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KHRUSHCHEV OF THE UKRAINE (IV)

One of the great uncharted areas in the organizational scheme of the secretariat of the Central Committee under Stalin was the position and powers of the dictator's personal secretariat. Never mentioned in official Soviet sources, it is almost invariably referred to by western specialists and assigned a key place in the events which directly preceded the purges and the period which followed when it allegedly usurped the functions of the regular Party bodies. According to Boris Nicolaevsky, the personal secretariat was created in 1922 and increased in size to a staff of several hundred, acquiring "unlimited resources and enormous privileges...access to top secret data of all Soviet institutions".¹ A functionary in this "supercommand post" since its first days, A.N. Poskrebyshev, became its chief in the early 1930's and maintained this post until Stalin's death. Described by Khrushchev in his secret speech as Stalin's "loyal shield bearer", this enigmatic personality has been erased from the pages of Soviet history and only one of the three persons whom Nicolaevsky lists as his closest collaborators, G.M. Malenkov, is still alive;² another, Yezhov, now shares with Beria the odium of responsibility for the purges and the third, M.F. Shkiryatov died in good standing as Chairman of the Party Control Committee in January 1954.

Since the death of Stalin and Khrushchev's consolidation of power as First secretary and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, nothing more has been divulged concerning either the composition or structure of a personal secretariat. The CC secretariat has, it is true, expanded greatly and under Khrushchev's guidance, in effect, been subdivided into two equal parts -- one responsible for the RSFSR and the other dealing with the other Union Republics.³ Despite this typical bureaucratic hypertrophy at the top of the hierarchy, contrasting to claims that the CC apparatus has been reduced as a whole, there are certain names which only rarely appear in the press and then with listings that do not fit into any of the usual classifications. Thus, on the list of those who are to accompany the First secretary, Chairman of the Council of Ministers -- and of recent date the head of state -- are A. S. Shevchenko and G. T. Shuisky.⁴ The former, clearly of Ukrainian origin, has been identified as an "assistant of the secretary of the CC" (Pomoshchik sekretarya TsK) who was awarded the Order of Lenin in January 1957 for his services in connection with the cultivation of the virgin lands and the record harvest of 1956.⁵ The career of the latter

¹The New Leader, 20 April 1953; see below p. 1.

²ibid.

³See Background Information series, "Khrushchev and the Ukraine" I, II.

⁴UPI, 1 September 1959.

⁵Vedomosti Verkhnego Soveta, 8 Feb. 1957, p. 92. In "5,000 Sowjetköpfe," Deutsche Industrie Verlag, Köln 1959, Shevchenko is listed as a candidate of Agricultural Sciences (1957), assistant to the CC Secretary for Agriculture, and Corresponding member of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences, 1958.

can be traced back to the Ukraine with more convincing evidence than a classical family name. A Komsomol functionary in the early post-war period, Shuisky "became assistant to an (unidentified) secretary of the Central Committee" (of the Ukraine)⁶ when Khrushchev was first secretary of the CC. In 1949 he was elected candidate member of the Ukrainian CC; in September 1952 his association with Khrushchev was continued in Moscow where he became a member of the Oblast Party Committee which his former chief in the Ukraine had headed since December 1949. Since then Shuisky has not been listed in any official Party capacity, although he accompanied Khrushchev (and Bulganin) as an "expert" to the Heads of Government Conference in Geneva in July 1955 and to Great Britain in the spring of 1956.⁷

In 1959 these two functionaries from the Ukraine are as unknown in the West - and in the Soviet Union - as Malenkov and Poskrebyshev were a quarter of a century ago. The scanty background material available on the agricultural specialist Andrei Stepanovich Shevchenko and the "expert", Grigory Trokhimovich Shuisky, does not permit any definite conclusions to be drawn. Insufficient as it may be, this evidence, nevertheless, provides the first hint as to those anonymous personalities on whom Khrushchev now depends just as Stalin once relied upon similar shadowy figures in his personal secretariat. For the present their work certainly involves less frightening assignments than the preparation of a purge; there can be little doubt, however, that the years of obedience to Khrushchev's commands have prepared functionaries, like Shuisky and the others, for unquestioning compliance with Khrushchev's instructions regardless of the consequences to Party rules and statutes.

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⁶ Radyanska Ukraina, 30 January 1948; quoted from J. Armstrong, The Soviet Bureaucratic Elite, Praeger, N.Y., 1959, p. 104.

⁷ CRU, 16 April 1956.