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## COMMUNIST AREA

USSR: Military

13 December 1966

### MORE CHANGES IN SOVIET HIGH COMMAND?

There is now reason to think that Army General P.G. Batitsky, who was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Air Defense Forces (P.V.O.) at the end of October,<sup>1</sup> has since been made a Deputy Minister of Defense and a Marshal of the Soviet Union. The indirect evidence, such as it is, came in the form of the obituary for Lt.-General I.A. Lavrenov which was published in Pravda on December 8th. The list of signatories reads:

L.I. Brezhnev, A.N. Kosygin, N.V. Podgorny, D.F. Ustinov, R.Ya. Malinovsky, A.A. Grechko, M.V. Zakharov, A.A. Yepishev, N.I. Krylov, I.Kh. Bagramyan, P.F. Batitsky, S.G. Gorshkov, K.A. Vershinin, K.S. Moskalenko.....

This listing contains further support for the view expressed in a C.A. paper on 24th October that Marshal of the Soviet Union N.I. Krylov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces, has been promoted to First Deputy Minister of Defense, in view of his listing between Zakharov, the Chief of the General Staff, who is a First Deputy, and Bagramyan who is a Deputy Minister (Yepishev's prominent position as Chief of the Main Political Administration is interesting, but as he is not a career officer it scarcely affects the conclusion).

Secondly Batitsky's name now appears for the first time among the Deputy Ministers of Defense, between Bagramyan and Gorshkov, the Admiral of the Fleet who is Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy. Bagramyan is a Marshal of the Soviet Union, as is Moskalenko, whose name is listed well below Batitsky's in the obituary.

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1) See Red Star, 29 October 1966.

Marshal of Aviation V.A. Sudets, who commanded the Air Defense Forces before Batitsky, was also a Deputy Minister of Defense. It therefore seems to follow that Batitsky's elevation to the ranks of the Deputy Ministers and Marshals of the Soviet Union is the ex-officio consequence of his job.

#### A Change in the SFG

Below this exalted level, there is a new First Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Forces in Germany. He is Lt.-General of the Armoured Forces S.K. Kurkotkin.<sup>2</sup> The previous incumbent was Colonel-General P.A. Belik, who after nearly five years in Germany has just been sent to command the Transbaikal Military District in Eastern Siberia. Belik's responsibilities there include the newly reinforced Amur River border with China,<sup>3</sup> where shots were being fired at Soviet shipping in the summer, and he may soon begin to look back almost with nostalgia to his politically more tranquil vigil on the Elbe.

As for Kurkotkin, he will presumably soon be promoted, because at present both the Chief of Staff (G.I. Ariko) and the Chief of the Political Administration of the SFG (A.P. Vasyagin) hold the higher rank of Colonel-General.

#### Malinovsky's Illness

Two Western news agencies (UPI and AP) have reported from Moscow that Marshal of the Soviet Union R.Ya. Malinovsky is ill, and that this was the reason for his non-appearance at the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Moscow. It is then suggested that Malinovsky may be about to retire, in view of his illness and his 68 years. Certainly his health has not been good recently, because it was presumably on these grounds that he was absent from the meeting of the leaders of the nine ruling parties in Moscow in October.<sup>4</sup> At the time the theory was put forward in a C.A. paper that Malinovsky might be seriously ill, and that Krylov's apparent promotion might be part of the preparations for a planned upgrading of Grechko to replace Malinovsky, with Krylov taking over Grechko's present duties as First Deputy Minister of Defense and

- 2) Red Star, 15 November 1966.
- 3) Marshal Chen Yi appears to believe that there are now 13 Soviet Divisions on the Chinese border (Times, 12 December 1966), which compares with 7 in the view of the Institute for Strategic Studies.
- 4) See Pravda, 22 October 1966.



Commander of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>5</sup> The latest agency reports from Moscow tend on the whole to strengthen this necessarily tenuous theory, as does the list of signatories to Lavrenov's obituary.

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5) C.A. paper 24 October 1966 "Is Krylov now a First Deputy Defense Minister?"