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## COMMUNIST AREA

● USSR: Military

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### IS KRYLOV NOW A FIRST DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER?

The Tass communiqué issued in Moscow after the end of the meeting of leaders of the ruling parties (except for those of China, N. Vietnam and N. Korea) on 21st October gave an unusual listing of the Marshals who were involved. It reads:

... Marshals of the Soviet Union A.A. Grechko, M.V. Zakharov, N.I. Krylov, I.H. Bagramyan, Chief Air Marshal K.A. Vershinin, Marshal of Artillery K.P. Kazakov, Marshal of Armoured Troops P.P. Poluboyarov ... (See also Pravda, 22 October 1966).

The absence from the list of Malinovsky might well be explained on grounds of illness. The Defense Minister is 68 years old, he signed an obituary published in Red Star on 13 October, and there is no reason at present to think that he is involved in any major conflict of views with the Kremlin.

But the listing of Marshal Krylov ahead of Bagramyan seems to suggest that Krylov has recently been made a First Deputy Minister of Defense. This is the rank held by both Grechko and Zakharov, whereas Bagramyan is only a Deputy Minister (there are usually about eight other officers who are Deputy Ministers).

If the supposition that Krylov has been promoted is eventually confirmed, it would follow that the influence of the Strategic Missile Forces, which are under his command, appears to be on the increase. Grechko is Commander-in-Chief

1) Emphasis supplied.

of the Warsaw Pact Forces, and Zakharov is the Chief of the General Staff. In other words no single arm of the forces has in recent years been represented at 1st Deputy Minister level, a fact which makes the upgrading of the Strategic Missile Forces as a result of Krylov's apparent promotion still more significant.

On the other hand, it is also possible that Krylov's newly enhanced status was due to a belief in the Kremlin that Malinovsky's illness is serious. If it is one from which the Defense Minister might not recover sufficiently to return to active duty, Grechko would be the most likely successor since the latter is only 63, whereas Zakharov is the same age as Malinovsky (i.e. well above normal pensionable age).

Any such further promotion of Grechko would leave one vacancy in the ranks of the First Deputy Ministers of Defense, and it may be in anticipation of such a gap that Krylov's apparent promotion was made known.

Moreover if it is accepted that Grechko is the most likely successor to Malinovsky as Minister of Defense,<sup>2</sup> it would seem reasonable to expect that Krylov might one day prove to be Grechko's successor as Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact Forces.

Such second-guessing as to the outcome of the game of musical chairs in the Ministry of Defense is inevitably a most speculative exercise, but there seems little doubt that Marshal N.I. Krylov has been promoted and that as a result the attention paid to the Strategic Missile Forces in Soviet defense thinking may well continue to expand.

r.r.g.

- 2) Grechko was Commander of the Kiev Military District in 1945-53, i.e. during the period when Brezhnev was also in the Ukraine (1945-50) as a 1st Secretary of Zaporozhe and Dnepropetrovsk Oblasts.