

Radio Free Europe/Munich
Office of the Policy Advisor
Background Information USSR

8 June 1959

KHRUSHCHEV AND THE PRESIDIUM (IX)

The new History of the C.P.S.U., the replacement for the Kratky Kurs, provides the first Soviet documentation for the persistent, but hitherto unconfirmed, reports that Marshal K. Voroshilov had at some time during the June 1957 Party crisis, backed the anti-Party group Presidium majority in their desperate attempt to oust Khrushchev as First secretary.¹ Omitting the name of the 79-year old Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from the list of those described as Khrushchev's "supporters"² two years ago this month, the official post Stalin Party textbook thereby reveals that Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Kirichenko, and Suslov had found themselves in temporary minority in the Presidium against the opposition led by Malenkov--Molotov--Kaganovich, the core of the anti-Party group, who were joined on this occasion by Saburov, Pervukhin, Bulganin, and Voroshilov. Thus, of the collective leadership which ruled the Soviet Union after Stalin's death,³ only Mikoyan now remains in good standing at Khrushchev's side on the summit of the Party leadership. Not yet subjected to the humiliating experience of those who were added piece meal to the anti Party group in the process of demotion and the debasement by public criticism, Voroshilov has been pushed on to the path of disgrace by omission which presages a speedy disappearance from the Soviet political scene.⁴ Perhaps spared the fate of the others because of his age and unquestioned popularity throughout the Soviet Union, this old Bolshevik-Stalinist has not in the 3 years since the XX Party Congress responded to the First secretary's challenge to

"find the necessary courage to write the truth about Stalin".⁵

Despite this refusal to renounce his loyalty to the deceased dictator, Voroshilov had been permitted to remain the Chief of State; as the most ineffectual of those who sought to halt the emergence of another dictator, the Marshal has paid the price of that failure with a suspended sentence of Party-political demise hanging over his head. The illness which prevented Voroshilov from speaking⁶ at the XXI Party Congress may eventually serve as the pretext for his withdrawal from the representational role he has occupied for the last six years of his four decades in the service of the Party-State. The real reason--still to be admitted in the Soviet press--will be the Marshal's temporary alignment with the arithmetical majority (7-4) in the Presidium which was incapable of shaking Khrushchev's position in the secretariat.

From the "statement" of M. Z. Saburov, now available in the stenographic Report of the Congress,⁷ additional documentation of the details of the intra Presidium struggle can be obtained. Previously known only from the short Tass summary since it was not printed, nor even mentioned in the Pravda reports of the Congress,⁸ the full text makes the following contribution

to a clarification of the situation in June 1957:

"While maintaining correct positions on basic questions of Party policy, after having discerned the true aim of the anti-party group, which amounted to changing the leadership of the Central Committee and changing the Leninist policy which was being conducted by the Presidium of the Central Committee and personally by N. S. Khrushchev, I, with the aid of several comrades from the healthy section of the Presidium of the Central Committee (Comrades Mikoyan and Kirichenko), quickly broke with the anti-party group and, at the Plenum of the Central Committee in June 1957, justly told all that I knew about the group's intentions; in doing so, I helped the Plenum and the whole Party to expose the plans and the intentions of that group."

The accuracy of Saburov's self-defense, almost immediately challenged and rejected by G. A. Denisov, 1st secretary Saratov oblast, is not, in this context, important; significant is the fact that only Anastas Mikoyan and Alexei Kirichenko are mentioned by name as members of the "healthy section of the Presidium". Missing is, therefore, not only Voroshilov, but also Mikhail Suslov, thereby raising some doubts concerning the steadfastness of the latter as well. Whether or not the final accounts of those June days are eventually fixed at 7 pro and 4 contra Khrushchev is, for the moment, only of Kremlinological interest. The fact that the First secretary had been able to overcome a Presidium majority had been established soon after the June Plenum; the subsequent quantitative changes, increasing the size of that temporary majority, do not affect in any qualitative sense, the original meaning of the victory of the secretariat over the Presidium and the reestablishment of the First secretary as the unchallenged leader of the Party.

In Saburov's recapitulation of the obstructionism and opposition of the anti Party group, the following accusations on specific internal foreign policy issues are listed:

- 1) Cultivation of the virgin lands;
- 2) New Planning Procedures in Agriculture;
- 3) Catching up with the U.S. in per capita milk, butter and meat production;
- 4) Raising prices for agricultural products sold to the State;
- 5) Abolition of arrears for economically weak kolkhozy;
- 6) Freeing individual farms from the obligation of delivering milk;
- 7) Broadening of rights of Union-Republics;
- 8) Reorganization of Industry;
- 9) Abolition of Compulsory loans;
- 10) Economic Aid to People's Democracies;
- 11) Aid to Underdeveloped Countries to Asia and Near East.

Nearly all of these charges have been mentioned previously in the two-year campaign against the anti-Party group and, in various combinations, they still reappear intermittently in the Agit-Prop organs. Singly and collectively, however, they present only the picture of total opposition

of the M-K-M group without throwing the least bit of light on their program--if indeed any common platform existed. Throughout the entire two years, particularly in the Confession of Bulganin and the attacks on the individual members of the anti-Party group at the December plenum⁹, as well as at the XXI Party Congress, a clear distinction has been drawn between the permissible policy debates and the plot and conspiracy to oust Khrushchev from the leadership of the Central Committee and the Party. The same differentiation is sought without justification--in the opinion of the apparatchiki apparently--by Saburov in his declaration to the Congress. As expressed in words attributed to Mikoyan at the end of June by G. Boffa¹⁰

"every machine needs an accelerator, but it also needs a brake...which can prevent errors and haste."

Since the removal of Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich et al, Khrushchev's Party-State machine has been moving ahead at considerable speed even without--to apply Mikoyan's metaphor--"a brake". This could be dangerous not only for those with places in the machine, but for anyone who may still seek to place obstacles in its path or seek to change its course. To date, however, the First secretary and his apparatchiki seem to have matters completely under control and therefore punishment for unwarranted use of the brakes in the post Stalin period has been deprivation of Party positions and loss of power and prestige. Nevertheless the repetition of reminders of criminal action in a more distant past is a warning that more drastic sanctions may yet be imposed on those who have thus far failed to "confess". Writing in the organ of the State Procuracy, the General Procurator of the USSR has recently--verbatim--reiterated the charges made against the anti-Party group last December before the Supreme Soviet:

"The exposure and rout of the anti-Party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov and Bulganin were of great importance in strengthening socialist legality. These splitters, especially Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, Bulganin, who themselves were guilty of flagrant arbitrary action and criminal violations of socialist legality, put the brake on the urgent and vital measures of the Party Central Committee to strengthen socialist legality."¹¹

These carefully chosen words from the pen of the prosecutor in the case of the collective leadership vs the "Beria clique" are the counterpart to the belatedly published declaration of Saburov. The latter continues the propagandistic construction of the Khrushchev image as a person of infinite patience and inordinate powers of persuasion, the former discloses--once again--that only one phase of the case of Khrushchev vs "collective leadership" has been closed.

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¹See V. Zorza, Manchester Guardian, 10 July 1957; G. Boffa, L'Unita 8 July 1957; also T. S., Khrushchev and the Anti-Party Group, the World Today September 1957.

²Reuter, Moscow, 4 June 1959, the new history confuses the real situation by listing all other present Presidium members and candidates--except Pervukhin--as supporters of Khrushchev.

³The Presidium of the CC after Stalin's death consisted of the 9 underlined names plus L. Beria.

⁴See V. Zorza, Manchester Guardian, 5 June 1959.

⁵Secret speech at XX Congress.

⁶The text of his prepared speech which is included in the recently published Stenographic Report of the Congress is devoted almost exclusively to administrative problems of the Soviets at various levels. Only a routine criticism of the anti-Party group is made.

⁷See below pp. 1-3.

⁸See below pp. 4-5.

⁹See Background Information, Khrushchev and the Presidium, 19 December 1958.

¹⁰La Grande Svolta, Edition Riuniti (Rome), 1959, p. 131-132; interestingly enough Boffa, the former Moscow correspondent of L'Unita, makes no reference to the roles of Voroshilov or Suslov in his analysis of the June plenum.

¹¹R. Rudenko, Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost, #4, April 1959 (passed for publication, 1 April 1959), p. 5; see also Izvestia, 27 December 1959.

SABUROV'S "STATEMENT" AT THE 21st CONGRESS

Kuusinen: The floor is given to Comrade Saburov for a statement (zayavleniye).

M.Z. Saburov: Comrades! The report of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev "On the Control Figures for the Development of the Economy of the USSR for 1959-65", which I approve fully and completely, contains the great results of the struggle of the Communist Party and the Soviet people for the building of a socialist society in our country under the banner of the great Lenin. This report also represents the grand plan of the construction of Communist society and shows us the way for effecting that plan, a plan which serves as a model for putting the ideas of Lenin into practice. This plan is the fruit of the collective work of the Central Committee CPSU and the whole party and is approved by the Soviet people.

No doubt, comrades, the time is not far off when our country will become the first in the world, not only in its absolute level of production, but also in its per capita production of the more important types of products. This will assure our people of the highest standard of living and will signify that the USSR will emerge victorious in its peaceful competition with capitalism. In this way, the historic task set by the great Lenin, to match and overtake economically the more developed capitalist countries will be accomplished.

The plan for the building of Communist society in our country, set forth for the 21st Congress by N.S. Khrushchev, is the pride and triumph of the collective thinking of the party and the Soviet people and of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism; it is, at the same time, evidence of the bankruptcy of the antiparty group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, Bulganin and Shepilov, a group which attempted to revise the historical decisions of the 20th CPSU Congress. This group, which was divorced from life and had nothing positive to offer, came out against the most important undertakings of our party.

It is known, comrades, that I made a mistake and showed political instability in the struggle of the Central Committee CPSU against the antiparty group in June 1957. Therefore, I consider it my duty to answer to the 21st Party Congress for that mistake.

Of what did my mistake consist and what role did I play in the period when the party was fighting against the anti-party group?

I had long known, as had all the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee CPSU, that a group of the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee, - Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and later Bulganin and Shepilov - within the Presidium of the Central Committee, in all the basic questions of domestic and foreign policy, took its own special position and, under various pretexts, strove to hinder the adoption of decisions on these very important questions. At almost every sitting of the Presidium of the Central Committee CPSU, this group spoke out with its own opinions, remarks and "corrections". In this matter, the Presidium of the Central Committee was, for a long time, very patient with the group and often postponed final decisions on the questions being discussed.

Among these most important questions on which the antiparty group conducted a struggle within the Presidium of the Central

Committee were these: the question of mastering the virgin land; the question of the new planning procedure in agriculture; the question of the slogan on catching up with the US in production of milk, butter and meat per capita; the question of raising prices on certain agricultural products given to the state; the question of abolishing arrears for economically weak kolkhozes; the question of freeing individual farms from the obligation of delivering milk; and a number of other questions raised in the Presidium of the Central Committee concerning agriculture, especially those raised by Comrade Khrushchev.

The members of the antiparty group also spoke out against broadening rights of the union republics, against reorganizing the administration of industry and construction, against reorganizing the work of Gosplan, against abolishing the loans, etc. I could list a number of other questions against the decision of which this antiparty group consistently spoke out within the Presidium of the Central Committee.

This group also spoke against, or tried by every means to delay the taking of decisions on, very important questions of foreign policy. The group particularly spoke against the policy of the Central Committee CPSU in such important questions as the necessity to develop our economic ties with countries of the people's democracies and to give them aid, to say nothing of our aid to underdeveloped and dependent countries of Asia and the Near East. The members of the group behaved like people blinded by narrow, national limitations; they showed a lack of understanding of the policy of the party on very important questions.

Comrades! In all these and other important questions of the policy of the Communist Party, I never shared the views of these antiparty elements who were divorced from life. On the contrary, during the entire time of my membership in the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, I firmly and consistently supported the line advanced by the healthy part of the Presidium, headed by Comrade Khrushchev.

In discussing the mastery of the virgin lands, the new forms of planning in agriculture, the reorganization of the administration of industry and construction, or the broadening of the rights of the union republics, in all these and in other questions of the internal and foreign policy of the party, I unwaveringly took correct positions and unconditionally supported the healthy core of the Presidium of the Central Committee which was headed by N.S. Khrushchev who most actively and consistently implemented all these questions from Leninist positions.

My error, comrades, consisted in that, before the June Plenum of the Central Committee CPSU, at a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee, I criticized shortcomings in the work of the Presidium, not from the position of the healthy section of the Presidium of the Central Committee CPSU, but from the position of the antiparty group which, using petty and easily-corrected shortcomings as a screen, attacked Comrade Khrushchev, striving for (dobivayas') a change in the leadership of the Central Committee, and, it follows, a change in the policy of the Central Committee, which occupied Leninist positions and positions indicated by the decisions of the 20th Party Congress.

But at a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU before the June Plenum I held quite a different position;

having protested against the dirty attempts of Kaganovich and other members of the antiparty group to sully the name of N.S. Khrushchev, I declared that the line of the Presidium of the Central Committee was correct, that collective leadership was being effected in the Presidium of the Central Committee, that it was necessary to end the whole business by considering and eliminating the unprincipled shortcomings that were noted.

Of course, comrades, my mistake was that, while taking a correct position in the Central Committee on very important questions, I could have gone into the Central Committee and pointed out the existing insignificant shortcomings, as N.S. Khrushchev quite correctly told me, but which I did not do at that time.

While maintaining correct positions on basic questions of Party politics after having discerned the true aim of the anti-party group, which amounts to changing the leadership of the Central Committee and changing the Leninist policy which was being conducted by the Presidium of the Central Committee and personally by N.S. Khrushchev, I, with the aid of several comrades from the healthy section of the Presidium of the Central Committee (Comrades Mikoyan and Kirichenko), quickly broke with the anti-party group and, at the Plenum of the Central Committee in June 1957, justly told all that I knew about the group's intentions; in doing so, I helped the Plenum and the whole Party to expose the plans and the intentions of that group.

The June Plenum of the Central Committee CPSU noted the political instability which I showed at that moment, and taking into consideration the fact that I had helped the Plenum in exposing the antiparty group, removed me from membership in the Presidium of the Central Committee but let me remain a member of the Central Committee. Later, by decision of the Central Committee of the Party, I was sent to work as director of a plant in the city of Syzran. I acknowledged this decision to be correct and, in working at the plant, I am devoting all my powers to correcting my mistake and justifying the trust of the Central Committee of the party and my people.

Comrades! The great program of building Communism in our country, the program set forth in the report of Comrade Khrushchev, is a program for effecting the Lenin plan in modern conditions. This program is calculated to raise the standard of living of our people and the might of our state, and it will undoubtedly be completed before the allotted time. In putting this plan into effect, the Communist Party and the entire Soviet people, rallying closer around the great banner of Lenin, are advancing with firm step on the road to Communism, sweeping everything decrepit out of its path, including the schismatic anti-party group.

Comrades! An honest acknowledgement of my mistake gives me hope that the delegates of the 21st Congress will find it possible to forgive me my past and thus open for me the prospect of active participation in the building of Communist society under the leadership of our party and under the banner of the great Lenin. (Vneocherednoy XXI S'yezd Kommunisticheskoy Partii Sovetskogo Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza: Stenograficheskiy Otchet, 1959, Vol. 2, pp. 289-292.)

SPEECH BY SABUROV

Tass Summary
4 February 1959

He declared that the SYP the Congress was discussing presented a victory of the collective wisdom of the Communist Party and the Soviet people. It was also a testimonial of the bankruptcy of the anti-Party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, Bulganin and Shepilov, who, having nothing of value of their own to suggest, had opposed all the important Party measures. Saburov admitted having made a mistake in June 1957 by manifesting political instability. After giving an account of his mistake, Saburov said he knew that the anti-Party group had maintained a position of their own on all matters and sought to hamper the implementation of the important measures drafted by the central Committee.

This attitude, Saburov said, was taken up with regard to the question of virgin soil development, the reorganization of planning and the call to catch up with the United States in per capita agricultural production, etc. The anti-Party group had also opposed the raising of certain problems of foreign affairs or held up their solution. This applied, for instance, to the Soviet Union's economic relations with the countries of the socialist camp and to its assistance to underdeveloped countries. Saburov declared that he did not share the views of the anti-Party group, but that he did criticize the work of the central committee presidium from the positions of that group before the June plenary session of 1957. By decision of the plenary session, Saburov was removed from the presidium at that time. Saburov said that he was now working as a factory manager in Syzran and was striving to atone by his work for the wrong he had done to the Party and the people.

(Comment: The publication of the full statement by Saburov calls attention to Pravda's treatment of it during the 21st Congress. Although Tass broadcast the short summary (see above) the Soviet press gave no indication that Saburov had spoken at all; not only was his speech not among the texts of the other speeches of that day or any day, but the running account of the day's proceedings (Pravda, 5 February 1959) did not even mention his name, giving the impression that Nicolas Shawi of Lebanon had spoken immediately after I.K. Zhegalin, when, in fact, Saburov had taken the floor and delivered his statement after Zhegalin.

Pravda's version of other speeches probably had to be doctored to eliminate references to Saburov's statement. This is definitely true of G.A. Denisov's speech, delivered at the evening session of 4 February the same day Saburov spoke, as the following demonstrates. The underlined phrases were omitted from the Pravda version and the changes from plural to singular are indicated by parentheses.)

G.A. Denisov's Remarks on Pervukhin and Saburov.

Comrades, it is impossible to ignore in silence the speech at this Congress of Comrade(s) Pervukhin and Saburov. Comrade Pervukhin stated - and Comrade Saburov said the same thing about himself - that they (he) helped the Central Committee to unmask the anti-party group; they (he) represented themselves (himself) to the congress as heroes (a hero). Is this so, Comrade(s) Pervukhin and Saburov? We members of the Central Committee all remember

how the matter was, and we remember your conduct. Was it not you who spoke against the reorganization of leadership of industry and construction? Was it not you who disagreed with the proposals of Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev on the most important questions of international policy? Was it not you who deserted the camp of the conspirators? And how can you say after this that you helped to unmask the antiparty group of conspirators? You spoke to the congress insincerely. You then, Comrades Pervukhin and Saburov, were forced to tell the June plenum of the Central Committee of the activities of the antiparty group only after the members and candidate members of the Central Committee unanimously condemned the antiparty group. You began to speak only then, and not immediately even then. So this is not aid to the Central Committee in unmasking the anti-party group; it is your confession. I subscribe to the speeches directed at you by the delegates to the congress, Comrade Spiridonov and Comrade Kuzmin. You are conducting yourselves (yourself) incorrectly, and you continue to speak to our party insincerely... (Vneocherednoy XXI S-yezd Kommunisticheskoy Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza: Stenograficheskiy Otchet, 1959, Vol. 2, pp. 314-315)

(Comment: Saburov was the only speaker at the congress to make a "statement" instead of a "speech". Pravda evidently printed only the "speeches". This does not explain, however, why it was necessary to alter another speech, Denisov's, to conceal the fact that Saburov had spoken. Neither Pervukhin nor Saburov, incidentally, was listed as a delegate to the congress.