped further. In the summer of 1955, Kommunist carried a letter from Molotov "recanting" his statement that the USSR had not yet built socialism--a statement which other evidence suggests was not Molotov's belief, but a slip of the tongue. This artificially inflated issue was an obvious effort to add ideological deviation to the list of Molotov's sins and was a further step in the downgrading of the Old Bolshevik. At the 20th Party Congress in February 1956, both he and Malenkov were obliged to repudiate the policies they had earlier advocated, and Molotov heard his conduct of Soviet foreign policy described as "ossified." In June 1956, on the eve of Tito's return visit to Moscow, Molotov was replaced by Shepilov as foreign minister.

Decline of Kaganovich

The ouster and vilification of Kaganovich is especially ironic. There is much evidence that he was an early patron of Khrushchev and helped him on his way to the top. After Stalin's death Kaganovich became a first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers; his influence increased and, until the end of 1955, he apparently remained the regime's top industrial specialist. He

undoubtedly sided with Khrushchev on the issue of heavy versus light industry in December 1954, since, as a long-time advocate of rapid industrial growth, he must have regarded Malenkov's consumer goods concessions as recklessly unorthodox.

In May 1955, as part of the government reorganization which followed Malenkov's demotion from the premiership, Kaganovich was appointed chairman of a new State Committee on Labor and Wages, an important assignment. When Khrushchev and Bulganin went to the Geneva conference in July 1955, Kaganovich reportedly was left in charge on the home front.

However, Kaganovich, the embodiment of the militant Old Bolshevik, undoubtedly shared some of Molotov's difficulties in adapting to the new policies introduced after Stalin's death, and may have become increasingly disturbed over the Khrushchev experiments. His four public speeches after 1953 reveal a continuing orientation toward a Stalinist style of thought, a rather reluctant endorsement of the post-Stalin "new look," and a tendency to emphasize a tough foreign policy. The most remarkable in this regard was his 7 November speech in 1955, which stressed the continuing validity of classical Marxist-Leninist theory--a somewhat discordant note at a time when Kommunist and other theoretical journals were inveighing loudly against the "isolation of theory from life." In contrast to Molotov, who actively resisted, Kaganovich seems to have become increasingly less flexible as a result of his uneasiness and disorientation. He was later accused of having obstructed work in the presidium with his long confused speeches. He opposed the virgin lands program, and as chairman of the State Committee on Labor and Wages reportedly accomplished nothing, his one goal being to dissolve the committee. This dogmatic inflexibility, which limited his usefulness in the Khrushchev era, probably explains why, towards the end of 1955, Kaganovich appeared to be undergoing gradual eclipse at the hands of younger economic administrators, particularly Pervukhin, with a corresponding decline of his influence in the presidium. In June 1956, Kaganovich was released from his position as chairman of the Committee on Labor and Wages, and in September was appointed Minister of the Building Materials Industry, a lower ranking post.

DeStalinization

Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956 appears to have been the first major issue that found Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich in any way united against the first secretary. Shortly before the congress, Khrushchev reportedly told the presidium that he intended to make a speech in closed session denouncing Stalin. This bombshell produced a violent reaction from Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Voroshilov, who, according to Khrushchev later, came out strongly against the exposure of the "cult of personality" and of the "violations of socialist legality." Khrushchev attributes their opposition to fear that their role in the purges would also be revealed; this was perhaps one factor, but it also applied to Khrushchev, and in any case the problem was undoubtedly more complicated than that. Stalin had undergone a gradual downgrading since his death, apparently by common consent; but a dramatic exposé such as that proposed by Khrushchev was a different matter and probably seemed, to those who opposed it, both unnecessary and unwise. They may have anticipated--unlike Khrushchev--that such an abrupt deStalinization might create more problems than it would solve. However, Khrushchev as usual steamrollered his opposition and threatened to make the speech to the entire congress. So Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Voroshilov finally gave in and agreed to let Khrushchev take up "the question of the cult of the individual" in a closed session.

Closed session or no, the opponents of deStalinization were clearly unhappy about the whole matter. At the 20th Party Congress, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Voroshilov were very reticent in commenting on the cult of personality, which Kaganovich described as "no easy question." As the policy of deStalinization began to be implemented, their uneasiness must have increased. Khrushchev has accused them of obstructing investigations into the purges and of opposing rehabilitation of purge victims. Ponomarev relates that Kaganovich and Molotov strongly resisted the idea of a new deStalinized party history, and Molotov continued to praise the old "short course" in the press.

Thus by the summer of 1956, Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich all had good reason to be dissatisfied with Khrushchev's leadership. All three had suffered substantial loss of power and influence since Stalin's

death--a fact which Khrushchev did not let them forget. Perhaps even more important than their frustrated ambition, they had become increasingly concerned over Khrushchev's policies and style of leadership. At the same time, there was little unity among the three men, and over the past four years they had more often than not found themselves on opposite sides of the fence. As individuals with little in common, Khrushchev had reduced them at leisure. Although they did not achieve real unity until early 1957, the issue of deStalinization did bring them somewhat closer together and made possible a certain unity of action.

Khrushchev Suffers A Temporary Setback

During the fall of 1956, Khrushchev seemed to be somewhat on the defensive. He appeared to be modifying his positions somewhat, particularly in regard to Stalin, and his major preoccupation seemed to be maintaining the status quo rather than trying new or unorthodox solutions to current problems.

While Khrushchev himself probably recognized the need for adjustment to the problems arising from the deStalinization campaign and the crises in Poland and Hungary, his unwonted moderation may also have been the result of strong pressure from his opponents in the presidium. It seems likely that they took advantage of the difficulties caused by Khrushchev's deStalinization campaign to reassert their influence and to put the "collectivity" back in the "leadership."

In October 1956, Molotov and Kaganovich accompanied Mikoyan and Khrushchev to Warsaw for the talks with Gomulka; the following month, Molotov was appointed Minister of State Control. Although the Hungarian revolution was apparently handled primarily by Mikoyan, Suslov and Khrushchev, Malenkov accompanied the first secretary to a high-level meeting of satellite leaders in Budapest from 1 to 4 January. During this same period Khrushchev's position was reported to be shaky: in mid-November and again in December there were rumors that he would be replaced. These rumors subsided when the December plenum took place after a three-day postponement and no personnel changes were made. In early January there was a rumor circulating in Warsaw that he had retained his leadership by only a "slim majority" at the plenum.

Shortly thereafter, however, Khrushchev again emerged as the dominant figure on the Soviet scene, and Malenkov did not participate in the 10 January talks with Kadar in Moscow. Khrushchev's public appearances and the programs with which his name was associated began to multiply. By February the first secretary appeared to have fully regained his preeminent position, and he had no trouble pushing his economic reorganization plan through the central committee.

The December 1956 Plenum

The economic reorganization plan was one of the end results of a process set in motion by the December 1956 plenum, which met to discuss economic problems. There seems to have been general agreement at the plenum that the regime faced serious economic difficulties, but there apparently was disagreement as to whether the fault was in the goals of the draft Sixth Five-Year Plan, approved by the 20th Party Congress in February, or in the administration of the economy. The two were not mutually exclusive, but in the minds of the protagonists probably became nearly so.

The industrial administrators, critical of the very high goals and the pattern of investment allocations contained in the Sixth Five-Year Plan, wanted a more economically realistic plan and some relief from the tensions produced by high growth tempos.

Those opposing this view--mainly party functionaries and military men--were concerned lest the goal of "catching up with the West" in per capita output be relegated to the museum of Communist antiquities. In their view sufficient reserves existed in the Soviet economy to enable the plan to be met, and the real culprits were the industrial administrators whose departmental empire-building, featherbedding and red tape prevented full realization of the USSR's economic capabilities.

The conflict ended in a standoff, and the plenum apparently decided that both criticisms had merit. It decided, on the one hand, that the Five-Year Plan should be revised as proposed by the administrators, but reportedly it ordered also, in an unpublished decision, an immediate examination of the problems of interdepartmental barriers.

The party presidium members were probably as divided on these issues as was the plenum. One Soviet source has reported that Molotov defended the Five-Year Plan and that Khrushchev attacked industrial administrators for maintaining interdepartmental barriers. Malenkov probably sided with the industrial administrators, since he had long considered retrenchment and correction of disproportions in the economy a vital necessity. Saburov, more than likely, was unsympathetic to attacks on the plan, since he had helped develop it and had been responsible for presenting it to the 20th Party Congress. The plenum, reflecting on his performance as planning chief, replaced him with Pervukhin as chairman of the State Economic Commission for Short Term Planning of the National Economy.

Judging from subsequent events, it seems likely that Khrushchev argued against any substantial downward revision of the plan, that Saburov criticized "administrative deficiencies," and that Molotov and Kaganovich may have seen in the attack on interdepartmental barriers a dangerous move toward further decentralization. Malenkov, Pervukhin, and Shepilov may also have resisted any reorganization, although it is possible that they only opposed the plan in its final radical form.

The plenum, therefore, set in motion two apparently separate sets of activities. Pervukhin, aided by a team of top-level administrators, proceeded to create the annual plan for 1957, ostensibly in accordance with the plenum's directives. Another group, composed of all the members of the presidium, both full and candidate, tackled the problem of interdepartmental barriers.

February 1957 Events

On 5 February 1957, Pervukhin presented his 1957 annual plan to the Supreme Soviet, which dutifully adopted it after three days of "debate." Planned growth of industrial production was cut from the 10.8 percent achieved in 1956 to 7.1 percent, the lowest in any peacetime year since 1928. If the annual plan was any forecast of the changes to be made in the Sixth Five-Year Plan, scheduled for revision by midyear, then the victory of the managerial elite was complete. Pervukhin's group apparently went even further with economic retrenchment than the December party plenum had intended.

Meanwhile the group working on the problem of administrative deficiencies had partially discarded the traditional Soviet method of merging ministries and had worked out a radical solution involving a sharp reduction in the central ministerial apparatus in Moscow and an expanded co-ordination of activities within regions. The new plan was designed in part to break up the ministerial empires, blast entrenched bureaucrats from their chairs, and distribute both men and administrative authority widely over the geographic face of the Soviet Union. It was also designed to "release" the economic reserves tied up by interdepartmental barriers, bureaucratic red tape, and other administrative deficiencies.

Although neither Molotov nor the economic administrators can have been very enthusiastic about this scheme, apparently neither he nor any of the others who subsequently opposed the plan expressed their disagreement while it was being drafted. The issue was brought up for final consideration at a presidium meeting which took place shortly before the central committee plenum on 13 and 14 February. The opponents of the reform again remained silent; however, at 3 a.m. on the eve of the plenum, as Furtseva later revealed, Molotov delivered a short note to his colleagues registering his opposition to the reorganization, on the grounds that the country was not yet ready for such a reform.

Khrushchev Regains the Initiative

The Supreme Soviet ended its work on 12 February and the central committee's two-day session began the next day. Although Khrushchev had remained very much in the background at the Supreme Soviet, the plenum which followed appears to have been completely dominated by him. The adoption of the reorganization scheme was a personal triumph for him. At the same time it marked a defeat for his political enemies and the destruction of the ministerial empire as a political base. In addition, Khrushchev was able to bring about the appointment of one of his supporters, Frol Kozlov, to the party presidium.

During the spring, Khrushchev initiated the practice of sending personally signed congratulatory telegrams to agricultural workers and officials and in March participated in the first of a series of much propagandized

regional agricultural conferences. At the end of the month, his theses on the economic reorganization were published for discussion.

During the month of May, Khrushchev's publicized activities reached an all-time high. In the volume of personal publicity and in the number and diversity of policies associated with his personal sponsorship, he surpassed all the other members of the collective leadership put together. Early in the month he presented his theses to the Supreme Soviet, was named chairman of the commission elected to draft the law and again addressed the session after the law was passed.

At an agricultural conferences in Leningrad on 22 May, in a manner clearly revealing his continued dominance over agriculture, Khrushchev boasted that the USSR could overtake the United States in per capita output of meat and dairy products in the next few years. It was also at this conference that he discussed the possibility of discontinuing the compulsory deliveries from private plots, a subject which had not yet been fully decided in the presidium. In between these activities, he was interviewed by CBS on television and received a plaque from a group of Leningrad workers with a highly laudatory inscription. No Soviet leader had received similar approbation since Stalin's death.

Formation of the Anti-Party Group

Precisely at what moment Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich decided to join forces for an attack on Khrushchev can only be conjectured. However, the imminent economic reorganization, which would seriously weaken the political power of the managerial elite, their strongest element of support, must have made it clear that they would have to act soon or not at all. In addition to the threat to their position inherent in the reorganization itself, the adoption of the reform clearly reflected Khrushchev's renewed preeminence and his continued ability to impose his policies arbitrarily against the wishes of his colleagues. The combination of past grievances and this latest threat--the most serious to date--effectively overshadowed the differences between the three men and made united action at once possible and necessary. Hence it was probably in the spring of 1957 that Molotov,

Malenkov and Kaganovich first made tentative plans to oust Khrushchev. Of the three, Malenkov was allegedly the practical organizer--which probably meant that he recruited supporters--while Molotov was the ideologist.

A few ominous indications that Khrushchev was planning to implicate the Molotov group in Stalin's excesses may well have given its members a feeling of desperation. Malenkov had reportedly received warnings that Khrushchev intended to accuse him of complicity in the Leningrad affair. At a presidium meeting which took place not long before the June plenum, the rehabilitation of Tukhachevsky and other military figures was discussed and unanimously approved. Khrushchev, as he told the 22nd Party Congress, then asked Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich whether they were sincere now, in voting for the rehabilitation, or then, when they had concurred in the execution order. Clearly this boded ill.

The Anti-Party Group Recruits Supporters

At the presidium meeting on 18 June, the original group of Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich was supported by five other members of the presidium; at what point their support was obtained is unclear. Undoubtedly the industrial reorganization plan had also created great dissatisfaction among many important political figures in Moscow, including members of the central committee and presidium. Their bureaucratic empires were being dissolved and many of them were personally threatened with transfer to the hinterlands far from the comparative luxury of Moscow. To many, the radical degree of decentralization envisaged in Khrushchev's scheme must have seemed a dangerous move, possibly putting in jeopardy Moscow's control of industry and hence weakening the party. Khrushchev's claim that the USSR could overtake the U.S. in per capita production of meat and dairy products by 1960 saddled the Soviet economy with a strenuous agricultural program on top of the economic reorganization and threatened to further intensify disruption of the economy resulting from unrealistically high goals. Undoubtedly deStalinization and the autumn events in Poland and Hungary had already created some general apprehension.

According to the official line, which must however be regarded with some caution, the anti-party group recruited supporters "with Jesuitical finesse" and launched its attack "trusting in contacts previously made." The group has frequently been accused of lacking a program; however, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to find a program or platform to which all eight men would agree. From the point of view of the three leaders, Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich, a tactical alliance was probably sufficient for their purposes and moreover much easier to achieve. It appears likely that by adopting a somewhat different approach to each member of the presidium, the anti-party group successfully translated a general uneasiness over Khrushchev's policies into political support for its move to oust the first secretary.

Many of the reports describing the June meeting indicate that the attack on Khrushchev at that moment took by surprise many of the presidium members who subsequently supported the opposition. This suggests that some, although generally aware that an attempt to remove Khrushchev was in the offing, may not have known that it would take place when it did. Others, while agreeing in principle to support the factionalists in opposing some of Khrushchev's policies, may have known nothing at all about the more ambitious plan to remove him from the leadership.

Bulganin, by his own confession, joined the anti-party group well in advance of the June presidium meeting and clearly participated in the plot to oust Khrushchev. His office became a meeting place for the conspirators. By virtue of his position as premier, he was made the nominal leader of the opposition. If his involvement is clear, his motives are less so. Bulganin had been the chief beneficiary of Khrushchev's rise to power. The first secretary's policies had apparently received his consistent support, although he may have come to share some of the general anxiety about Khrushchev's course. He did not speak up in favor of the economic reorganization at the February plenum, although he later contended that this measure also had his support. In addition, Ignatiev charged later that Bulganin was dissatisfied with his status in the party and had joined the factionalists out of ambition; it is just possible that he was tired of playing second fiddle to Khrushchev.

Voroshilov, publicly identified at the 22nd Party Congress for the first time as a member of the anti-party group, was at that time linked with Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich in such a way as to imply that he had been one of the original conspirators. This is difficult to believe, if only because he was in the Far East from the middle of April to the end of May--probably the very time when the three leaders began to lay their plans. Moreover, by Khrushchev's account, Voroshilov's relationship with the other three was far from cordial. Voroshilov has himself admitted, however, that he supported the policies of the anti-party group. As an Old Bolshevik who had served for years under Stalin, he may well have shared some of the doubts of the "dogmatists" about the wisdom of Khrushchev's course; he had openly opposed the deStalinization. His fear of being implicated in the purges, as Khrushchev suggests, may also have been a factor. Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich, by skillfully playing on his doubts and fears, may have found Voroshilov--already somewhat senile--readily susceptible to their forcefully presented arguments. At the 22nd Party Congress, Voroshilov denied the charges that he had been a conspirator or that he knew of their factional activities. While Voroshilov's memory may not be altogether reliable, it is entirely possible that he did not know of the plan to oust Khrushchev until the presidium meeting--at which point he wavered but finally gave his support, or that he was persuaded that policies could be changed only with the removal of Khrushchev. In any case, most reports indicate that he vacillated throughout. Although they undoubtedly knew that Voroshilov would be inclined to waver, the three ringleaders appear to have considered his support important; the prestige he enjoyed in the party would be a useful tool.

Shepilov's immediate expulsion from the presidium and central committee in 1957 suggested that he had been deeply implicated in the anti-party conspiracy. However, later accounts, coupled with the accusations of careerism and doubledealing thrown at him, indicate that he changed sides fairly late in the game and that his ingratitude came as an unpleasant surprise to Khrushchev. Long considered a protégé of the first secretary's, Shepilov had apparently given his firm support to Khrushchev's policies, both foreign and domestic. It is true that he was openly unenthusiastic about the economic

reorganization and is known to have joined Molotov and Pervukhin in forming a triumvirate of opposition. However, it was apparently opportunism rather than ideology that determined his position: according to the official version, Shepilov switched loyalties when he decided that victory lay with the insurgents, who, as he thought, would be able to obtain a majority. On the basis of this calculation he gave the anti-party group his full and unequivocal support and stayed with them until the end. Because of his well known sympathies, the others had probably not attempted to recruit Shepilov, who moreover was only a candidate member of the presidium without a vote, but they undoubtedly would have welcomed his support. Shepilov was the only member of the party secretariat to join them, and had, moreover, extensive ties with the cultural intelligentsia.

The inclusion of Shepilov clearly illustrates the heterogeneous character of the anti-party group, since he had little in common with its other members. Shepilov was closely identified with Khrushchev's foreign policy, which cannot have endeared him to Molotov. His liberal tendencies, which earned him the name of "Dmitri progressivniy," and in particular his leniency towards writers, were clearly at odds with the more hard-line attitude of his fellow conspirators.

Judging from what appears to have been the line-up at the June presidium meeting, it seems a fair guess that the factionalists considered Pervukhin and Saburov to be potential supporters, somewhat in the same category as Voroshilov. Pervukhin had vehemently opposed the economic reorganization, which, among other things, eliminated his job. This, he later confessed, encouraged the opposition to count on his support. In addition, Pervukhin had clashed with Khrushchev on the issue of hydro- versus thermo-electric power stations. Saburov was probably counted as less certain than Pervukhin. Although formerly a Malenkov protégé, he had supported Khrushchev's policies over the past few years; on the other hand, he had recently been removed from his position as head of Gosplan. On the basis of later evidence, it seems likely that the anti-party group did not expect support from either Mikoyan or Suslov and almost certainly not from Kirichenko. Most of the candidate members of the presidium were Khrushchev appointees, but they had no vote. According

to one report, Malenkov had hoped to obtain the support of Zhukov--a valuable ally, even though only a candidate member--but was unsuccessful.

The Anti-Party Group Plans Its Strategy

The anti-party group evidently intended to keep the attack against Khrushchev wholly within the confines of the presidium; to do this, it needed the support of a majority within that body. As it turned out, Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich did have more adherents than Khrushchev, but this support, while probable, could not be considered altogether certain in advance. Even if the potential majority did materialize, the group could not be sure that its allies would not withdraw their support if pushed too far or if faced with determined opposition from a large body of Khrushchevites. The unstable coalition put together by the anti-party group would be a useful weapon against Khrushchev only if supplemented by skillful tactics. Timing would obviously be an important factor; the opposition presumably planned to move against Khrushchev at a moment when his allies, both real and potential, would be at a minimum, while the anti-party group would be at its strongest. The factionalists might also have reasoned that the weaker their opposition, the more strongly their potential allies would come out in their behalf. Clearly, 18 June was a propitious moment; on that date, many of Khrushchev's supporters would be away from Moscow. Suslov had been away on vacation since 19 May; Kirichenko would be at a plenum of the Ukrainian central committee; Saburov was scheduled to attend a CEMA meeting in Warsaw. Among the full members, that left only Khrushchev and Mikoyan to face five dissidents, in addition to Pervukhin, a potential ally. Of the candidate members, Kozlov would be in Leningrad, preparing for the celebration of the city's 250th Anniversary; Mukhitdinov also would probably be in his "constituency" of Uzbekistan; Shvernik was scheduled to attend celebrations in Ufa. The anti-party group may also have expected that Zhukov would be in Leningrad, where in fact he was until 17 June, playing host to General Gošnjak, the visiting Yugoslav Minister of Defense. Of Khrushchev's presumed supporters, this left only Furtseva and Brezhnev in Moscow. It is true that many of the leaders scheduled to be absent on 18 June were also due to return very shortly, but the anti-party group evidently expected Khrushchev to give in at once, thus

presenting Khrushchev's adherents both in the presidium and in the central committee with a fait accompli and rendering them virtually helpless. (This is, in any case, the strategy officially attributed to the anti-party group.)

Bulganin and Khrushchev were in Finland on a state visit from 6-14 June, during which time the anti-party group, minus Bulganin, probably laid its final plans. When Bulganin and Khrushchev returned, they were met at the airport by Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, Mikoyan, Pervukhin and Saburov. At some point after Khrushchev's return (some reports say on the same day), Malenkov requested a presidium meeting to decide which members of the presidium would attend the celebrations in Leningrad on 22 June. Khrushchev reportedly questioned the need for such a meeting, since the arrangements had already been made, but finally agreed; and the presidium met on 18 June. The meeting probably did not begin until late, because during the day Khrushchev was interviewed by a Japanese editor; the presidium members known to be in Moscow (including Zhukov, by this time) received a delegation of Hungarian journalists; and Saburov left for Warsaw. Probably none of these developments would have taken place had the battle already begun.

Showdown in the Presidium

The fight apparently began at once, with Malenkov questioning Khrushchev's right to preside over the meeting, as Khrushchev had apparently been in the habit of doing by virtue of his position as first secretary. An acrimonious debate ensued. In the end a vote was reportedly taken which removed Khrushchev and placed Bulganin, who had abstained during the vote, in the chair. Continuing in the same vein, Malenkov, as principal spokesman for the insurgents, reportedly stated that Khrushchev had consistently violated the principles of collective leadership, and he demanded that the first secretary resign. Malenkov accused Khrushchev of having carried out many measures without the concurrence of the other leaders, particularly in agriculture--the most recent instance being his speech in May announcing the abolition of compulsory deliveries from private plots and the goal of overtaking the USA in per capita production of meat, milk, and butter by 1960.

This debate soon turned into a major policy battle, in the course of which most of Khrushchev's innovations since 1955 came under attack. The opposition appears to have concentrated its fire on the reorganization and Khrushchev's milk and meat goals, but the discussion seems to have eventually extended to the larger questions of resource allocation and investment priorities. Khrushchev's meat and milk goals were assailed as unrealistic and untimely; he was accused of taking "a purely practical approach," of "trying to put economics above policy," and Molotov is said to have called him a "demagogue without any ideological basis." His agricultural policies in general were denounced as a "rightist deviation" which threatened the "Leninist general line on the preferential development of heavy industry." His foreign aid program is also said to have been attacked as detrimental to the Soviet economy. The economic reorganization, it was charged, would lead to a serious dilution of political power and control--a process which Khrushchev's opponents undoubtedly thought had already gone too far. While it seems an over-simplification to state, as does the official party line, that the anti-party group wanted a complete return to hard-line Stalinist policies, it is not unlikely that the factionalists, as they were reported to have done, advocated tightening up controls. Judging from their past record of opposition to deStalinization, they probably attacked Khrushchev on this issue; there is also some evidence that the question of government versus party control may have arisen.

Molotov led the attack on Khrushchev's foreign policy, which he reportedly assailed as "Trotskyist and opportunist." Shepilov also joined in the fray, attacking Khrushchev's hard-line speech to a group of writers on 19 May. Later it was revealed that Shepilov had a booklet, "a unique file of his perfidy," in which he had entered bits of scandal about his colleagues. He presumably put this to good use at the presidium meeting.

Bulganin, Voroshilov, and eventually Pervukhin also participated in the attack, although somewhat more moderately and not, according to most reports, until the discussion had been raging for some time. Pervukhin joined in denouncing the economic reorganization, accusing Khrushchev of having an "organizational itch" and hinting at a "bias" (presumably in favor of the party) in the idea of reorganization.

The real battle, however, focussed on the attempt to remove Khrushchev from his position as first secretary. Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich had reportedly prepared a new list of candidates for the secretariat and the presidium, in which one of them was to become first secretary and Khrushchev was to be offered the ministry of agriculture. Although some of the anti-party group may have been unaware previously of the plot to oust Khrushchev, they nonetheless appear to have ultimately concurred in demanding that he resign. Khrushchev's energetic self-defense must have made it clear to them that he would not yield to pressure from his colleagues on policy matters and that a change in policy--presumably their motive for supporting the factionalists--could be effected only with his removal. They may also have felt that in supporting the anti-party group thus far, they had committed themselves irrevocably.

Khrushchev, however, aided by Mikoyan, defended himself vigorously and categorically refused to resign. He apparently argued that the presidium's demand was illegal, since only the central committee could remove him. Khrushchev's intransigeance must have come as something of a surprise to his opponents; they had probably assumed he would bow to the demands of the majority, as Malenkov over his consumer goods program and Molotov over Yugoslavia had done in 1955. Since the first secretary's substantial political strength in the central committee would clearly guarantee him an easy victory, the anti-party group vehemently opposed Khrushchev's demand that the matter be submitted to that body; keeping the battle within the presidium was obviously their only chance of success.

In Stalin's day, the use of force would have been the next step. Bulganin had in fact placed guards around the Kremlin, and in particular around the building where the presidium was meeting, with orders to let no one through without specific instructions from him. Since their whole strategy suggests that the factionalists expected an easy victory, the guards seem to have been intended more as a potential than an actual threat. But when Khrushchev did not give in, their use would have seemed logical and indeed imperative. However, the more vacillating supporters of the anti-party group, having perhaps already been pushed farther than they originally intended to go, may have got cold feet and opposed the use of Stalinist methods to bring about Khrushchev's removal.

Khrushchev Rallies His Cohorts

At this point, a new development occurred which strengthened Khrushchev's hand. The central committee members residing in Moscow were informed of the battle within the presidium--probably by Furtseva, although possibly by another presidium member. Khrushchev's "healthy core" in the presidium was undoubtedly instrumental in rallying the central committee to the support of the first secretary, but it is not clear which of his supporters was the most active. Furtseva is generally credited with having played a major role; apparently she not only got in touch with the central committee members residing in Moscow, but also alerted the provincial party bosses and summoned them to Moscow immediately. Another version circulating in Warsaw after the 22nd Party Congress assigns this role to Mikoyan and Polyansky, while Furtseva rendered an equally important service by conducting a filibuster in the presidium. In any case, the provincial central committee members were urgently summoned to the capital--transported, according to one rumor, in special planes supplied by Zhukov. Central committee members abroad were also informed of the situation and several ambassadors--Malik, Vinogradov, Ponomarenko, Pegov, and Yudin--left their posts hastily to return to Moscow. As the central committee members arrived in Moscow, they were very likely briefed on the situation by either Furtseva or Mikoyan and given instructions on how to act, both then and subsequently at the plenum.

Members of the presidium who had been absent were also returning--many of them Khrushchev supporters. Shvernik had returned on the 19th; Suslov, Mukhitdinov, and Kirichenko arrived back in time for the plenum on the 22nd; Kozlov, who had been in Leningrad when the presidium meeting began, was there again on 22-23 June, but may have returned in the interim. Saburov, the only returnee to support the opposition, was publicly identified in Warsaw on the 19th and so could not have returned before the 20th or even later. However, from his own admission, we know that he took part in the later presidium meetings, where he seems to have taken a somewhat ambiguous position. In general he defended Khrushchev's policies and resisted "the attempts of Kaganovich and the others to besmirch the name of Khrushchev," but apparently he did not come out firmly on Khrushchev's side. He admitted giving the factionalists some support, but only "on the basis of easily eliminated shortcomings, which were not of a fundamental nature."

The Central Committee Enters on the Scene

Meanwhile, before the arrival of their colleagues, the central committee in Moscow sent a delegation of 18 or 20 to the presidium. The envoys, armed with a petition from the central committee as a whole, made their way "literally illegally" past the guards posted by Bulganin and presented themselves at the door of the building where the presidium was meeting, demanding to be received by that body. Although they were unable to see the leaders, they managed to deliver the central committee petition requesting that the issue of leadership currently under discussion in the presidium be submitted to a central committee plenum, which alone had the right to decide such a question.

The intrusion of the central committee into the affairs of the presidium caused an uproar. Khrushchev's opponents heaped abuse on the central committee for daring to interfere: Kaganovich, who was particularly insulting, spoke of pressure being put on the presidium; others raged that the central committee did not trust its ruling body. Although Khrushchev demanded that the delegation be received, the three leaders of the anti-party group for a time flatly refused.

However, the tide was rapidly turning in the first secretary's favor. By this time, Khrushchev's strength in the presidium had greatly increased with the return of his supporters, and the anti-party group was probably under pressure from some of its own erstwhile adherents to agree to a plenum.* More and more central committee members were arriving in Moscow; as they joined the delegation in the Kremlin, bringing its strength up to 70 or more, it became clear that the factionalists would have to receive the envoys and probably agree to a plenum as well. Meanwhile, however, the hard core of the insurgents had been fighting a desperate rearguard action. While agreeing in principle to a plenum, the anti-party group apparently continued to demand that Khrushchev resign first, judging, probably correctly, that the

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* Most reports suggest that Pervukhin, Saburov, Voroshilov, and Bulganin had by this time become somewhat lukewarm in their support of the factionalists.

central committee would not oppose a fait accompli. The announcement of his resignation, together with a policy statement to be drafted by Shepilov, was to be published in the press. Khrushchev, however, undeceived by this rather obvious strateagem, rejected this proposal. According to Khrushchev's own account of this episode, his opponents then suggested that Voroshilov be sent to meet the central committee members alone, apparently calculating that his stature within the party would influence them. This Khrushchev also refused to accept. He insisted on going with Voroshilov, stating that no one could deprive the first secretary of the right to meet members of the central committee which had elected him. In the end, it was agreed that four members of the presidium would go, two from each side: Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Voroshilov, and Bulganin. The convocation of a plenum--already virtually certain--must have been formally agreed on at this meeting; this marked the de facto end of the anti-party group's revolt.

Central Committee Plenum

The plenum of the central committee opened on 22 June. Present were members of the central committee, both full and candidate, and members of the auditing commission--a total of 309. Roughly a third of these men clearly owed their careers to Khrushchev; many others were probably indirectly indebted to him. Although the anti-party group may have counted on dissatisfaction with the economic reorganization to undercut some of Khrushchev's strength in the central committee, they probably did not expect the battle to go beyond the presidium, and there is no evidence to suggest that they had attempted to build up active support in the larger body. Khrushchev, in addition, had the advantage of superior organization: the central committee had probably been well briefed by his supporters and its loyalty assured. This, added to his existing strength--which was probably greatest among the very members summoned to Moscow--effectively guaranteed his victory. The length of the session--eight days--indicates that it turned into a full-scale rally of support for Khrushchev and a forum for detailing the "perfidy" of his opponents.

The only item on the agenda of the plenum was consideration of the issues raised by the anti-party group. Suslov, who apparently presided over the meeting,

presented a report on the presidium meeting which had just taken place and was probably able to manipulate the speakers in favor of Khrushchev. The four insurgents were each allowed to speak twice during the plenum. One after the other, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov defended their positions at length and reiterated their charges against Khrushchev. With the possible exception of Bulganin, who was later accused of having tried to shield Malenkov during the discussion, the former supporters of the group apparently did not speak up in their defense and in fact began to gravitate towards the other side. Saburov, under the influence of Mikoyan and Kirichenko, deserted even before the plenum began. If the anti-party group had any adherents in the central committee, they were either not allowed to speak or preferred to remain silent.

The speeches of the four insurgents were followed by those of Khrushchev's well-briefed supporters. Of the 215 members who requested permission to speak, 60 were allowed to do so, and the rest submitted written statements. All allegedly supported Khrushchev and fiercely denounced the anti-party group. Following what was probably a carefully planned line of attack, one speaker after another rose to defend the line laid down at the 20th Party Congress. The members of the anti-party group were attacked not only for their continuous and stubborn resistance to implementation of party policy, but also for their nefarious role in the purges. Malenkov was reportedly singled out for his role in the Leningrad affair and in the liquidation of Voznesensky, while Molotov and Kaganovich were accused of having participated in the mass repressions in innocent cadres. This caused Voroshilov to jump up from his seat; waving his arms in the air, he shouted to the central committee: "You are young! We will correct your brains!" Shepilov, dubbed a "political prostitute," was denounced for his hypocrisy and doubledealing.

As the isolation of anti-party group became increasingly evident, its adherents, Saburov, Voroshilov, Pervukhin, and Bulganin began to desert one by one. Towards the end of the plenum, each of these four rose to denounce the anti-party group and to "expose" its activities, confessing at the same time their own

errors.* Zhukov allegedly appeared towards the end of the plenum, when he reaffirmed his support for Khrushchev and his opposition to Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich. This was probably the final blow, for on the last day of the plenum Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov recanted and confessed their guilt; Shepilov tried to absolve himself on the grounds that he had only joined at the last minute. According to one report, the factionalists first tried to make a partial retreat and to mitigate their demands, but the plenum demanded a full recantation, which it got, apparently in the form of written statements from the three men. Molotov alone held out and stubbornly refused to repudiate his position.

The central committee, on the last day of the session, 29 June, drew up a resolution condemning the factional activities of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and Shepilov, and expelling them from the central committee; the resolution was adopted unanimously, except by Molotov who abstained. At the same time, the four leaders were all removed from the presidium, as was Saburov, while Pervukhin was demoted to candidate member, and Shepilov was removed from the secretariat. Voroshilov and Bulganin, apparently treated as lesser offenders because of their recantations, reportedly received official reprimands (which remained secret) but retained their positions. The changes in the presidium, together with the resolution of the central committee, were published in Pravda on 3 July; on 5 July, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, Pervukhin, and Saburov were released as deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers.

Somewhat surprisingly, the four ringleaders--Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Shepilov--remained in the party. Although their activities would certainly seem to have warranted expulsion, and while the central committee resolution specifically cited Lenin to the effect that party members might be expelled for factionalism, no action was taken against them either then or later. At the 22nd Party Congress in October 1961, despite repeated calls for the

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* This is suggested in the "confessions" of these four men: Bulganin's at the December 1958 CC plenum; Saburov's and Pervukhin's at the 21st Party Congress, Jan.-Feb. 1959; and Voroshilov's statement to the 22nd Party Congress; also Khrushchev's speech at 22nd Party Congress, 27 October 1961.

removal from the party of Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich, these demands were not incorporated in the final resolution of the congress. However, it has been rumored that expulsion proceedings are currently under way, although, as retribution for events which took place four years ago, expulsion now seems a rather belated and irrelevant gesture.

Although the threat to Khrushchev's leadership ended with the central committee plenum of June 1957, the anti-party group as an issue has been kept very much alive, and, over the past four years, the propaganda campaign against the factionalists has been repeatedly revived. The gradual unmasking of the other four villains--Bulganin in December 1958, Saburov and Pervukhin in February 1959, and Voroshilov in October 1961--has provided a more or less continuous opportunity for virulent attacks on the group as a whole. Whether Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich are expelled from the party or not, the anti-party group seems likely to remain a standard item in the party's propaganda repertory for some time.