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THE FALL OF A FAVORITE

In December 1957 N.S. Khrushchev consolidated his July victory over the anti-Party group and completed his reorganization of the apex of the Party hierarchy by bringing into the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU, three more full members of the Presidium, A.I. Kirichenko (1st Secretary of the Ukrainian CP), N. Mukhitdinov (1st Secretary of the Uzbekistan CP), and N.G. Ignatov (1st Secretary of Gorky oblast);<sup>1</sup> simultaneously but without any public announcement concerning his status in the secretariat, N. Belyaev, secretary, CC, CPSU, since July 1955, Vice Chairman of the CC Buro for the RSFSR since March 1956, and full member of the Presidium, CC, CPSU since July 1957, was appointed first secretary of the Kazakh CP.<sup>2</sup> At the time the significance of the packing of the Secretariat was obvious, and Khrushchev's key organizational innovation of placing 8 Presidium members<sup>3</sup> in the secretariat, in fact, has effectively subordinated the nominally higher policy making Party body to the source of Khrushchev's power, the secretariat where his control is unchallenged.

The importance of personnel changes in the Secretariat, particularly the unpublicized removals, is in the Khrushchev era therefore from an analytical point of view as great as ousters from the Presidium, the last of which was the expulsion of Marshal N. Bulganin in March, 1958.<sup>4</sup> Since that time the 14 member Presidium has remained unaffected, but the secretariat has lost two of its top ranking members. Thus, although N. Belyaev has spent two years in Alma Ata and his participation in Presidium decisions, if any, is certainly not on the same regular basis - 2 to 3 times per week<sup>5</sup> - as the members permanently located in Moscow, he is still officially - in alphabetical order - always listed with the other Presidium members. While never officially announced, it is obvious that Belyaev's transfer to Kazakhstan has meant the severance of his ties with the secretariat. This ouster also denoted the surrender of his post as Khrushchev's deputy in the CC Buro for the RSFSR to A. Aristov,<sup>6</sup> whose frequent routine appearances at regional Party meetings at which personnel changes are implemented have suddenly been given a dramatic impact by his participation in the work of the Rostov Obkom plenum which "elected comrade A.I. Kirichenko, as first secretary of the obkom."<sup>7</sup>

In purely organizational terms, the transfer of Khrushchev's "crown prince"<sup>8</sup> from Moscow to the mouth of the Don cannot be compared to Belyaev's assignment to Alma Ata two years ago. The latter could well have been interpreted as an indication of particular trust to guarantee the success of Khrushchev's key virgin land project; but the fact that the good 1958 harvest was not rewarded with the return to the Kremlin suggests that Belyaev's initial performance in Kazakhstan had not been considered sufficient penance for whatever previous errors had led to his transfer. The public tongue lashing delivered by Khrushchev to his former deputy at the December plenum is evidence

that the man whom the First secretary had selected - together with Aristov - in July 1955 as his first choice for work in the understrength secretariat still has considerable amends to make before winning his way back to full favor. Despite the importance of Rostov as an industrial and agricultural area, such speculation is entirely excluded with respect to Kirichenko's removal from the peak of the Party pyramid in Moscow to the regional level of Rostov, one of the 70 odd oblasts of the RSFSR Party organization.

It is, however, simpler to postulate the disgrace of the former favorite of Khrushchev than to provide reasons for his fall. As with all the other members of the secretariat, he has been denied opportunity of having his views presented in the press by the ever increasing monopoly exercised by the First secretary of the CC, CPSU. Except for the publication of his important speech at the XXI Party Congress, extravagant in praise of Khrushchev and the most detailed exposition of the struggle against the anti-Party group,<sup>9</sup> Kirichenko's ideas found no reflection in the pages of Pravda or any other press or propaganda media in 1959. Not even a word of his address at the All-Union Conference of the leading functionaries of the State security organs was reported.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of this single appearance before the secret police leaders, it is scarcely possible to confirm the widely held assumption that Khrushchev had charged his wartime comrade with responsibility for the police.<sup>12</sup> Nor can it be stated with absolute certainty that Kirichenko's extensive remarks on Party personnel policy at the XXI Congress are final evidence of his responsibility for cadres' work in the Central Committee secretariat. In 1959, for example, his only appearance<sup>13</sup> in such a capacity was at the Moscow Obkom plenum which released I. Kapitonov as first secretary, and even on this occasion he shared the purge duties with the ubiquitous A. Aristov.

Since Aristov's duties in this sector have been concentrated, without exception, in the RSFSR, there is no doubt that he has been in charge of the appointment and removal of Party functionaries in the largest republic of the Soviet Union. In view of the division of the Secretariat into Departments for the RSFSR and for the Union Republics,<sup>14</sup> Kirichenko seemed, in the absence of any documentation, the most likely counterpart to Aristov. If this assumption is correct, the reasons for Kirichenko's demotion can easily be traced to the generally disappointing performance, particularly in agriculture, of most of the Union Republics this year. In addition, the replacement of the first party secretaries in the Turkmen (December 1958) and Uzbek (March 1959) Republics, in Azerbaidzhan<sup>15</sup> (June 1959) and Latvia (November 1959) suggests that Khrushchev's dissatisfaction with the cadres in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Baltics was general and not restricted to any particular geographical area.<sup>16</sup> True to his words at the XXI Party Congress and reaffirmed even more strongly by force of example at the December plenum, the first secretary seems determined to demonstrate that past associations and previous performance will carry relatively little weight in this continuous reassessment of pledges and actual achievements.



As circumstantial proof that Kirichenko was lacking in the necessary leadership qualifications in the field of agriculture two facts may be cited: 1) his absence from the list of recipients of the medal "For Labor Valor" which included Khrushchev, Ignatov and Aristov from the Presidium/Secretariat and the newcomers G. Denisov, Chief CC Department for Agriculture in the Union Republics, G.I. Vorobyev, Chief CC Department for Agriculture for the RSFSR and M.T. Yefremov, Chief, CC Department for Party Organs of the RSFSR<sup>17</sup>; 2) the failure to be included among the members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet who were given the same award on 13 January, also for contributions in the agricultural sector. The slighting of Kirichenko, implicit in the first omission, becomes explicit in the second; the only other Presidium member, except Voroshilov, holding a seat on this body, who did not receive the medal was N.I. Belyaev, while the following candidate members, J. Kalnberznin, recently transferred from first secretary of the Latvian CC to the post of Chairman of the Republican Supreme Soviet, K. Mazurov, first secretary of the Belo-Russian CC, who was criticized at the December plenum by Khrushchev, N.V. Podgorny, Kirichenko's successor as head of the Ukrainian CC, and D.S. Korotchenko, Chairman of the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, were granted this award.

For the time being, the exact nature of the issues involved in Kirichenko's removal from the secretariat<sup>18</sup> must, nevertheless, remain a matter of speculation. Whether it is his failure to implement the instructions of the leader in agriculture or his responsibility for the shortcomings of the functionaries selected by him, Kirichenko has now become the most significant symbol of Khrushchev's chastisement of a long-time member of his Ukrainian Party machine, the most prominent of the apparatchiki who faithfully fought with the First secretary in his spectacular assent to unrestricted domination of the Party apparatus. That Stalin's successor would ruthlessly turn on a newly acquired "opportunistic" ally had been shown in the expulsion of Marshal Zhukov as well as in his tactics of expediency against those who had supported him in his struggle with Malenkov. That Khrushchev could humiliate a loyal old associate such as Nikolai Bulganin without a trace of remorse had been forecast by the manner in which he consigned his sponsor and teacher, L.M. Kaganovich to the depths of Party oblivion. That he was ready to deprecate the abilities and question the honesty and courage of one of the key apparatchiki on whom he had relied since 1955 was apparent from his treatment of N. Belyaev. Different in kind from all these cases, however, is the sudden removal from the center of power - the secretariat - of Khrushchev's trained apparatchik whose career since 1939 had been entirely dependent - except for 1950-53 - on his relationship with the present ruler of the Party-State apparatus. In Khrushchev's own words at the plenum can be found the hard core of his catechism on cadres: "Friendship is one thing, but work is another." With the peremptory stripping of Party power and status from his former comrade-in-arms (Stalingrad and other fronts) and post-Stalin protege Khrushchev has proven, regardless of the uncertainty concerning the nature of the controversy, that he practise that which he preaches.

This profession of absolute impartiality must be taken into account in any analysis, and, in fact, it fits almost too well into the image of the leader which Khrushchev is consciously seeking to implant in the minds of the apparatchiki and the

masses. Thus, in the same speech in which he humiliates Belyaev he reveals his appreciation for the work done by a state farm director in Kazakhstan, A.I. Kozlov, a former Chief of the CC Department for Agriculture and Minister of State Farms, who was removed, in 1955, on charges which came close to an accusation of deliberate sabotage of party, i.e., Khrushchev's policy in the early stages of the virgin soil campaign. As a former subordinate of Malenkov in the secretariat, A.I. Kozlov has, through his self-criticism<sup>19</sup> and acknowledgement of the correctness and efficacy of Khrushchev's Party disciplinary measures, filled in some more of the details of the picture of the leader who justly inflicts punishment and fairly dispenses rewards.<sup>20</sup>

This is, however, only one of the possible reactions. For the numerous members of the Ukrainian machine who have been brought to Moscow, or assigned to top Party/State posts in the RSFSR<sup>21</sup> and other republics, Kirichenko's departure must inevitably be a warning that new influences are making themselves felt in the most sensitive sector of cadre selection. Within the next few weeks, Republican Party Congresses will be held and the resulting personnel changes will provide an accurate forecast of the delegates to the XXII Congress to be held in 1961 or earlier. As Chief of the CC Department for Party Organs in the Union Republics, V.I. Churayev,<sup>22</sup> who since 1956 has served under Aristov in the same capacity in the CC Department for Party Organs in the RSFSR, will have a key role in implementing Moscow's decisions. Should N.G. Ignatov who has just returned from the post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR "to work at his main job in the Central Committee" appear at these Congresses, the mystery of Kirichenko's successor as cadre chief of the non-Russian republics will be clarified. If, on the other hand, Aristov extends his activities into the Union Republics, responsibility for cadres will, once again, be concentrated in the hands of a single person - and a new contender for the succession to Khrushchev will have appeared. In any case, the fall of Kirichenko marks a turning point in the story of Khrushchev and his men from the Ukraine.

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