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THE SECRET OF SHTEMENKO - II

A recent Tass report<sup>1</sup> has identified Colonel-General Sergei Shtemenko, who was once Chief of Military Intelligence of the Soviet Army, as being now the Chief of the Main Staff of the Ground Forces.

If this report is accurate, it indicates that the final stage in the professional and political rehabilitation of Shtemenko, one of the most mysterious Red Army leaders of the post-war period,<sup>2</sup> is in progress.

Between 1948 and 1952, the last phase of the Stalin era, Shtemenko held the post of Deputy Chief, and later of Chief of the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces. From December 1952-1953 he was Commander of the Soviet Army Group in E. Germany, and at the last Stalinist Party Congress (the 19th in 1952) he was elected a candidate member of the CC, CPSU.

But after Stalin's death, Shtemenko, who had served on the General Staff in World War II was one of the intended victims of the notorious "Doctors' Plot", was abruptly demoted from General of the Army to Lieutenant-General and disappeared from public view for three years. He reappeared in Moscow on 23rd October 1956 at a reception for the Yugoslav delegation then visiting the Soviet capital, and on 30th March 1957, when he was awarded the Order of the Red Banner, he had already been promoted to Colonel-General, the rank he holds today.

In January 1959 it was learnt from Siegfried Dombrowski, the former deputy chief of Military Counter-Intelligence of the SSD who defected to the West,<sup>3</sup> that Shtemenko was then Chief of Military Intelligence (GRU) of the Red Army. But in 1960 Shtemenko was transferred to the less important post, politically speaking, of Deputy Commander of Troops in the Volga Military District. He remained there until 1961, when he was appointed Commander of the Tbilisi Garrison (Zarya Vostoka, 7th November 1961).

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<sup>1</sup>Tass in English to Europe, 6th September 1963.

<sup>2</sup>See Background Information, 24 January 1959, "The Secret of Shtemenko" by h.r.

<sup>3</sup>Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23 January 1959.

The Tass report last month which now indentifies him as Chief of the Main Staff of the Ground Forces means that he has won a return to the political scene in Moscow, and in addition has been given a much more important military post. Under these circumstances his return to candidate membership of the CC, CPSU, at the 23rd Party Congress seems a distinct probability. Be that as it may, the team of Khrushchev and Malinovsky appears to have recognized that whatever the political failings of Shtemenko may have been (i.e., presumably his too close association with Stalin), his military capabilities are such as to warrant this new advancement

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