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Henry and Ludmila Shapiro

Madison, Wisconsin
INTRODUCTION

At the core of this book are the transcripts of my conversations (or interviews) with Henry Shapiro in the academic year of 1975-1976. Shapiro was a journalist who served as a foreign correspondent in Moscow for some 40 years, from 1933 until his retirement in 1973. In his day he was the doyen of the foreign press corps in the Soviet capital. When he finally left Moscow, he accepted a position as Kemper-Knapp Professor in the Journalism School of the University of Wisconsin – Madison. He settled there, and he died in Madison in 1991.

During the academic year of 1975-1976 he met every two or three weeks with my seminar in East European History at the University of Wisconsin to discuss his experiences in the Soviet Union. For my students it was a rare opportunity to hear eyewitness accounts of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. By agreement with Professor Shapiro, I tape recorded our conversations, immediately typed them out, and then gave him the original copy – I kept a carbon copy. Between us we had the only copies of this text. Before his widow Ludmilla Shapiro donated her husband’s papers to the Library of Congress – a 35-page catalogue of the collection is available on the Internet\(^1\) – she gave me the set of his original copies of those transcripts.

The transcripts do not pretend to present the full fabric of Shapiro's rich and productive life, but they do offer an intriguing outline of his work in Moscow. He witnessed the full power of Stalin's despotic rule; he experienced the trials and triumphs of the Second World War; he shared the tensions of Stalin's last years. In the second phase of his time in Moscow, he reported the exultation of deStalinization, the political evolution of the post-Stalin regime, and the beginnings of what came to be called the “stagnation” of Leonid Brezhnev's time.

Since Professor Shapiro was working on his memoirs when we made these recordings, I agreed that I would not use the texts or the information as long as he was alive. The transcripts in fact sat unused on my book shelf until now. At the initiative of Docent Aukse Balcytiene, chairperson of the Journalism Department at Vytautas Magnus University, we decided to publish them as a supporting text for courses in VDU’s journalism department.

The Man

Henry Shapiro was born in Vaslui, Romania, on April 19, 1906 and died in Madison Wisconsin on April 4, 1991. He came to the United States in 1920, became an American citizen in 1928, and graduated from the City College of New York in 1929. After completing his studies at Harvard University Law School in 1932, where he specialized in international law, he practiced law for one year in New York City. After the United States and the Soviet Union had established diplomatic relations in 1933, Shapiro went to Moscow with the intention of studying law with Evgenii Pashukanis, at that time the preeminent authority in Soviet law. While he worked to improve his knowledge of the Russian language, he began working as a journalist, and over the next several years he contributed to The New York Herald Tribune, the London Morning Post, and to Reuters news service. As the Stalinist system took harsher forms, Pashukanis lost his position of authority in Soviet jurisprudence, but Shapiro in turn decided to remain on in Moscow as a foreign correspondent.

From 1937 until after Stalin’s death in 1953 Shapiro worked for United Press news service, known familiarly as UP. The conditions were difficult: In the xenophobic atmosphere of Stalin’s last years in Moscow, Shapiro would not leave the country even when the American embassy warned that he personally might be in danger. He feared that he would not be able to return and that in his absence, his wife and daughter, who were Soviet citizens and therefore unable to accompany him, would fall prey to arbitrary arrest and even disappear. After Stalin’s death, he was finally able take his family abroad with him, and he accepted a visiting professorship at Harvard University.

In 1955, having attended the summit conference in Geneva, Switzerland, where US President Dwight Eisenhower met with Nikita Khrushchev, the new leader of the Soviet Union, Shapiro accepted the challenge of returning to Moscow, and he worked there as UPI Bureau Chief until his retirement in 1973. (In 1958, United Press merged with International News Service, thereby forming United Press International, UPI.)

The Job

In his book The Moscow Correspondents,2 Whitman Bassow called the collection of reporters who worked in Moscow through the Soviet period, “The most exclusive club in American journalism.” Bassow himself worked with Shapiro for United Press in the late 1950s, and his book is probably the best single source for learning about the trials and tribulations of reporting from the Soviet capital. In writing his book, he went far beyond his own experiences and consulted – here we can use the term “interviewed” – a number of other correspondents, including Shapiro.

Shapiro’s time in Moscow could be broken into two periods: the Stalin years and the post-Stalin years. In between these two periods, Shapiro spent something over a year in the United States. The Stalin years saw intensifying controls being established over the reports of foreign correspondents and a censorship that scrutinized dispatches to the point of blocking their transmission. (Bassow told of a Reuters correspondent ”who filed twenty-nine separate cables in the first three weeks of March 1949. All were killed by Glavlit [the

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In addition, in Bassow’s words, western correspondents “were hostages for any story about Russia dispatched from any other bureau of their newspaper or agency. If the story reflected unfavorably on the Soviet Union or its leaders, the correspondents in Moscow would pay a penalty, probably expulsion…”  The post-Stalin saw the relaxation and eventual abolition of preliminary censorship of the correspondents’ dispatches, but Soviet officials threatened – and on occasion carried out – the expulsion of reporters who had written stories that Moscow disapproved of. The correspondents themselves spoke of “Moscow madness” as a description of their working environment.

Through it all Shapiro remained in Moscow. It is unusual for foreign correspondents to spend their entire careers in one capital. Like diplomats, they usually stay on just a few years and then proceed to new places of work. This practice has the advantage of minimizing the journalist’s attachment to any one area and keeping his or her focus on the needs of the agency that assigned such work; it has the disadvantage of either requiring intensive preparation for a relatively short assignment or dispatching the journalist into a new region to learn on the job before yet again moving. Shapiro’s extended service in Moscow was clearly exceptional. By the beginning of the Nazi-Soviet war in 1941, he was already the doyen of the foreign correspondents in the Soviet capital.

Shapiro’s lengthy sojourn in Moscow made him a consummate authority on the possibilities and problems of working in the Soviet capital. He “learned the ropes” in the Stalin years, and he played an important role in establishing a community for other correspondents. In the post-Stalin years, as Soviet society changed and the community of foreign correspondents – including more who could themselves speak Russian – grew, the cohesiveness of that community began to crack and the working conditions changed. His own staffers admired his work and remained grateful to him for his leadership, but – see Chapter VI below – some of his competitors had harsh words for him.

When Shapiro left the Soviet Union in 1953, he had not expected to return, and he wrote a critical characterization of life in Stalin’s Moscow: “From the moment a foreigner arrives in the Soviet Union, he is stamped, registered and subjected to constant surveillance.” The foreigner’s movements were limited to the environs of Moscow, and he could expect to be followed “by a brown or grey Pobeda automobile with three security agents inside.” Because of the controls, “virtually all non-official sources of information have dried up, compelling correspondents to rely almost entirely on two old sources, the Soviet press and the diplomatic corps, for news, opinion and trends.” Having collected some information, the correspondent then had “to wage a one-sided battle against an invisible adversary, the censorship, or what is euphemistically called the ‘Literary Department’ [i.e., “Glavlit” – aes].” A censor, he declared, was not concerned about the accuracy of a report: “In point of fact, only one criterion governs the censor’s decision – is it good or bad for the Soviet Union?”

In all, he wrote, in Stalin’s Russia “foreigners are as isolated from the people of Russia as if they lived in a medieval ghetto.” In the words of another correspondent, Henry C. Cassidy of Associated Press, a decade earlier, “The foreign colony of Moscow lived a life apart, behind walls which were invisible but as impregnable

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3 Bassow, op. cit., offers a sympathetic account. See also Aline Mosby, The View from No. 13 People’s Street (New York: Random House, 1962). Mosby dedicated her book to Ludmilla and Henry Shapiro. Alexander Werth, Russia under Khrushchev (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 48, also offered a sympathetic picture: “he was the best-informed correspondent on Russia” and “his comments had always been fair and moderate.”
as the ramparts of the Kremlin.” The “foreign colony” included both correspondents and diplomats; both categories of visitors found themselves equally under surveillance in the Soviet system; and therefore the life of the correspondents intertwined closely with that of the diplomats. As Shapiro recounted in the discussions published below, diplomatic receptions were important occasions for the gathering and exchange of information.

As Shapiro told my students, in 1955 he decided that things had changed for the better in Moscow, and he accepted UP’s request that he return to Moscow. He thereupon resumed his seniority as the doyen of the foreign correspondents. In his book on the Moscow correspondents, Bassow declared that for some it was “a great puzzle” why Shapiro worked so long in Moscow, but Bassow considered the answer fairly clear. He noted Shapiro’s extensive circle of friends and contacts in Moscow and went on to list the “formidable” perquisites of the job: “a car, a chauffeur, a rent-free apartment, a living allowance, an expense account, frequent vacations, and sabbaticals.” To this list, we might add the fact that he spoke Russian, and this gave him a great advantage in Moscow; also one might add that the longer Shapiro stayed in Moscow, the more entrenched his position as doyen of the foreign press corps became. To be sure, a diplomat in Washington, D.C., once declared that the doyen of the diplomatic corps is a man whom his government has forgotten, but Shapiro’s position in Moscow as the press doyen gave him power, prestige, and fascinating work. In his book, Bassow concluded that Shapiro “was so specialized he probably could not have earned his pay in any other assignment – no secret within the UPI”.

There were personal as well as professional issues involved in his long stay in Stalin’s Moscow. He married a Russian woman, Ludmilla Nikitina, and their daughter Irina (now Irina Korten) was born in Moscow, a Soviet citizen. In Stalin’s later years, the Soviet state banned marriages of Russians to foreigners – such an act appeared tantamount to treason. His wife could not leave the country, and she lived under constant threat of arrest. Shapiro himself feared traveling abroad even for a vacation, lest upon return – should he be allowed to return – he find that his wife and daughter had disappeared. As Bassow recounted, in Stalin’s last months, amid fears that the Soviet authorities might choose to compromise a foreign correspondent, Shapiro even rejected the urging of the American embassy to leave, saying he would not do so without his family. They left the country together after Stalin’s death, and Mrs. Shapiro returned only after acquiring American citizenship.

When Ludmilla Shapiro died in May 2005, her obituary in The New York Times spoke of her as a collector of “Soviet kitsch,” referring to her unusual collection of Soviet porcelain that she like to use as an indicator of changing social values in Soviet society over the years. Her obituary in the Wisconsin State Journal (May 15, 2005) spoke more of her intellectual activities while living in Moscow. Educated as a specialist in English and American literature, she “worked as a translator, a freelance journalist and a photographer” for a number of western publications. She also pored through the daily Soviet press, and, as her obituary reported, “Her razor sharp interpretation ‘between the lines’ of Soviet news reports resulted in several ‘scoops’ by Henry.” Since it was well nigh impossible to interview leading Soviet party and governmental officials in Stalin’s day, reading the newspapers became a special art form in itself; Ludmilla Shapiro was exceptional practitioner of the art.
The stories of Shapiro’s work and how he collected information were legion. His reports could come from endless searching, chance conversations, careful reading of the press, what interviews he could snatch, and a myriad of other sources, including his own special agents. Some stories about his work, as will be noted below, were uncomplimentary. One example of his broad range of subjects that particularly intrigued me came up when I found an interview that he had taken in 1948 from the man in charge of the Soviet sports program. I asked him how he had come to write this; it seemed atypical of his work as I knew it. As he explained it to me, at the time the Soviet Union was preparing to join the Olympic Games, and it wanted to refute western complaints that its athletes were “professionals.”

“Seize the opportunity,” carpe diem, could well have been his daily motto.

The biographical sketch of his life provided in the Library of Congress’s catalogue of his papers emphasizes two of his journalistic “scoops” - his reports of the Battle of Stalingrad and of Stalin’s death. In the interviews published below, he discussed the circumstances of both of them.

Thoughts about Interviewing

Interviews have various forms and serve various purposes. They may take the form of question and answer or simply of discussion. They may be sharply focused or rambling. They do not necessarily even have to be oral; they may take place in writing. They usually start with the assumption that the interviewee, the “target,” the person who is answering questions, has information and/or opinions that the interviewer, the questioner, wants to learn. The interviewee may be “interviewing” in the hopes of “getting a job” or expecting some other reward for his or her performance; or the interviewee may be just helping the interviewer. While there is usually just one such “target,” there may on occasion be multiple questioners, as in my seminar. Whether the questioner is to play any role in helping the interviewee may be a factor in the exchange – as I noted above, I proposed that the process of speaking with my seminar might help Shapiro to write his memoirs. The variations can be infinite.

My purpose in preparing this book is to offer an example of my own practical experience in “interviewing” as well as to present Shapiro’s own account of his work in Moscow. I make no attempt here to categorize types of interviews or to offer a single form for interviews. I will not be discussing the use of questionnaires, the drawing up of one set of questions to present to multiple respondents. Having worked basically as a historian but occasionally also as a journalist, I will discuss just my own experience in “interviews,” and I use the term “interview” in the very broad sense of covering any attempt to obtain unpublished information from a unique living source, a type of information not available otherwise.

Over the years of my study of Russian and Lithuanian history I have used “living” sources repeatedly. When I began to study Russian history in the 1950s, Stalin was still alive, and it was very difficult to find useful “archival materials” for research. As a substitute I exploited the opportunity to meet émigrés from Russia, who in
their time had earned mention in the history books – individuals such as Irakli Tseretelli and Alexander Kerensky. As I began to study and write about Lithuanian history, I had the opportunity to meet and correspond with Steponas Kairys, Mykolas Krupavicius, Vaclovas Sidzikauskas, Bronius Kazys Balutis, Mykolas Birziska, and others. To some degree this might be called “oral history,” but I also corresponded with some of these men. Therefore “oral” does not completely fit; I was seeking “living historical sources.”

Such correspondence and conversations, “interviews,” constituted my “institute of Lithuanian history” in those days. As the archival situation improved in later decades, I still found interviews interesting and useful, whether with principals, historians, or the children of persons about whom I was writing (such as A. N. Rubakin, the son of N. A. Rubakin, a Russian bibliographer or Nicolaus Fritz Platten, the son of Fritz Platten, the man who led V. I. Lenin’s celebrated or notorious train ride through Germany in 1917). In my work on Lenin’s activities in Switzerland, I was delighted to speak with a man who had spent an evening in a one-on-one meeting with Lenin in 1916 in Zurich.

All this experience stood me in good stead when, by chance, I was in Lithuania in the fall of 1988 and had the opportunity to sit in the sessions of the Sajudis Initiative Group. Out of this came my book *Lithuania Awakening*, which I would call essentially a memoir and which depended heavily on “interviews.” By the time I wrote *Gorbachev’s Failure in Lithuania* (1995), I had many more “documents” at hand and called the result a “history,” but the reader of that book will see that I still relied heavily on interviews. Journalists, of course, depend heavily on interviews, but I do not think Lithuanian historians generally use interviews in the same way that I do and certainly not as much.

I have asked questions orally and in writing. When I was studying the assassination of a Soviet diplomat in Switzerland in 1923, I discovered that one of the principals in the case was still alive in Sao Paolo, Brazil. I entered into a brief, fascinating correspondence with him. He died before I completed my book, which would have been much weaker without his testimony. In turn, in the spring of 2005, when Elta requested an interview of me, I was given the opportunity to answer the questions in writing, in English – thereby reasserting another rule of interviewing: It is desirable to carry out the communication in a language in which your “target” is the most comfortable.

At times I found it useful and informative simply to speak with authors about their works – this perhaps for the purpose of simply better understanding both the subject and the author. Two examples of this: With such purpose in mind, I sought out meetings with the American diplomat George Kennan and the Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

I visited Kennan in his office in Washington, D.C. He seated me in front of a blackboard on which he had listed his important meetings for that day – he was obviously a busy man – and asked me my purpose. I explained that I often had to lecture about him and his work and that I simply wanted to make his acquaintance in order to better understand him. I had no intention of calling this an “interview,” although I now qualify this as such. We had an interesting conversation.

Solzhenitsyn I contacted in Switzerland. After the Soviet government had deported him in 1974, he had settled in Zurich. He seized the opportunity to collect
material for his characterization of Lenin in Switzerland during World War I, and through mutual friends, I helped him on a few questions. In return he agreed to meet me, and as we sat in the yard of his home in Zurich, I declared that I just wanted to become acquainted – I was not planning to write up our meeting as an “interview.” Solzhenitsyn told me how he had collected and used information for his book The Gulag Archipelago, and he also asked me about my work. That meeting had unexpected significance for me: As our conversation veered off into a discussion, an exchange of ideas, he asked me why I had given up studying Lithuanian history some years earlier to concentrate on the study of Russians in Switzerland. Upon hearing my explanation, he urged me to return to writing about Lithuania.

Another Nobel Prize winner whom I met just to become acquainted was Czeslaw Milosz. I first sought him out at a conference that we attended together, and subsequently I visited him in Berkeley, California. (This was in the 1970s, before he won the Nobel Prize.) He too disapproved of my leaving Lithuanian history and even suggested topics for research to me. Relevant to the study of Soviet history, Milosz once asked me what textbooks I was then using in teaching Soviet history at the University of Wisconsin. When I mentioned Hedrick Smith, The Russians (a book by an American journalist), and Hope Against Hope, a memoir by Nadezhda Mandelshtam, Osip Mandelshtam’s widow, he strongly approved of my using such “unofficial,” personal histories.

There is always the question “Why is this person ready to tell you something or even to spend time with you?” Kennan gave me time just out of the goodness of his heart and perhaps because of his own curiosity about me and my intentions. Solzhenitsyn was rewarding me for having answered a few questions. In the 1950s, when I as a student first began approaching Lithuanian émigré politicians, many helped me simply because they knew my father, who had taught in Lithuania in the 1920s. In turn, individuals with whom I have spoken have often recommended to others that they speak with me. It is especially rewarding when someone declared his or her readiness to speak with me because of having read something that I had already written.

One must also remember that the interviewee may have his or her own concerns. The interviewee may also have his or her own specific purposes. It was the Georgian Menshevik Irakli Tseretelli who first made me aware of the necessity of considering an author’s, or a speaker’s, purposes: He told me that when he had chosen to write something in Russian, Georgian or French, he had always kept in his mind the thought of what audience he was trying to reach. The interviewer has to consider this just as a reader does.

Is there a payment of some sort involved? To offer a mild example for comparison, a clinic may pay individuals to take a certain medicine and then report on the results – or they may simply offer a chance to be “a part of history.” A doctor once gave me the choice between pills and injections for a special treatment. I chose pills, although he would have liked me to choose injections. I would be part of a grand study, he told me. I responded that I did not like injections, and therefore I was not willing to participate in his investigation. He sadly complied. The most a scholar can offer an interviewee is usually just a chance to be a part of a grand study and perhaps to influence its outcome. While that may be enough, the “target’s” motivation in responding has to be a factor in the type of questions the
interviewer may choose. If the target is getting a material return, the interviewer might well ask sharper questions; if the target is responding out of good will, the interviewer must take care to be encouraging.

The interviewee may be reluctant to discuss certain subjects. As I have mentioned, Shapiro was concerned about preserving the value of his memoirs, and, for example, he refused to say much about his own extensive interview with Khrushchev in 1957. I myself have experienced this: In the spring and summer of 2005 Lithuanian media became interested in my problems in gaining access to materials in the Ypatingasis archyvas. I even received a telephone call on this subject when I was already in the United States. I was not looking for scandal, I intended yet to try again to gain access to materials in this archive, and my instinct was to say nothing. At the same time, concerned about some of the things already being said in the Lithuanian media about my problem, I had to say something – but very carefully.

Interviewing produces the best results; it seems to me, when the interviewee feels completely at ease, with the least possible tension. When I was interviewing the Swiss who had spoken with Lenin, my “target” began our conversation by asking what I really wanted. He had, he declared, recounted everything Lenin had said in his articles about their meeting, and he disliked the pressure that interviewers might exert in looking for new material. On the other hand, the interviewer has to take the lead – following the interviewee’s line of thought, pushing in one direction, perhaps restraining in another, but always carefully.

It is my belief that no one writes down everything that he or she remembers about an event, and that a published account of an event, of a series of events, and especially of a life is already an “artistic recreation.” There may be details that were not significant to the author that may be significant for me. In my interview with Jules Humbert-Droz, a Swiss who was once secretary of the Comintern, Humbert-Droz told me that in 1918 a Soviet diplomat had offered to buy the Tribune de Lausanne, a reputable newspaper, and to turn it over to him so that it would serve the purposes of Soviet propaganda. For me, then writing a book on the activity of that Soviet diplomatic mission in Switzerland, this was “hot stuff.” A Swiss historian subsequently expressed doubt about the story because Humbert-Droz had not included this in his memoirs. Humbert-Droz, I would say, had other issues to deal with in writing those memoirs, and I was very happy to have had the opportunity to talk with him.

Yet another thought about “the art” of memoirs concerns the difference between a given person’s written statements and his or her oral statements. Written statements usually represent more careful presentation of one’s arguments. Oral statements, of course, may be prepared, even rehearsed, but they can also be much more spontaneous and even self-contradictory. Shapiro was an experienced journalist and a fine craftsman of the word. Once my son made an interview with him concerning the Helsinki Agreements, and I was impressed by Shapiro’s flowing, smooth response. By contrast, my discussions with Shapiro, as offered below, involved a much more spontaneous, unstructured exchange of thoughts. The give and take of live examination and cross examination in a court room can produce much more information than a written response to questions. The ultimate consideration here, of course, would be the purpose of the person posing questions.
Here I am reminded of an exchange I had in 1988 with Bob Johnson, at the time the head of the United States international hockey program. I was working on my book on Soviet sports (published in 2005 by VDU as *SportsWorld USSR – 1988*), and I had written to him asking his views on the status of Soviet hockey at the end of that year. *Odin prekrasnyi den’,* Johnson’s secretary called me, and Johnson immediately came on the line, saying “I just don’t have time to write a letter, ask me questions about what you want to know.” To say the least, this was the opposite of the cautious approach of a person who prefers to give a structured, “artistic” response.

As for the question from my Swiss friend who had met with Lenin in 1916, I responded that my hope was that when he eventually saw my finished product, he would perhaps consider it a broken mirror: He might recognize his own contribution, and he would perhaps accept my general image, even though he might contend that there are still some missing parts. But in general, I hoped that he would consider it worth while while having talked with me. He liked this idea, and our discussion quickly turned to his memories of other Russians and East Europeans he had known in the course of the First World War.

What does the interviewer get from an interview? The answer to this can range from a detail to an understanding of a historical epoch. The interview may have a very narrow focus on just one event, extracting material to be used just once and then forgotten, or it may have lasting value, lingering on as a continuing reference for the interviewer. As a historian, I have regularly recycled, both in my writing and in my lectures, the information I have obtained through interviews. This book itself is evidence of what may result from interviewing.

In my experience, interviews have helped to understand a person, a period, a given historical question. Vaclovas Sidzikauskas went to great lengths in explaining the Lithuanian positions in various diplomatic issues of the 1920s. Mykolas Krupavicius obviously enjoyed detailing political intrigues of the 1920s. When I spoke with Jonas Budrys concerning his role in the Klaipeda rising of 1923, he gave me an account that absolutely contradicted what he had published just the year previously in an article in the “Boston encyclopedia,” *Lietuvių enciklopedija.* They all contributed not just to the history I was trying to write but also to my general education. As I have declared, these men were my living “institute of Lithuanian history,” giving me information and understanding that I could get neither from the classes in the schools I attended nor in publications. I also had to learn to balance conflicting interpretations.

Casual unplanned meetings may result in exciting interviews. One time in Zurich, I went to talk with an old Russian who had emigrated to Switzerland in 1913. I was doing a favor for friends in Moscow, but when I discovered he had known a number of Russian political émigrés, including Paul Axelrod and Georgii Plekhanov, this turned into a delightful scholarly afternoon. My new acquaintance’s memories of these political figures offered perspectives and insights not available in published memoirs. He himself had not been engaged in promoting “revolution,” and he spoke of these people as simply fellow Russian émigrés in a foreign land.

I did not always follow up such opportunities adequately. Once, in Connecticut, I drove my sister’s father-in-law to a Lithuanian picnic, and he recounted to me his experiences in St. Petersburg in March and April of 1917 – his efforts to get per-
mission to travel to America, his brief employment in a factory, the revolutionary work of the shop steward. This was all fascinating to me, but what I should have done was sit down with him, organize his reminiscences, and produce a text. After his death, when I went through his papers, I found that he had actually tried to write these memories out himself – a popular American magazine stood ready to publish them – but he had finally given up this effort, writing, “I cannot do it.” To a certain extent, this memory may have been an underlying factor in my decision to record these discussions with Henry Shapiro.

Are all interviews equal? As a simple answer: “Hardly.” In the discussions reproduced below, Shapiro several times discussed the reliability of his sources in Moscow and the problem of obtaining confirmation of some incident or fact. Was someone, a “provocateur,” deliberately giving him false information? Remember what Shapiro said about the isolation of the “foreign colony” in Moscow: Any Russian who managed to approach a foreign correspondent in Stalin’s time was a provocateur, an adventurer, or a useful new source – and only one of these three possibilities was a positive one. I know that when I lived in Moscow in Brezhnev’s time, I responded very, very cautiously upon being approached by a seemingly friendly but unknown person. For a journalist, faced by deadlines and demanding editors, the reliability of a source is a crucial question. For a scholar who has the time to balance the results of interviews, even the “worst” interview can be useful – for example: the biases involved in a given action, the significance of an erroneous memory, the prejudices of the interviewee, and so on. Nevertheless, the scholar should be as critical in evaluating information as journalists have to be.

A question where the practices of journalists and historians sharply diverge is of course on the disclosure of sources. Robert Woodward and Carl Bernstein kept the identity of “Deep Throat” secret in their expose of practices in Richard Nixon’s White House. In the summer of 2005 a journalist for The New York Times went to prison to protect the identity of a source. As she was being sentenced, the reporter told the judge, “If journalists cannot be trusted to guarantee confidentiality, then journalists cannot function and there cannot be a free press.”

The obverse side to this question of anonymous sources is of course whether the source or the material revealed is indeed reliable – not to mention the problem of whether the reporter himself or herself is reliable. In the debates of these points in the last few years, several American news establishments have felt it necessary to publish carefully worded statements concerning their “integrity” and their readiness to use “anonymous sources.” The New York Times has declared that it should explain the “motivation” of a source that must remain anonymous. (“Motivation” was in fact a major issue in the case mentioned in the previous paragraph, and it became the source of considerable embarrassment for the Times when the reporter finally agreed to reveal her source.) “Anonymity,” states the Times, “must not be automatic or an assumed condition.” Furthermore, it adds, “We do not grant anonymity to people who use it as a cover for a personal or a partisan attack.”

Critics have emphasized abusive use of “anonymous sources.” At the very least, the “anonymous sources” may be misquoted; at absolute worst, the “anonymous sources” may be invented. As an “anonymous source” once misquoted by a New York Times correspondent in Moscow, I can myself testify to the possibility of being misquoted. Then there are well known examples of reporters’ making up their “anonymous sources” and then writing essentially fiction. Most major American
publications are in the process of significantly tightening standards for granting anonymity to “whistle blowers” and other “inside sources.”

In one complicated case, a man in Minnesota, Dan Cohen, sued the Minneapolis Star Tribune because he had been revealed as the source for a revelation that had been commissioned by a man running for political office. The purpose was to discredit the politician’s opponent. Claiming that he had suffered because his identity had been revealed, Cohen sued the newspaper for “breach of contract” in having not only revealed his identity but then castigating him for his part in the scandal. He carried his case to the United States Supreme Court, which eventually ruled in his favor.\(^{10}\)

Historians, on the other hand, are expected to reveal their sources – the “scientific method” presumes that others can check the accuracy of what the historian has written. But the historian dealing with “contemporary history” may feel pressure to protect sources like a journalist does. I have interviewed diplomats who told me, “You can say that you spoke to me, but do not quote me.” I do not know that I would go to jail to protect these diplomats, but I have never had important enough information to be put to the test.

Another interesting question for historians and journalists is what to do if the interviewee wants to see any text based on that conversation before publication. In a letter that I cite below in Chapter VI, Shapiro complained that another journalist had not displayed kollegialnost’ and had not sent him text before publication, but American journalists generally do not allow interviewees to preview text before publication. In Soviet times, Soviet journalists would ask me to preview texts of interviews I had given; in independent Lithuania I have had to wait for publication to find out what I had said.

For the historian, there can in fact be an advantage in offering a summary of the conversation. I know that when I was a graduate student just beginning serious research, I welcomed the opportunity to send a summary to individuals I had spoken with. I spoke with Mykolas Birziska in Lithuanian; since I considered my written Russian far stronger than my written Lithuanian, I sent him a summary in Russian; he extensively edited my text (in Russian), correcting some spots and adding new material in others. Since Jonas Budrys had given me such a startling interpretation of the Klaipėda rising, I gladly agreed to his request to let him see the text based on his testimony before publication – and his comments were helpful.

Having established all those general principles, I want to emphasize the planning of specific interviews. The interviewer must collect whatever information he or she can find about the interviewee. I like to cite in this regard my interview with Arvydas Sabonis in his first year of playing in the NBA. Realizing that the first question in any interview is crucial, I studied my file of newspaper articles (in English, Russian, and Lithuanian), and finally decided on my first question: “Do you still play the accordion?” Arvydas laughed and declared that he could if he had the time, and we went on to more relevant questions in good humor. As an illustration of a disastrous opening, I almost wrecked my first meeting with Kazys Balutis when I began by speaking negatively of Augustinas Voldemaras. In my own experience of being interviewed, of being a “target,” I find that I react negatively when I discover that my interviewer has almost no idea who I am – “My

\(^{10}\) For documents relating to the use of “anonymous sources,” look for “anonymous source” on an Internet search machine. Dan Cohen described his experience in his book Anonymous Source: At War Against the Media; a True Story (Minneapolis MN: Oliver Press, 2005).
editor sent me to talk with you.” I almost expect the next sentence to be: “And I do not know why.” I find this not encouraging.

In conclusion, there is one more point that I would like to emphasize, namely the responsibility of the interviewer to the interviewee. Here again I am speaking more as a historian who is not looking for sensation. In the United States, there is a CBS television program entitled “Sixty Minutes,” specializing in exposes (often disguised as “investigative journalism”), that is notorious for sending out television crews to force people to give interviews, and it is legendary that some people, seeing the CBS crew arrive, run and hide. The program often shows people refusing to give interviews. This of course helps build the show’s popularity, but the “interview” process is, to say the least, corrupted. By way of contrast, I fondly remember hearing the one-time Christian Democratic leader Mykolas Krupavicius recommend me to a friend, saying “You can speak freely with him.”

In using material from an interview, I have always borne in mind the thought that I might yet come face to face with that person and have to justify what I have said. Indeed, in writing contemporary history I have the same thoughts in writing about any given person, whether I have interviewed that person or not. I can think of a number of occasions on which I have handed published text to a person I have quoted and then watched his or her face to judge the reaction. The cautious and careful use of privileged information can go far in establishing trust and opening the way for yet more productive interviews.

**Interviewing Henry Shapiro**

I have already indicated that I use a broad definition for the word “interview.” In the case of my talks with Henry Shapiro, there was an audience – my seminar students – who could also ask questions and comment. By some definitions, this may not have been an “interview” process. Once I suggested to a specialist who had insisted on the strict use of this type of terminology that perhaps my talks with Shapiro might fit the definition of “oral history,” but this specialist said no, an “oral history” interview has only two participants. Perhaps my talks with Shapiro qualify as a “press conference.” We prepared our topics; he and I together drew up a list in advance. Nevertheless, despite such semantic niceties, I still call the procedure “interviewing.” To me, an “interview” is the process of asking questions of another person – in certain circumstances this might even be a group – in order to obtain information and opinions of interest that the target is uniquely qualified to give.

Shapiro came to our campus in the fall of 1973. I had helped in finding a house for him and his wife to rent – his wife Ludmilla especially loved the birch trees outside the living room window – and we became good friends, meeting regularly to discuss history and current events. After a while I decided that it would be good to systematize the stories that I was hearing, and I proposed that we work out a way to present all this material to a group of graduate students, namely my seminar. If we followed the format of interviews, it would perhaps minimize the effort that he would have to put in to preparing for a given class.

Shapiro immediately pointed out that he was writing his memoirs, and he did not want to compromise the impact that he would have in telling his own stories. I declared that I understood, and I responded with two proposals: that I would
guarantee not to use the material or retell the stories before the publication of his memoirs or, if needs be, so long as he was alive; and that I give him transcripts of each session that might in fact help him to coordinate his thoughts in actually writing his memoirs. He agreed to this, and we drew up a plan to hold such meetings every two or three weeks (depending on his travel as well as mine) throughout the academic year of 1975-1976.

Our next task was to plan the routine. Ideally we would meet with the seminar every two weeks. In the intervening week, he and I would meet separately to establish a set of topics for the next meeting; in turn I would meet the seminar to inform them of the next topic and give them suggested readings. This proved to be an easy and consistent schedule to work with.

The next question, quite crucial, was “Where?” The interviewer cannot always control the environment for the discussion, but when he or she can, it is helpful to plan carefully. A classroom is perhaps not very jauku for a discussion aimed at probing memory. I decided the best place would be in my home, in a sunny porch that many visitors had praised as very sympathetic and “homey.” But it would not do to seat Shapiro where the sun would be in his eyes. That might make him uncomfortable and thereby interfere with his free communication with his memories. Therefore I placed the most comfortable chair in a spot where he could look outside at our back yard when he cared to, but where he would never have the sun in his eyes. My family provided a modest array of things to drink and to eat.

Then there was one last touch to make him comfortable: My seminar always ended promptly at 5.15 in the afternoon. That gave the students time to leave before he and I sat down to watch the CBS evening news on television. Even in retirement, Shapiro was what we call a “newshound,” and his favorite television news anchorman was Walter Cronkite, who had at one time worked in Moscow for United Press. Shapiro and I would sit, watch, and discuss the news, and then he would leave to go home.

There remains the question of specifically what I might have wanted to learn in these discussions. For the most part, the questions came from the list of subjects that Shapiro and I had decided on in advance. That list in turn represented the points on which our mutual interests coincided. My own purposes arose from both curiosity and a desire to collect information and stories that I could use in my lectures on Soviet history. (My own specialization in the University of Wisconsin History Department was Soviet history.) After rereading these texts, I also have to admit that I have always had a special interest in the personal dimension of history, stories about individuals who actually make the decisions and write the documents that historians and other scholars then formally interpret as embodying “class” or “group” interests.

Certainly a major return for this series of discussions with Professor Shapiro was the picture of the evolution of the Soviet Union. Categorical descriptions of the Soviet system as totalitarian contribute little to understanding the course of Russia’s history in the 20th century, the changes in the daily life of Soviet citizens. Shapiro repeatedly made the point that this or that was possible under Stalin’s successors, but not under Stalin. In my own experience in Moscow in the 1970s and 1980s, Russians often commented that they could not have spoken “this way” with me in Stalin’s time. Shapiro witnessed enormous changes in Moscow during his
forty years there, and his comments described the roots as well as the course and results of these changes.

A Lithuanian reader might object that I did not pursue Shapiro’s understanding of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the Soviet takeover of Lithuania, or Lithuanian resistance after World War II. On the one hand, in the mid 1970s, I had essentially abandoned the study of Lithuanian history in favor of other topics, and on the other, as Shapiro revealed in his answer to my question on Lithuanian dissent in our last discussion, he had paid little attention to events in Lithuania. Our discussions focused on Moscow.

Through all the details, we also see Shapiro himself. A reader, certainly a Lithuanian reader, might object to a number of his interpretations – say, his picture of Stalin – but I did not consider it my job to argue with Professor Shapiro. I wanted to collect his views and interpretations; it was not my concern to establish firm historical interpretations for the ages. He sympathized with some persons; he expressed strong dislike for others. He seemed to conceive of his work as understanding and reporting the Soviet Union as Soviet intellectuals in Moscow understood it, reflecting their feelings about their own gains or losses in this society; he criticized colleagues in Moscow who had neither the background nor the linguistic abilities to understand fully what they were witnessing. He had a keen interest in the position of Jews in Soviet society. But above all, he was a journalist – looking for stories, ready to ask questions of anyone he could find, and competing with his colleagues for “scoops.”

AES

Kaunas, October 2005
Unfortunately, the first transcript here recounts only the second meeting of Professor Shapiro with my seminar. In the first meeting, probably on September 10, 1975, my tape recorder did not work properly. Beginning with this second meeting, we have transcripts of all the subsequent eleven sessions.

In talks such as these, a myriad of names are brought up; to identify all of them would significantly expand this volume. I have therefore made no attempt to identify all the persons mentioned in these talks. In this internet age, it is fairly easy to find listings of major figures mentioned in these pages; I would just note that I have used the American transliteration system for Russian names, as in Khrushchev.

In this particular discussion, however, we paid particular attention to Soviet science: the work of Nikolai Vavilov and Ivan Pavlov and the scandalous story of Trofim Lysenko. Pavlov is of course known for his study of the conditioned reflex in dogs, but the other two men were involved in the politics and study of genetics. Shapiro also made a reference Raissa Berg, an émigré Russian geneticist and daughter of Lev Berg (a geographer and member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences whom Stalin sent to Siberia). She was at the time working in Madison; therefore Soviet genetics was a popular topic of conversation for us. At my urging Berg eventually wrote a history of Soviet genetics.

Attending the World Congress of Physiologists in Leningrad was apparently Shapiro’s first major assignment; in journalists’ talk, he was a “cub reporter.” Adding to his excitement was the fact that he shared his train compartment from Moscow with Walter Duranty, a well-known writer for The New York Times. Rather than competing with Duranty, however, he apparently helped Duranty in Leningrad, giving him material that the Times correspondent used for himself. “Of course, I kept the best for myself,” Shapiro later declared to Duranty’s biographer.1

Our discussion in this session focused on intellectual life of the early 1930s and on the ominous signs of the Soviet Union’s Stalinist future. Shapiro had gone to Moscow in 1933 – the Soviet Union had just survived the passions of the First Five

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1 Taylor Stalin’s Apologist, p. 245.

1: Life in the 1930s – September 24, 1975
Year Plan, the Seventeenth Party Congress of 1934 was called “the congress of victors,” because a period of party purge had just come to an end, and there seemed hope for a period of stable social development. Then came the assassination of Sergei Kirov, the party boss in Leningrad, and the Stalinist regime launched the Great Purge, in which, to use Soviet terminology, the USSR set a world record for executing members of the Communist Party as the Soviet terror apparatus turned on the party itself.

As I reread the text, several explanatory thoughts come to mind: 1/ I was interested in Shapiro’s memories and interpretations – one could always look for details and confirmation later. 2/ I was loath to argue with him for essentially the same reason – I wanted the general outline of his thoughts. 3/ I was not usually looking for specific information, and therefore I often went along as he rambled away into other topics – I was also interested in where he would go. I have not translated Russian phrases – we frequently used them in talking with each other.

In the transcripts, I have identified myself as “AS” and Shapiro as “HS.” “Q” indicates questions asked by students in the seminar. I have added some first names and identifications. For those of you not completely familiar with American jargon, I should probably yet explain Shapiro’s reference to the “three Rs” in education. This means “reading, ’riting, and ’rithmetic” (reading, writing, and arithmetic).

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AS: Well, we can continue on from where we left off last time. Professor Shapiro, the other day I heard you tell of having met Vavilov and Pavlov. Would you tell us the story?

HS: That was of course a different period from that which was to come a year or two later. This was 1934. I already talked of the Seventeenth Party Congress. Bohlen [Charles “Chip” Bohlen was later US ambassador in Moscow — aces] called this the most “optimistic” period. It was an optimistic period. Karl Radek at one time told me that they were thinking of putting out a newspaper without censorship. To think in those terms in those days was a revolution.

Anyhow, through a famous American geneticist named Hermann Muller, who was later to get a Nobel Prize and who was working in Moscow, I met Professor Nikolai Vavilov, one of the world’s great geneticists. His brother [Sergei] was later president of the Academy of Sciences, but even though he was president, he was unable to save the geneticist from jail.

Having met Vavilov, when I went to the Physiological Congress in Leningrad in the summer of 1934, he put a lot of interesting material my way. He and Professor Walter Cannon, an American geneticist from Harvard, arranged for me to see Pavlov. Pavlov was to live another couple of years; he was already in his 80s, very fragile, but he still worked in a laboratory every day. He was inaccessible, that is, his son, also a physiologist, had gotten himself a group of bodyguards so that it was impossible to get to him.

Vavilov and particularly Cannon, whom I had met at Cambridge, told me, “I’ll arrange it; it’ll be no problem. Come up to the platform, and I will in-
I came up to the platform; Cannon took me by the arm and brushed aside about twelve Nobel Prize winners gathered around Pavlov and introduced me, much to the consternation of his son and the bodyguards. Pavlov, the old man, was very friendly, very pleasant, and after I told him what I wanted, he said, “Fire away, I’ll answer any questions you want.”

The first question I asked was, “What do you think of the Soviet regime now?” He was a monarchist. The first year or two after the Revolution the monarchists used to get together and drink toasts to the monarchy. And he would be there. Whenever he denounced the Soviet government, Lenin would give him a new laboratory. Lenin protected him. Stalin would have shot him. This was 1934; Lenin was dead. His answer to my question was, “I am very grateful to the Soviet experiment.” He still called it an “experiment.” “No government in the world does so much for science as the Soviet government does,” which was probably true then. I went on asking questions of Pavlov. He said some critical things of the Soviet government, but he was generally in approval. As a matter of fact he was still religious and he went to church every Sunday.

Without meaning any offense to any of you with religious feelings, it was a common anecdote at the time that one Sunday morning, some workers were passing the church where Pavlov used to worship when he drove up in his car, one of the few cars then, and walked into the church. This was at the height of the anti-religious campaign. One of the workers, not recognizing Pavlov – he was a very distinguished man – pointed and said, “kakaiá temnota!” You would not hear that thing today. Even the most atheist Russians have a much more respectful attitude toward religion and people who worship. At that time it was still a period of militant atheism. The young people used to parade around churches at Easter and at Christmas with Soviet slogans.

Vavilov, as you know, was the leader of a school of geneticists, and he got into trouble with Lysenko, the notorious Lysenko, who was a charlatan, an ignoramus – nevertheless he succeeded Vavilov as president of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences. He managed to sell Stalin a bill of goods, namely that he could not only change biology, he could raise wheat in the Arctic, he could produce two crops a year; he could change the environment and change human character too. That was the great struggle of that period; it was already beginning, the geneticists against the so-called “environmentalists,” the Lysenko school and the Vavilov school. Gradually Lysenko achieved control and became a sort of dictator of biology in the Soviet Union and started arresting. Vavilov was arrested, and most of the biologists. That went on until after the war. Top biologists were arrested and some of them were shot. Vavilov was not shot, but he died in exile.

After Stalin’s death, Lysenko was discredited, but he seemed to win Khrushchev’s favor. Khrushchev rehabilitated him. He was fired from the presidency of the academy, but Khrushchev made some speeches where he praised him. He was still a sort of Rasputin character; he was able to convince Khrushchev as he had Stalin that he could get more yield per acre. Khrushchev defended him. At this time people were not afraid of him any more, and they spoke up. Vavilov was rehabilitated, posthumously. The Academy of Sciences ap-
pointed a commission to go to the experimental farm of Lysenko’s, where he claimed to have produced all sorts of miracles, a combination of Burbank and Michurin, and they discovered that the whole thing was a fake. He was completely discredited, but according to a Soviet woman geneticist who left the Soviet Union six months ago and is now at this university, Dr. Berg, Lysenko is still doing harm. He still works in a laboratory.

AS: Did Pavlov give you the interview right on the platform?

HS: Right on the platform, to the consternation of all those people, right in the middle of the conference, everybody watching me, admiring or cursing my chutzpah.

AS: How long did you manage to speak with him?

HS: It must have been half an hour, but I saw him again later. The congress moved from Leningrad to Moscow. It had a session at the Kremlin. One of the things which they asked to see was Lenin’s tomb, because there were rumors that the object there was not Lenin. The chief of the press section of the congress happened to be the famous chemist and biologist who had embalmed Lenin, Professor Zbarsky, whom I got to know very well. Zbarsky said we are going to take these academicians down there, and you can come along. So I went, hanging on to the coattails of Walter Cannon. Vavilov had already seen Lenin. They were allowed to open the tomb, they stuck pins into him. They were all physiologists, and they were convinced that it was not a wax figure, but that it was Lenin, that it was a human body.

Zbarsky told me how it came to be. When Lenin died, it was cold. Millions of people came from all over the country to see the body, and they kept on coming. It was cold, and nothing was needed to preserve the body. Then the Central Committee asked him – he had just come back from Switzerland where he got a degree in biochemistry – whether he could do something to preserve it longer. He started working on it, and he developed this process which they kept on perfecting. He was the official caretaker. After the war he told me that it was good for another 500 years.

The body was evacuated to Sverdlovsk – a big secret. A few days after the war had been declared, I asked the Soviet spokesman, Lozovsky, is it true? Could he confirm the rumor that Lenin’s body had been evacuated? He just hesitated a second, looked at the ceiling, and said, “Comrade Lenin is always with us.” That was his answer. It was confirmed later that the body had been taken to Sverdlovsk, and it was brought back after the war. Zbarsky was later arrested as one of the “rootless cosmopolitans.”

AS: Then we might turn to the subject we had on our list: the culture of the 1930s.

HS: I still managed to hit the end of the Golden Age of Soviet culture. There was a sparkling efflorescence after the Revolution of all kinds of schools of thought. Poetry, literature, the theatre. They had a lot of freedom, in form anyhow. All sorts of experimentalists in the theater. They used to have an annual international theater festival. The leading theater critics and dramatists from all over Europe used to come. Moscow was at that time, in a sense, the most important theater center, movie center. Of course they were limited ideologically, but they had a lot of leeway. Actually the modern abstract painters started to flourish then – Kandinsky, Malevich. There was that much freedom. For two
reasons: one, Lenin was himself a sophisticated intellectual, catholic tastes. Lunacharsky, the minister of education, was in charge of all the cultural development.

I think that some of the best post-revolutionary literature was written in that period. [Boris] Pilniak. I am mentioning the dead ones. [Vladimir] Mayakovskiy. [Mikhail] Bulgakov wrote his play, *Dni turbinov*, for the first time showing the Whites as human beings, opponents, anti-Bolsheviks, who were dignified human beings; they weren't just caricatures or bandits, as they had been portrayed until then. It was a very interesting period from that point of view. Of course, [Boris] Pasternak was writing all sorts of poetry. [Ilia] Ehrenburg was still living in Paris; he had written a series of anti-Soviet novels. They began publishing him in the Soviet Union, even though Lenin had denounced him. By 1932, 1933, 1934, the whole thing was beginning to fade away.

Speaking of culture, it is important to note that 1934 was also the year of educational reform, the reform of the writing of history, the beginning of the recognition of some of the pre-Revolutionary figures in Russian history. Ivan Grozny was not called grozny; some called him Ivan Dobry. Do you know that story of the painting by Repin in the Tretiakov, *Ivan Grozny ubivaet svoego syna*? Well, the wits in Moscow renamed it, "Ivan the Kind giving first aid to his son." Alexei Tolstoy wrote *Peter the Great*, glorifying Peter, and drawing obvious parallels.

In education, they started emphasizing the three R's all over again. They started denouncing the textbooks on pedagogy as vulgar sociology. They introduced the tsarist texts in history. They introduced the curricula and the methods of pre-Revolutionary times, very good, based on French and German lycees. That was 1934.

But with the Kirov assassination [Serghei Kirov, party chief in Leningrad, was killed in December 1934 – aes] and the rapid rise of terror, a lot of the intellectuals began to fear that worse times were coming. But that was still a very exciting period on the cultural front.

AS: You’ve mentioned to me that you knew Alexei Tolstoy well. Did you get any sense of these cultural changes from him?

HS: I got to know Alexei Tolstoy better during the war. He was one of the writers who stayed in Moscow. We were evacuated, the diplomatic corps and part of the government, on October 15, 1941 to Kuibyshev. In Kuibyshev we were all in a small hotel, so small that the official name of it was the Grand Hotel. There was not a single bathroom. We all lived together, and that’s how I got to know him fairly well. Tolstoy lived there, Kataev, Petrov, Sholokhov.

AS: Kataev was Petrov’s brother.

HS: Yes. Kataev’s original name was Petrov. As the brothers grew up, they decided that it was not *udobno* to have two writers named Petrov. So one of them remained Petrov, and the other became Kataev. Kataev was the better writer; Petrov was the better journalist.

But we got to know each other very well, and we almost had an international murder in there. I had the largest suite in the Grand Hotel. I had a reception to which I invited some of the Russian writers, together with people from the
embassy. One of them was Charley Thayer, Bohlen’s brother-in-law, at that
time First Secretary. And there was John Russell, the nephew of Bertrand
Russell, who is now British ambassador to Spain. And Kataev.

Charley Thayer, a bit of a hooligan, knew Kataev’s weakness for [Ernest]
Hemingway. After they had all had a few drinks, Thayer made a disparaging
remark about Hemingway – “Hemingway was a lousy writer.” Kataev went
after Thayer, a big fellow, and began to strangle him. “How dare you say that
about Hemingway, the world’s greatest living writer?” It was particularly dan-
gerous because the writers were all in uniform; during the war they all became
political commissars attached to the Red Army and they all had guns. So any
one of them could have taken their revolvers and shot him. It is amusing to talk
about this now, but it was very scary when it happened.

There was an intimacy possible then in Kuibyshev. At the time of the first
Soviet counteroffensive in December, we were allowed to return to Moscow.
The writers came, including Alexei Tolstoy. I got to know him quite well,
him and Sholokhov. At that time the Americans were popular. They were
all pulling our leg about the second front. Pearl Harbor was on December
7. The night between the sixth and the seventh, I was typing a dispatch. The
telephone rang. It was Ehrenburg. He said, “Congratulations!” I asked why.
“We are allies now.” The Japanese had started the war. That is how I learned
about Pearl Harbor. It took me another fifteen or twenty minutes before I got
hold of TASS. Communications were not very good. The Foreign Ministry
knew, but it was not generally known. I heard it first from Ehrenburg. I
telephoned the embassy, but the embassy had not heard. The embassy heard
about it twenty minutes later when it received a message from Washington.

To show you the total relationship, when we got back to Moscow, we decided
to establish an Anglo-American Press Association. Until then it had been
forbidden. So we organized. I was elected first president. We had about
sixty members. As the first function, we decided to hold a lunch and to invite
top Soviet officials, below Stalin of course. Much to my surprise, everybody
invited showed up. Two members of the Politburo, Shcherbakov and Alex-
androv. All the important writers, including Tolstoy, Ehrenburg, Kataev, and
Fadeev. They all came. I had Shcherbakov on one side and Alexandrov on
the other. It was never repeated.

They were in a very good humor. They kidded us about the second front. But
then about a week later they gave a similar dinner in return. The Russians
are very particular about reciprocity. The same people; they gave the same
speeches.

This is when I really got to know Tolstoy. He had finished The Road to Calva-
ry. It is a Zhivago type of book, but much better. The problem of the adjust-
ment of the Russian intelligentsia to the revolution. As a novel, it is certainly
better. Pasternak’s writing is better. Certainly some parts of Dr. Zhivago are
some of the best Russian prose ever written. But Pasternak was not a novel-
ist. I recommend that you all read this book – I presume that you all have
read Dr. Zhivago – and compare it, and see how the problem is treated by a
man who by this time is sympathetic to it and eleven years later by Pasternák,
who never was, and remained opposed to it.
AS: When we talked about some of the personalities of the 1930s, I asked you about Mikhail Bulgakov, and you told me that he was rather hard to get to know.

HS: Bulgakov was a loner. Most of the activities of the writers were centered in two places. One was the Writers’ Union, which was in a house described by Lev Tolstoy in War and Peace. The house where Natasha …

/end of reel/

HS: Alexei Tolstoy’s friends, sometimes jokingly, sometimes not so jokingly, used to call him Graf Tolstoy. He lived in a mansion; he and Gorky probably had the most luxurious mansions in Moscow. Not so luxurious as they might have been before the revolution, but by Soviet standards they were pleasant. And he had a butler, a lackey, whom he had brought back from Paris. When there was a telephone call, the butler would say, “His Excellency Comrade Graf Tolstoy has just left for a meeting of the Central Committee.” Well, a lot of people criticized him for becoming too Soviet. It was all right during the war to be a Russian patriot, but Peter I was criticized as too much of an effort to fawn on Stalin, to draw the parallel too close.

AS: You mean it was criticized unofficially.

HS: Oh, of course. Officially he got the Stalin Prize. A highly cultivated man. Many of the Russian writers are highly talented, but they don’t have much culture, especially the younger generation.

This is one of the criticisms of Solzhenitsyn. His best friend, Kornei Chukovsky, the poet, said that one of the tragedies of Solzhenitsyn is that he didn’t have enough general culture. He hadn’t read enough, and what is even worse, he didn’t have enough contacts with Soviet intelligentsia. He lived more or less the life of a loner.

It was true of Bulgakov too, but Bulgakov was already a product of the old Russian intelligentsia, which as you know was very highly developed, whereas Solzhenitsyn grew up in a Cossack village in the Don valley and went to an ordinary Soviet school, which wasn’t too good in that period. He came to full maturity in prison, and after he came out he lived for many years in Riazan where he hardly ever saw anyone. Chukovsky thought it was a great tragedy that he didn’t have enough contact.

Bulgakov for other reasons. Bulgakov was ostracized for a long time because of his bourgeois wife.

I was talking about the two centers for the writers. One was the writers’ union. They used to have meetings there. They had a good restaurant, the best in Moscow. They had debates. Then in Peredelkino, a village outside Moscow, the Writers’ Union built houses for the writers. They lived there for most of the year, certainly in the summer. They had soirees there. In that period I was still allowed to go there, especially after I met my wife who was a student as the Gorky Literary Institute.

AS: Excuse me, you said she was a student with Konstantin Simonov.

HS: Simonov was her classmate. He was one of the most famous of her class-
mates. [Sergei] Mikhalkov, the one who wrote the national anthem, a notorious character, he was her classmate. And [Aleksandr] Tvardovsky was one of her teachers.

In the house that we lived in, built by the Writers’ Union, my predecessor, Eugene Lyons, wangled a membership in the Writers’ Union – which is now analogous to my being elected to the College of Cardinals – and got hold of this apartment, which he later sold to the United Press. [Osip] Mandelstam lived there; Ilf and Petrov – *The Little Golden Calf* was written in that house. I used to hear the typewriter going all night.

I had seen Bulgakov occasionally on the staircase. He didn’t talk very much. He died rather early, about 1939. Had he lived until the war, I would have gotten to know him better. Nobody knew that he was writing *Master and Margarita*.

You know his background. He was a medical doctor like [Anton] Chekhov. The difference was that Chekhov got published right away and Bulgakov was not, until he wrote this *Dni turbino*, which he sent to Stalin with a letter where he asked either you produce this play or you let me go to Paris, where my brother lives. Stalin approved the play, and he became overnight one of the most famous Soviet playwrights.

AS: I think we might move on to some of the other topics we have on our list. We come back to the Seventeenth Party Congress [1934 – aes]. Was the phrase “reconciliation: used at that time?

HS: If it was used, it must have been in a casual and insignificant way. There was something in the air, a feeling that the worst is out of the way. Rationing was about to be abolished; the class enemy was out of the way; the kulaks had been exiled; the foundations of communism had been laid; the major powers had already recognized the Soviet Union.

AS: Is this the time when they had the portraits of Stalin staying, “Life is becoming happier, comrades, life is becoming more cheerful”?

HS: Yes. “Life has become better, life has become jollier. He said that, and it looked that way. But the enemy was still a class enemy, and Stalin was still talking in terms of capitalist encirclement. Hitler was in power, and they were preparing for the popular front. Reconciliation between whom and whom?

AS: Within the party.

HS: Most of the opponents of Stalin, those who had opposed him publicly, both the Right Opposition and the Left Opposition, had recanted and had admitted their errors publicly. In that sense I suppose you could call it reconciliation, but it turned out to be false. The charges in the trials were of course exaggerated, but there is every reason to believe that they continued opposing Stalin in one form or another.

AS: Were you a reporter at the Seventeenth Party Congress?

HS: I was a reporter at the time in Moscow. We were not permitted into the Congress, but I could get information.

AS: Some western Sovietologists argue that Stalin was essentially demoted by that Seventeenth Party Congress.
HS: Well, there was a very popular theory in Moscow at the time, and it is also mentioned by Medvedev. Now Medvedev [Roy Medvedev, an independent historian - aes] said that only four or five people voted for Stalin. I cannot believe that. Stalin was too much in control.

But the story that I did hear was that when Kirov walked in, he had louder applause, and the applause lasted longer than what Stalin got. Kirov was unquestionably the number two man by reputation and prestige. Not in the party hierarchy: There was no number two man, there was only one Secretary General, Stalin, and that was enough. There is no law or rule of succession in the Soviet Union. Lenin was not able to appoint his successor; Stalin was unable to name his successor. When the Secretary General dies, the Politburo names his successor. No one could guess that Stalin – Stalin was one of the candidates but more people bet on Trotsky than on Stalin. And nobody bet on Khrushchev to succeed Stalin. The two obvious successors seemed to be Malenkov and Molotov. Earlier [Andrei] Zhdanov seemed to be the obvious successor, but he died.

At this congress – and this story was confirmed by Shaumian, the son of the famous Armenian [Stepan] Shaumian shot by the British – Kirov got more applause than Stalin. If there had been a free vote, the congress would have elected Kirov. Kirov was elected secretary. Right after the congress, he went back to Leningrad. Instead of letting him resign his post in Leningrad to come to Moscow, Stalin, his critics say, insisted on keeping him in Leningrad until December when he was assassinated. And that is one of the factors in suspecting that Stalin had a hand in the assassination. I am prepared to believe that if there had really been a free vote, Stalin might have been ousted.

AS: What is your interpretation of the assassination?

HS: I’d say, whether Stalin had a hand in it or not, he certainly took full advantage of it. Stalin benefited by it. He was given the pretext to liquidate everyone he wanted to. If he did not already have supreme power, he now took it. I have some suspicion of the theory that Stalin engineered the assassination.

Khrushchev was the first one to officially raise doubt, at the Twentieth Party Congress, about the facts surrounding the murder of Kirov. And he said, isn’t it strange that everybody connected with the assassination is not longer alive, all the witnesses. But still there are documents and archives. Khrushchev had full control, and he appointed a committee to investigate and to report in just a few months. This was in 1956. At the Twenty-Second Party Congress, in 1961, Khrushchev again raised the question, and he never produced the slightest bit of evidence. Particularly in 1961 Khrushchev was boiling with fury. I don’t know what was bothering him. He had quieted down, and suddenly in 1961 he started all over again. Whereas until then, Stalin had been a man, pretty good until he developed the personality cult, in 1961 Stalin had never been any good; he had been a criminal all along. And yet Khrushchev never produced a scintilla of evidence linking Stalin directly with the Kirov assassination. Now that to me is highly suspicious. Khrushchev had full power by that time.

AS: In another context, I have read of Stalin’s destroying records. Is it conceivable that the documents were destroyed?
HS: It is conceivable, but you could not possibly destroy all records. Russians like to write notes; they like to keep diaries. There are very few Russians who don't keep a diary. In the worst days of the purge, they would keep diaries, either in code or in some innocuous form. There were too many of the former KGB chiefs who were in prison. I haven't read that any of the survivors of the camps who met the KGB chiefs, that any of them threw the slightest suspicion on Stalin. It is an interesting theory, especially since Stalin benefited so much by the assassination. If anybody had reason to get Kirov out of the way, it was Stalin.

AS: What was the immediate reaction in your circles to the assassination?

HS: The correspondents were convinced that Stalin had something to do with it. By that time it was already bruited about that Kirov was more popular than Stalin. There were several other theories, some of them pure gossip. One theory was that Kirov had seduced Nikolaev's wife. Another theory was that it was an intrigue within the police. Another was that it was a case of jealousy – Nikolaev [the assassin – aes] had been Kirov's private secretary and had been fired. One constant, repeated all along, was the suspicion that Stalin was afraid of Kirov.

AS: Was there any feeling that this was some epochal turning point in Soviet history?

HS: The country had a tradition of assassination: [Moisei] Uritsky, two attempts on Lenin, and attempts on others.

AS: The Kirov case had to be sensational in that it was the major assassination since the end of the Civil War.

HS: It was sensational. But the adult generation of that time knew the history of assassinations in that country. That was one thing. The other thing is that the Stalinist propaganda made it appear that the enemies did it, the Zinovievs, the Kamenevs, and people like that. Kirov was a tribune, a man of the people. In the absence of anything to contradict it, they presented a pretty plausible case. And of course Stalin was built up as a demigod.

AS: This reaction intrigues me. Did they actually put this in the context of pre-revolutionary assassinations?

HS: We..., maybe if the intellectuals could get together and freely talk, but you could not do that sort of thing. You never knew who would report you. By that time, the terror was on already, immediately after the assassination. It wasn't as it became in '36 and '37, but there was no question they were cracking down. There were violent editorials in the papers. People were afraid.

The murder of Kirov certainly was a turning point in Soviet history. This became seen pretty soon after. Draconian legislation was enacted. Summary execution of persons accused of conspiring to overthrow the regime or to assassinate leaders. No right of appeal. The death penalty was reinstated. And then arrests started. The greatest wave of arrests came in 1936 to 1938; but in Leningrad they started right away.

AS: [Grigorii] Zinoviev and [Lev] Kamenev were arrested and tried right away in January 1935. As I recall, they were sentenced to ten years or so for having inspired the assassination.
HS: That trial was not public. It was just announced in the papers. We knew that they were arrested. They inspired the assassination. Other people were being arrested all the time. Then the new trial came in 1936; that was public. That’s the one I attended.

AS: Do you recall any specific reaction in your circles to that first trial of January 1935?

HS: Well I had two or three circles: diplomatic-correspondent, Soviet officials, and Soviet intellectuals. Most of the foreigners didn’t believe it; they thought the whole thing was stages. By foreigners, I mean the official foreigners, the diplomats and the correspondents. The feeling was mixed among the Soviet intellectuals. The whole Trotsky movement, Zinoviev and Kamenev, had been so discredited; so many years of anti-Trotsky propaganda had gone on. And then there were these abject confessions.

AS: Now you are getting off into the public trials. My question concerned the trials of 1935.

HS: Zinoviev and Kamenev were not very popular. They were people who were known to have been in the opposition. Zinoviev and Kamenev were particularly unpopular because they were against the seizure of power [in 1917 – aes]. Not only that, but they published the news that Lenin was planning to seize power.

AS: Between the secret trial of 1935 and the public trial of 1936 was there a feeling that the Kirov affair had been settled? Was there tension that there would be more?

HS: There was a feeling that it was getting worse, that the whole thing was developing, especially since these stories of increased arrests were coming through all the time. Among the party members, especially top echelon members, there was terror, but not on a wholesale level. It was tense. There was no question it was getting worse all the time.

AS: The Seventh Comintern Congress took place in 1935. We will discuss it later in relation to foreign policy. Does it have any bearing…

/ end of reel/

AS: All right, we were talking about the Seventh Comintern Congress.

HS: That was a very delicate thing, because the Comintern was still full of foreigners. The foreigners had not been totally liquidated. There were Germans there, Americans, British and Yugoslavs. There still were remnants of Trotskyites, and other foreign communists who were anti-Stalin.

AS: It is sort of humorous to think of the Comintern as being full of foreigners.

HS: After the First World War, some senator, when asked what he thought of the League of Nations, said, it could have been a wonderful organization if it weren’t for all those foreigners in it.

All right. Stalin was pretty much in control already of the Comintern. There were still remnants of the old intelligentsia. But there were bound to be tensions. Particularly since he had been proved wrong on the Nazi question; Trotsky, from exile, had supported the popular front, socialists and commu-
nists against the Nazis even before Hitler took power. His argument was that it is much better that the socialists and communists work together, take power, then it will be easy to get rid of the Social Democrats, rather than to let the Nazis come to power. Several times, the German communists in the Reichstag, under orders from the Comintern, under orders from Stalin, voted with the Nazis against the Socialists. There were Germans – Neumann was there – who felt that Stalin had been wrong. Stalin was about to announce the popular front, in other words, an admission that he had been wrong. The fact that Georgi Dimitrov had become head of the Comintern helped him. Dimitrov’s record was clean, he wasn’t involved.

There was a certain amount of gossip. The American communists stayed in a hotel called Lux. It wasn’t very luxurious, more like the Grand Hotel in Kuibyshev. On Gorky Street. They could not be seen. I once saw Browder [Earl Browder, head of the US Communist Party] in the hotel and went over to talk to him; he walked away. Even when I told him who I was, he just turned his back and would not talk to me. And of course there were guardians. You could only pick up a certain amount of information from Russians.

The big break between William Bullitt [US ambassador to the Soviet Union] and the Russians came at that time. That sort of precipitated it. Bullitt had been gradually becoming anti-Soviet, and here he had a very good pretext to complain about a violation of the so-called Roosevelt-Litvinov agreement. The American delegate spoke of revolution in the United States. This represented intervention into the internal affairs of the United States. Not that he expected revolution to break out the next day, but the fact that an American citizen, a member of the Communist Party, made a speech in Moscow saying that there was a class struggle in the United States, that the bourgeoisie must be overthrown, Bullitt considered sufficient ground for protest. It was rejected.

AS: I think we can open up to questions.

Q: Speaking of writers, were you in Moscow when Maxim Gorky died? Do you have any thoughts about his death?

HS: At one of the trials, Genrik Iagoda, the chief of police, was accused of having arranged his death. There was a mixture of scandal and politics. Iagoda was a woman-chaser; he was supposedly having an affair with Gorky’s daughter-in-law, the wife of Peshkov. Maybe he even married her. He was anxious to get rid of Gorky, according to the charges, because Gorky was a humanist and was a good influence and he tried to influence Stalin to be more peaceful. That was supposed to be bad.

Anyway, Gorky was at his dacha in the Crimea. There was a bonfire. They arranged it so that he would be facing the bonfire and got warmed up. Then they walked away with him so that he was facing the Black Sea and caught cold. There were little Borgia-type stories like that. When Iagoda was deputy chief of the GPU, the chief of Viacheslav Menzhinsky, he wanted to get rid of him. He sprayed Menzhinsky with fumes so that Menzhinsky died. There were these Medici-type stories.

AS: How much of a public figure was Gorky?

HS: He was a great public figure. He was very popular. He did have a benign influence. At the beginning he opposed the Bolsheviks. The announcement
that the Bolsheviks were going to attack the Winter Palace was published in Gorky's paper. Gorky took a position between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. After the Bolshevik seizure of power, he stayed in Capri. Then he came back and was received with great honor. Stalin apparently liked him. He achieved tremendous influence. He saved people's lives. He was always doing something to improve the lot of the writers. Of course he became increasingly apologetic for the regime.

AS: He was very influential in the development of Socialist Realism.

HS: Very much, he was a Proletkultist at the beginning. He was the one who laid down the ideology. At the first Writers' Congress in Minsk, it was he who formulated the ideology of Socialist Realism. It was one thing what Gorky meant by it until all those little bureaucrats got hold of it.

AS: Did you ever have occasion to meet him?

HS: Yes, I met him. We had some dialogue. He was very easy going, very amiable. Strong voice, strong authority. There was a sense of communism you wouldn't expect in somebody who became the official writer-laureate. But he was. He was very accessible. He used to get hundreds of manuscripts from young writers, and he used to read them all. He would read everything and answer it, criticize. Very interesting man.

Q: Did word get around about Master and Margarita?

HS: It was published in Novyi mir, not in full, but most of it. I wrote the first story on it. It was a great sensation.

AS: But you said originally that no one in Bulgakov's time knew that he was working on it.

HS: His wife had a manuscript, that is, his widow. It was she who decided to give it to Tvardovsky. She had a literary salon. At the same time she got a copy of the manuscript abroad, so the full text was published abroad. But the gut of it was in Novyi mir. What impression? It made a great impression. Other writers said, “I wish I had written that.” He was never “uninstated.” He was never a popular figure. Dni turbinov made a lot of money.

The easiest way to become a millionaire in the Soviet Union is to write a popular play. The play, when accepted, if it's good, is produced simultaneously in several hundred theaters. The authors get royalties, not from the book alone, but from the box office. They get a certain percentage of the box office receipts. The richest people in the Soviet Union since the revolution have been the playwrights. When we get a combination like Simonov – Simonov writes a very successful novel, does the scenario for the movie, and then writes a play. He does it all himself. So Simonov, after Stalin's death, was one of the few people in the Soviet Union considered to have an otkrytyi otchet.

Who has such accounts? Well, Brezhnev has. Brezhnev of course has a salary of 2000. But I am sure that he does not live on his salary. So if he needs any money, he gets it. Maybe Kosygin, certainly the party leader. Simonov was the richest man in the country for a while. Then there was this children's poet, Chukovsky. He died about three years ago. A poet. Three generations of Russian-speaking children have grown up reading Chukovsky. After he died, he left enough money to keep Solzhenitsyn for a couple of years.
Q: Did you ever interview Stalin?

HS: No. The last interview he gave to a western newspaperman was in 1935, to Roy Howard, the president of United Press at the time. During the war, Stalin answered a few letters of correspondents. Generally he received very few people. He received Emil Ludwig, Leon Feuchtwanger, H. G. Wells, and of course during the war he received such well known people as Winston Churchill.

Q: What is the general and official reaction to Evgeny Zamiatin's *We*? Was it criticized as a negative blueprint of the future?

HS: If I remember correctly it was criticized in some of the party literature not exactly in those terms. It was a slanderous, defamatory book. At that time, they did it, and it was over. Zamiatin went abroad. Stalin let him go. Now again there is a pattern. They let the trouble makers go out instead of arresting and killing them. They let them go out: Solzhenitsyn, for example, Chaliidze, Litvinov, Tarais. Some of the unknown writers are arrested. The better known troublemakers, [Zhores] Medved, are allowed to go abroad. The feeling is that they get rid of them, and they can do less damage in that way. I think they made a mistake in Solzhenitsyn's case, but that was the idea.

Q: Were there any indications during the Seventeenth Party Congress of impending changes in the party?

HS: There were indications that things would improve. There was already talk of the new constitution. There was a feeling that things were improving, being liberalized. In the field of civil rights, there would be substantial improvement. When Stalin saw Roy Howard, he said there would be several candidates from different groups. Even after the trials had started, Stalin made Feuchtwanger believe that matters will improve. But they got worse until the end of 1938, when the purges were stopped.

And then at the end of the war, it started all over again. Stalin's paranoia and suspicions were strange at this time. Taking hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war coming back from Germany to be purified and decontaminated. But most of them were released. Imagine what would happen in this country. These were prisoners of war who had fought for the Soviet Union, and Stalin thought they had been contaminated.

AS: We will get back to the end of World War II another time.

Q: Can I turn to the early '30s? If I recall correctly, the major literary journals were still coming out of Leningrad, like Zvezda and Neva. Later on, these sort of withered away. Was there any jealousy between the Leningrad intelligentsia and the Moscow intelligentsia?

HS: I don't know what you would call jealousy. Certainly there was competition, and there still is, not only between Leningrad and Moscow but also between one magazine and other. The great battle in Tvardovsky's time was between him and Oktiabr'. Oktiabr was supposed to be the conservative magazine, and Novyi mir the liberal magazine. I am not sure that you are right that Zvezda and Neva was supposed to be the superior magazines.

Q: At least in the late '20s.

HS: You must be very careful. Although St. Petersburg was the capital of Russia, Moscow was always the cultural capital. The great writers lived there – Tol-
stoy, Chekhov. Gorky lived in St. Petersburg. The Academy of Sciences was in St. Petersburg. But Moscow was the superior cultural center.

Q: Perhaps I had in mind the symbolists.

HS: A particular school could have originated there. You are right in taking a given movement in a given period. But if you take the whole period from 1917 to date, you will find first that there is a certain amount of competition between the two cities, but by and large Moscow dominated. The Writers’ Union was established in Moscow, but that only came in the 1930s. But all the important people were there – the Central Committee, the proletariat.

Q: Perhaps I did not phrase my question properly. Was this renewed emphasis on Moscow an effort to stifle the free thinkers of the ’20s connected with St. Petersburg?

HS: I wouldn’t say so, because those same free thinkers could be suppressed as easily in Moscow as in Leningrad. The whole trend was toward centralization. It did not make any different. The Leningrad magazines had to be censored in Moscow. The chief censorship was in Moscow.

AS: Through all the years you were in Moscow working for the UPI, did you ever have a person working in Leningrad?

HS: No, we were not allowed to. We used to take occasional trips to Leningrad and to other cities. There was no point. What was there in Leningrad for the foreign press? The big thing was the Kirov assassination. Immediately everyone rushed to the train – at that time nobody flew – and the Leningrad station was surrounded by KGB and troops. It took nearly an hour to get to the train. Why? Because Stalin was in that train. Stalin, Voroshilov and practically the whole Politburo were on the train going to Leningrad to investigate the assassination. But what could the correspondents do when they got to Leningrad? They could not stop people on the streets; people were already terrified. Kirov had been murdered. You can imagine all the troops they had called out. Most of the correspondents scouted around; most of them did not know any Russian. They went to the Finnish consulate, the German consulate, picked up a certain amount of gossip here and there. Now there is an American consulate in Leningrad; it has been there two or three years. It can pick up a certain amount of local color. That’s all.

AS: Essentially Moscow is a combination of Washington and New York.

HS: And St. Louis, and Madison, and Nome, Alaska. It does not matter so much now, speaking from a mechanical point of view. Until 1961 the censorship was in Moscow. That international physiological congress, there the censor came with us from Moscow. We had to show anything we wrote. He passed it. There were ways of evading him. I used the telephone, especially on nonpolitical stories. I usually got through. I sent long feature articles by registered mail. But the censor was there to see that …

/end of reel, end of session!
II: THE LATER
1930s – OCTOBER 15, 1975
In my collection of transcripts, I have a few copies of the syllabi that I gave the students in preparation for each meeting. These included topics and suggested readings – I usually drew up these lists in cooperation with Professor Shapiro.

The syllabus:

Topics for discussion:
The Great Public Trials: Radek, Rakovsky, Bukharin, Rykov
The 18th Party Congress
The aftermath of the Great Purge
Collective Security
The Spanish Civil War
Conflicts with the Japanese
Munich
Litvinov’s dismissal
The Nazi-Soviet Pact

Suggested Readings:
Transcripts of the Public Trials
Stephen Cohen. *Bukharin and the Russian Revolution*
Boris Nicolaevsky. *Letter from an Old Bolshevik*
*Falsifiers of History.*

This second transcript concerned the period of terror in the latter 1930s. Stalin and his henchmen carried out a massive purge of the party and the military. Some commentators have claimed that he was eliminating a potential “fifth column” within his own ranks in preparation for the coming, inevitable conflict with Nazi Germany; others have insisted that he was simply paranoid and that the purges actually weakened the Soviet Union. The high point of the “Great Purge” seemed to be the public trials of leading “Old Bolsheviks,” individuals who
had joined the party before the October Revolution of 1917 and had even been comrades of V. I. Lenin; arrests and executions nevertheless continued until the war. In Soviet history the period became known as the Ezhovshchina, named for Nikolai Ezhov, ending in 1938 when Lavrentii Beria replaced Ezhov as head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the NKVD.

Although in 1936 Stalin proclaimed that the Soviet Union had achieved the stage of “socialism” and that the society was united as never before, the regime identified enemies seemingly everywhere. Ideologists spoke of a “capitalist encirclement” or “environment” that threatened the Soviet Union's achievements, and they insisted that the closer the Soviet system came to the realization of the ideals of communism, the more desperate and dangerous became its enemies. Accordingly, the idea of the “withering away of the state,” as formulated in Marxist writings, had to be understood not as a gradual withering but rather only as a sudden withering at the point at which the Soviet Union had once and for all conquered all its enemies, internal as well as external, and had constructed the strongest possible state. That was the ideological turn that doomed Evgenii Pashukanis, the man Shapiro had wanted to study with.

The class discussion inevitably turned to personalities as actors in the spectacle of the great purge trials, both as prosecutors and defenders. I was of course intrigued by the fact that Shapiro had known so many of the principal figures of the 1930s involved in the Moscow trials. I once asked him whether he had known Beria; Shapiro said that he had only spoken with him at cocktail parties.

It would seem that of the major figures of the day, only Stalin had remained out of Shapiro’s reach, and I am led to wonder whether the dictator’s remoteness was a factor in Shapiro’s rather contradictory interpretations of both the motivation of the public trials and also Stalin’s behavior when at the time of the German invasion of 1941, to be discussed in the next chapter of this book. Shapiro had simply never had the chance to connect the various lines of thought that he had about the Soviet dictator.

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AS: Our topic for today is the latter ‘30s, and we may wind up just talking about the public trials. I would like to pursue this from the point of view of the personalities involved. First we might look at the background of Soviet jurisprudence, particularly since Professor Shapiro first went to Moscow with the plan of studying law. You knew Evgenii Pashukanis. Would you tell us about him?

HS: We have used the phrase “the most optimistic year” of 1934. It was so optimistic that Pashukanis, who was the leading theoretician of Soviet law, was talking in terms of the imminence of the “withering away of the law.” Before long, there would be no need for law. He developed a very elaborate theory on that, which Andrei Vyshinsky was to use very effectively to condemn Pashukanis, calling the man a sort of anarchist, a man who was ready to destroy the state in a period when it had to be strengthened. Stalin and Vyshinsky were to develop a theory of capitalist encirclement, surrounded by capitalist powers set to destroy, and of course the state had plenty of enemies both in-
side and outside the country, especially inside. This was a period of strengthening the law and not weakening it. That was one of the arguments against Pashukanis. Pashukanis was a very gentle intellectual.

AS: What was his position?

HS: He was director of the institute of law, which was the top research institute on jurisprudence under the Academy of Sciences. He was editor of the law journal. It’s not like the law journal here which is a record of cases. It was more like the Harvard Law Review. He was highly respected. He was the unquestioned leader.

AS: Was there any particular basis to his prestige? I know John Hazard [a professor of Soviet law at Columbia University with whom I had studied - aes] used to quote him extensively.

HS: He was a great scholar. He wrote several books on jurisprudence. He was one of the first to develop a Marxist theory of law. He was a member of the party, a Marxist scholar; he felt that even within his lifetime, the time would come for the withering away of the state. Obviously when Stalin decided to do what he did, this was a very dangerous, a very harmful theory. That was a period in law when there were no prisons in the Soviet Union. Prisons were called houses of correction, and punishments were called measures of social correction. The old terminology, which is now used again, was abolished. Most of the prisons had no bars. Ordinary prisoners, not political prisoners, were allowed to go home on weekends and holidays. There was a feeling of a revolutionary, almost utopian age.

AS: Now you began to talk about him personally.

HS: Personally he was an internationalist, like most of the communist intellectuals. Of course he was not a Russian, you can tell by the name. He was a Latvian. He was raised in the Russian tradition. He knew his German law and philosophy. He did not speak any English. I came in to see him and told him what I wanted to do. He immediately began telephoning and arranged for me to attend courses. Unfortunately in that period I did not know enough Russian and so I was not able to pursue this with much profit. By the time I learned enough Russian, I was too involved in journalism, and anyway the situation became very difficult – the arrests began.

AS: What was Pashukanis’s fate?

HS: He was shot. He was arrested as an enemy of the people, violently condemned by Vyshinsky, and by all the other holders of the then popular theory of law that this was not the time to weaken the state but to strengthen it together with all its institutions. I remember hearing [Nikolai] Krylenko at a public lecture. There was a question from the audience, why should relatives be punished? Let them be punished, so what? If the interests of the state are enhanced, that is the first thing to look at.

AS: Pashukanis was not a participant in any of the public trials as I remember.

HS: No. Pashukanis was just one of the several million who just disappeared. But most of them we never heard about. He was criticized. He was denounced. Every now and then there would be an article in the law journal, which Vyshinsky took over, denouncing Pashukanis as a wrecker, a saboteur,
an enemy of the people. This was the time when "enemy of the people" was almost a household phrase. After Stalin's death, they formally denounced the phrase, and now there is a formal act which forbids use of the phrase "enemy of the people."

AS: You mentioned Krylenko. Now as I understand it, this is the same Krylenko whom Lenin named Commander-in-chief after the October Revolution. He was the public prosecutor in the early '30s?

HS: Yes, he was the first one. A very fiery man. He had an American brother-in-law, Max Eastman. Eastman married his sister. Eastman probably got Lenin's last testament not through Krylenko – Krylenko was a Stalinist – but through Trotsky himself.

AS: What was Krylenko like?

HS: Krylenko was also an intellectual – all of them were intellectuals in those days – very vigorous, very articulate, but angry. He was always denouncing enemies. I am sure that it gave him great pleasure to arrest people; he looked the kind. Very tough.

He had been Vyshinsky's boss. Vyshinsky called him a traitor, and English spy, an American spy, a German spy. He threw the book at him. Krylenko admitted most of the charges, but he said, you can call me anything you like, but if I had been a spy, the Germans and the Japanese might just as well have closed their intelligence services. That's one thing he denied.

AS: Let's go on to Vyshinsky. He is one who survived all this. He replaced both Pashukanis and Krylenko. How did he first come on to the public scene?

HS: He was a Menshevik, and he joined the Communist Party soon after the revolution. First he was a professor of law in Kiev and then he moved on to Moscow. By the late '20s, he was a high official of the Commissariat of Justice, and he worked in the prosecutor's office.

About the middle of 1934, I was having tea at the Hotel Metropole, and I recognized two of my professors from CCNY, Professor Nelson Meade and Salwyn Shapiro. They were glad to see me, and I was glad to see them. After a while I asked whether I could help them. They wanted to have a look at Soviet legal institutions. So I suggested the Attorney General. Literally, I got hold of a telephone book, I looked up the Prokuratora, I called up and asked for Vyshinsky's secretary. I told him here are two American professors who are interested in Soviet law and they would like to have a talk with the Prokurator. He answered send them right over. We went. By this time I knew enough Russian to act as the interpreter. The three of us had about two and a half hours with Vyshinsky. While we were there, he telephoned the Collegium of Defenders, the Bar Association, the president of the Municipal Court, and arranged dates for us. He was a great charmer, a very cultivated man, very witty. He could quote from Shakespeare and the Bible by the mile. Really, it was one of the most interesting conversations we ever had. Later he became inaccessible, but I started seeing him again during the war when we were allies.

After Stalin's death he was fairly easy to see. I asked him once how he managed to do so much. He was practically the whole legal establishment: editor of the law journal, director of the institute of law, chief of the legal section of
the academy, attorney general. He said he practically did not sleep. With a grin which could have been ambiguous, he said, well not all of us survive. By that time he wasn't shooting anyone any more; he was Foreign Minister.

**AS:** Did you have any feeling for his personality?

**HS:** If he had been an American, he would have been the head of one of the big Wall Street law firms, a great politician. He talked a little too much; sometimes he got into trouble. He was witty. At a conference in Paris after the war, he referred to someone: "He will run like the Italian army at Caporetto." The Italian government protested. He had to apologize. He was Foreign Minister, and Gromyko was his deputy. Gromyko was a coming man. Vyshinsky was beginning to slide. At this conference in Paris, it seems that French intelligence intercepted a telephone conversation between Vyshinsky and Gromyko. Gromyko was in Moscow. Gromyko was reprimanding Vyshinsky with four letter words.

**AS:** The stories I have heard about Vyshinsky indicated that he had a ready wit in turning a phrase. Was he a joke-teller too?

**HS:** Yes. After the occupation of Berlin, I was there to cover the Allied Control Council. Before the meeting, we had a news conference with Zhukov. He told us about the last days of Hitler in the bunker. With a smile he told us that Hitler had gotten married. Vyshinsky was at his elbow as political commissar. I asked, Whom did he marry? Zhukov said that he could not say just now, but Vyshinsky declared, I can tell you that it was not a man. There were rumors that Hitler was homosexual. He was always making wisecracks. Another example of how he was running the show, not Zhukov: Before we went in to see Zhukov, we saw Marshall Sokolovsky, Zhukov's right hand man, his chief of staff. We asked him about Hitler, and he gave me all the details which were later to be confirmed: that Hitler had committed suicide. Zhukov hedged on that. Under Vyshinsky's instructions, he said, "We have no definite evidence that Hitler is dead; we found bodies there, burned bodies. For all I know, Hitler is in Spain." Vyshinsky was whispering in his ear.

**AS:** To complete this picture of the Soviet judicial establishment of the time, you told me that you had met (N. I.) Ezhov once or twice.

**HS:** After the second trial, the American ambassador, Joseph Davies, from Wisconsin, organized a big party at the embassy, dinner and dancing. Much to the consternation of the diplomatic guests when they arrived, there were Ezhov and [Vasily] Ulrikh, the presiding justice. Bohlen was fuming. Nobody wanted to talk to Ezhov. I was a reporter, not a diplomat. Here was an opportunity. I went over, followed by the indignant eyes of everybody. I talked to Ezhov for ten or fifteen minutes. Unfortunately he was not very talkative. It was very hard going. He was very short; he looked like a cripple. He had sharp eyes. He didn't tell me very much other than that we have enemies, and we are going to get rid of them, and no nonsense.

Then I went over to talk to Ulrikh, and he turned out to be more pleasant. I said to him, if these people are guilty, couldn't you find some other way to get rid of them? After all, look at the impression it makes all over the world. He said – and this was illustrative of the feeling of the time – We don't care what you people think of us, you or anybody else. It is our problem and we are
going to solve it in our own way. We are going to liquidate all our enemies. He laid a lot of emphasis on the fact that it was nobody's business. Absolute contempt for public opinion. I can't imagine any Soviet public official talking that way now. We know from the Solzhenitsyn case that they have a little more respect for public opinion now.

Davies had to face a lot of flak from his staff and from his colleagues in the diplomatic corps. But I think that he was essentially right. Maybe he should not have had a big party to which he invited the whole diplomatic corps. Maybe he should have had just a small party, just a few selected people; it would have been more tactful. The feeling among the diplomatic corps, almost without exception, was that the whole trial was a frame-up. Anybody who had anything to do with the trial was a murderer. These people who had once been in power, such as [Nikolai] Bukharin, now became the victims, and suddenly everyone had sympathy for them.

At one of the trails I was sitting next to Davies, and Kennan had to walk out. For a few minutes I interpreted for him. He invited me back to Spasso House [the residence of the US ambassador – aes] for a postmortem and a drink. It was then that he told me that he had had a lot of experience as a district attorney: "I can tell a guilty man when I see one, and I tell you that all these people are guilty."

They did not look guilty or not guilty to me; they looked like fallen heroes. The men whom I had seen before when they were in power looked subdued and sad, as you might expect of someone who expected to be shot. But aside from that, you could have told them from anyone else in a crowd. Except for Bukharin: Bukharin had a very finely chiseled face, blue eyes, a nice beard. They were all well dressed; they had been given good suits before the trial. They looked well fed and perfectly rational. They were coherent. At that time we did not know that they had all sorts of methods of extracting confessions people that need not be physical. Also, nobody would believe at that time that torture was being used against members of the party. None of them looked as though they had gone through any physical suffering.

AS: You did not meet Ulrikh or Ezhov on any other occasion?

HS: Ezhov I did not. Ulrikh I met on several occasions. During the war, for some mysterious reason, he lived in the Hotel Metropole. He had a suite. And during the war all foreign correspondents lived in the Hotel Metropole. I used to see him almost every day. I met him in the elevator. I talked to him a few times. I went to his suite. During the war it was an entirely different situation. He was a mediocre man; he was of course a general of justice. All the people in the military collegium of the Supreme Court have military rank. He wasn't a Vyshinsky or Pashukanis or anything like that. Once a man comes up before the military tribunal of the Supreme Court, he is guilty by Soviet practice. Ulrikh's job was not to find justice, but to go through the motions of a trial and to sentence him to death, in most cases.

AS: Returning to the personalities of the trials, let us turn to the defense. You knew [Karl] Radek. Could I ask you to say something systematic about him?

HS: Very talkative, very sociable. We used to see him at many of the embassy receptions. I first met him at the American embassy. Bullitt, the first American
ambassador, arrived; some of the young diplomats such as Bohlen and Ken-
nan used to enjoy talking to him. He was always full of wit. My impression
of him was that he – by this time he had been in trouble – was just a feature
writer. He was very cynical. I don't believe that he believed in anything. He
was supposed to have been the author of many of the anti-Stalin anecdotes.
One story attributed to him: Stalin called him in one day and said, "I enjoy
a joke myself, but you have gone too far. You know I am the great leader,
the greatest of all times, the most popular man of all times, etc., etc." Radek
interrupted him, "I haven't told that one yet."
He was very witty, and it was fun to read his essays. When he wrote an article
on foreign affairs, everybody read it and clipped it. He was very erudite, and
he knew foreign affairs. Almost every paragraph was an epigram. His Rus-
sian was bad. He was born in Austria. His real language was German. He
had a foreign accent. But whenever he made a public appearance, everyone
ran to hear him.

AS: What were your feelings on seeing him confess at the trial?
HS: Everyone felt that he was the least trustworthy of the defendants. Nobody
ever believed anything he said no matter which side he was on.
Leon Feuchtwanger, the German writer, came to Moscow. He was received
by Stalin. Feuchtwanger had known Radek in Germany. He asked Stalin
about Radek. Stalin said to him, If you would like it, I can arrange for you to
go see Radek and let him tell you himself why he was arrested. Feuchtwanger
refused; he did not want to get mixed up.

AS: Did Feuchtwanger tell you this story?
HS: Yes, I wrote about it at the time. I wrote it from France; I couldn't get it out of
the Soviet Union. I spent a week with Feuchtwanger at his villa in southern
France. He told me a lot of things.

Among other things: The first half hour with Stalin was very difficult. Then
the discussion drifted into western European literature. Feuchtwanger was
amazed to learn how much Stalin knew about western European literature,
fiction. He had read all the important books. He got the impression that
Stalin was a very well-read man.

There's one other thing that impressed and shocked Feuchtwanger. In the
course of his four hour conversation, Stalin said to him, You Jews have given
the world the image of Judas the traitor. Feuchtwanger was so shocked that
he said nothing. Then in a little book that he wrote, Moscow 1937, he said it
was very strange to hear that from Stalin, who in all other respects was per-
fectly rational, perfectly logical. The conclusion was obvious that you could
expect treason from a Jew like Trotsky.

AS: I drew you off by asking about Feuchtwanger. Was there a follow-up here
when Stalin asked Feuchtwanger whether he wanted to see Radek?
HS: No, there was no follow-up. Feuchtwanger refused. Radek was tried; he
was sentenced to ten years. He is alleged to have been killed in prison at the
beginning of the war. Some other prisoners had a fight in prison. Anyhow
nothing was ever heard. Whenever anyone was arrested – Radek was one of
the last to be arrested – Radek was one of the first to appear in Izvestiia with
an article denouncing him. Not Bukharin. Bukharin waited until the very last minute before he joined the whole chorus of condemnation.

At Radek’s trial, all of a sudden, without any rhyme or reason, he mentioned Tukhachevsky. Whereupon Ulrikh interrupted him and stopped him: You mustn’t mention him. But it was a signal to the people who thought they knew what was going on, a signal that Radek was trying to drag Tukhachevsky in. The moment I heard the name Tukhachevsky, I ran out; the censor was set up right in the hall. I wrote a bulletin: Radek implicates Tukhachevsky in the trial. It was passed by the censor, he had earphones. That was before Ulrikh had had time to strike the thing from the record. And then when he did it, the censor came running after me. That was all wrong about Tukhachevsky, take it back! So I wrote another bulletin: “Kill Tukhachevsky.” The censor blew up when he saw it.

I think Radek played the role of an informer. I think he condemned a lot of people. It was enough just to mention names…

/end of reel/

[Missing here is a question about N. N. Krestinsky, who was the only person in the public trials who attempted to deny his guilt.]

HS: By the time of the trial, Krestinsky was a relatively unimportant man. He had been demoted. He had been an ambassador to Berlin and then Deputy Foreign Minister. Berlin was an important place, but it was nothing like being secretary of the Central Committee.

Most people don’t know this, but Krestinsky was the man who had Stalin’s job. He was the first secretary of the Central Committee. Molotov was also a secretary. Neither Molotov nor Krestinsky had the ambition, the imagination, or the drive that Stalin had. Stalin made something out of it. Krestinsky had the job, which shows how highly Lenin thought of him. But Stalin didn’t like him. He took the job away from him and kept demoting him.

The interesting thing historically about Krestinsky was that he was the only one, upon being read the charges, did not plead guilty, ne priznais’. Whereupon Vyshinsky jumped up and stopped the trial. I don’t remember how long the recess lasted. The next day, Krestinsky pleaded guilty. Physically he did not look any different. A short fellow, eyeglasses with thick lenses, rather thin. Then he cooperated, one hundred percent, with the prosecution.

As ambassador to Berlin he used to come back to Moscow every now and then. Then he was deputy foreign minister; he made a very good impression. He was one of the early intellectuals, the kind of people that Chicherin had around him. Westernized, knew languages, an entirely different type than those who came in with Stalin.

You can speculate what happened during that recess. What happened? Nicolaevsky [Boris Nicolaevsky, an émigré author – aes] wrote a book about the trials, Stalin’s Crimes, a commentary on the Twentieth Party Congress. I think you’ll find it useful, taking into consideration that Nicolaevsky, whatever you think of him, is not an objective scholar. He had his own axe to grind.

Do you remember Letter of an Old Bolshevik? This was during the period of the purges. He claimed to receive it from a famous, unnamed old Bolshe-
vik, one close to power. Later he leaked out the information that that letter was written by Bukharin. Bukharin had been allowed to go abroad, and he met Nicolaevsky. Armstrong [John Armstrong, a Political Science professor at the University of Wisconsin - aes] says that Nicolaevsky admitted to him that Bukharin did not write it. Nicolaevsky wrote it himself on the basis of information from Bukharin.

AS: I never spoke with Nicolaevsky, but that is my understanding of the letter.

HS: The basic question was what was happening? Were these men guilty? I have been asked, what did I think while I was sitting there? I have thought about it for years. I am still confused to some extent. At the moment it seemed to me highly improbable, highly irrational, that men who had made the revolution, heroes of the revolution, who had done as much if not more than Stalin, who risked their lives any number of times – what happened to these men that they became such cowards? They hated Stalin. It was clear from everything they said while the opposition was legal. Bukharin called Stalin a Genghis Khan. Suddenly these men abjectly confess.

You must have read Bukharin’s last plea. He did formally plead guilty. One of the great forensic speeches of all times. He defended himself too. He talked about his experiences in prison.

The question I kept asking myself: Could these men have done all this? I came to the conclusion that they could not have done many of these things. But in a sense they were guilty, guilty of going against the party. Bukharin and Zinoviev had as much a hand as Stalin in creating this system, which holds that once you take a position against the party, you become a traitor. Stalin was the leader; Stalin laid down the party line. But it was the party line. If you oppose the party line, you are automatically guilty. Especially at that time, it was a question of Stalin against the Nazis, to put it brutally. Once a man admitted he was guilty, they threw the whole book at him. He became a spy, a wrecker.

I have been kicking these ideas around for a long time. It is interesting to see that after the Twentieth Party Congress, when others were rehabilitated, even posthumously, most of this group which were tried publicly were not rehabilitated. Some of them were morally, partly rehabilitated.

In 1958 or so there was a conference of historians. [P. N.] Pospelov was in the chair. Someone stood up and questioned whether Bukharin and [Aleksei] Rykov had properly been accused of treason. Pospelov was a diehard Stalinist himself; he said, If you read the records of the Twentieth Party Congress, you know they were not traitors. They did not plot with the Germans, but they did plot against Stalin, to overthrow Stalin.

I cannot believe that such dedicated revolutionaries as Bukharin stopped opposing Stalin just because Stalin had the supreme power. I remember that a friend of mine came back from a meeting of the academy, an anniversary meeting in 1935, at which Bukharin spoke. My friend started whispering to me, It was a great speech, you know he did not mention Stalin once! This was 1935; no one could open his mouth publicly without saying, “as Comrade Stalin says.” Bukharin dared, at a public meeting, to give the key address without mentioning Stalin once. I am sure that he could have had a much
better position that editor of *Pravda*. He showed continuous contempt.

From the point of view of the system they set up, I think they were at least in the opposition. They had been members of the legal opposition before, and they remained in the underground opposition. In another society they would not have been shot. They would have been neutralized.

**AS:** Do you think they were in a conspiratorial opposition, or only an individualized opposition?

**HS:** It was mostly individual. Perhaps they had conversations, exchanged letters. This trip of Bukharin’s, his conversations with Nicolaevsky. That by itself, from the Soviet point of view, was treacherous. For Bukharin to have a secret meeting with Nicolaevsky abroad, from the point of view of the mores and the law of that period, and the rules of the Communist Party, for that alone he would have been arrested. That was, of course, not known.

The point I was trying to make, they don’t call these people traitors any more. Even Trotsky is not called a traitor any more. In the histories that are being written now, they say that Trotsky opposed Lenin, that he was not a true Marxist, but they do not call him a traitor. But they have not rehabilitated any of the leaders who appeared in these trials.

**AS:** There was a report in the west in the late ‘60s that the criminal charges against Bukharin had been dropped. You told me on another occasion that you had checked into that.

**HS:** Yes. It was not true. I checked with the best possible sources. Before I left Moscow, I had conversations, formal conversations, with the present and the former presidents of the Supreme Court. They denied it. I asked whether they were planning to revise the history of the period and to rehabilitate Bukharin and the others. They said no. They would not do any such thing. From the point of view of party discipline those men were subject to discipline. If such a thing should happen today, they would just be thrown out of the Central Committee. But that was Stalin, and at that time they were really afraid. They were just cleaning their stables. Besides, Stalin was paranoid; he was seeing enemies under the bed.

**AS:** There is a feeling in the west that the trial of Bukharin really represents a peak. Here was a man dueling with Vyshinsky; he was defending himself. Cohen [Steve Cohen published a biography of Bukharin – aes] has presented a favorable picture of Bukharin. Solzhenitsyn has been critical. But was there a feeling at the time that Bukharin’s trial was something special? Was there a feeling of a duel between Bukharin and Vyshinsky?

**HS:** It stood out principally because of Bukharin’s speech, because of Bukharin’s behavior in court. He spoke with dignity. I am guilty, he said, but I was no spy for the Japanese. He probably felt objectively guilty because he had corresponded with Trotsky, had met with Nicolaevsky. He knew what he had said to his friends in private meetings. He felt that he had done wrong by his own party. He had also been privy to the rule; if it had gone the other way, Bukharin, certainly not in the same style, would have done his best to neutralize Stalin. Maybe he would not have shot him, but he would have sent him off to Siberia.
AS: It seems to me that you are accepting the picture of Bukharin in [Arthur] Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, which Cohen objects to.

HS: I don't accept it entirely. According to Koestler, that is the main reason. An appeal to an Old Bolshevik: Here is the last service which you can make for the party. That's fiction, that's an interesting psychological problem. It was not necessarily Bukharin either. A novelist can do anything he likes. It's possible that some of the investigators might talk to these people this way. They don't exactly put it, it's you or Hitler. We're going to have a war; the country has to be united under Comrade Stalin. Look what you have done. These men knew they were dying anyhow. They had been in prison for months, Bukharin for about a year. As he said in his speech, you sit in prison and you think what am I living for, what have I done? It is possible, that some of them thought, well I am finished anyhow, I might as well do something to strengthen the country. But that would be only one element.

Q: From reading the transcript, it sounded as though Bukharin had intellectually convinced himself that whereas he might not be physically guilty, he had this overall guilt in the long run.

HS: I think that is a fair reading. There was one big furor when Radek was testifying. He said that in prison, I was “tormented.” He used the Russian word which could be either tortured or tormented. In the context it could mean either, it could mean that he was tormented by doubts, by worries, by guilt. Radek being the wise guy that he was, a lot of people jumped to the conclusion that he's telling the world that he was being tortured. But you can't tell. I am not sure that at that time they were already being tortured. Especially those people. Later, of course, it became common.

That's another thing, Vyshinsky's evil contribution to Soviet law, later repudiated, that a confession is conclusive proof of guilt. That was the theory of the time. That's why the police went out of their way to get a confession. Once they had a confession, signed on the dotted line, the job was done. Now the confession, as in most countries, has only a persuasive value. If a man confesses, there must be something to it. But the burden of proof, especially in capital cases, is still with the prosecution.

Let me say something about the atmosphere of the period. It was very oppressive. Everybody felt it, even foreigners. Foreigners at that time could not be touched. It was heavy. Friends used to disappear. All my friends disappeared. Some of them were shot. Industry was virtually paralyzed. If something went wrong – sabotage! Everything was sabotage. There was no such thing as normal wear and tear, inefficiency, mechanical breakdown. Everything was sabotage. The result was that those who survived did their best not to do anything. A crack of the time was, It doesn't matter what you do as long as you don't do it. In the army, maybe 90% of the officers were liquidated. When the war started, some of the generals who had not been shot, who were still in Siberia, were let out, and they went straight to the front. Several became really key commanders. That's one of the things that encouraged the Japanese to attack; that was a minor war – whole divisions. Zhukov was the commander in the Far East, and he was the first one to use the Panzer thrust.
I was talking to the German military attaché in Moscow at the beginning of the war. The younger Germans were expecting a quick victory. General Koestring, who knew Russia well, was saying, Don't underestimate the armed strength, the army had been weakened but not destroyed. It took them a little time to get organized. They had plenty of space to retire to, they had tremendous reserves. They were expecting the war; eventually they were able to mount these tremendous offensives.

A5: We will come to the war in due time; are there any other questions on the era of the purges?

Q: In the purge trials, why do you think they combined these big fish with little people?

HS: I think that was done to discredit them. Here was Bukharin in the dock with a speculator, birds of a feather. That's a common police trick. Those are the people who got smaller sentences. The doctors were significant people. There was Dr. Levine, the best general practitioner in Moscow.

Q: I get the impression that you are saying that Bukharin and others were guilty by their very existence, because at one time they had opposed Stalin. Are you also saying that you had the feeling that they were actually doing something?

HS: I had the feeling that they had never accepted Stalin. I knew that Trotsky was carrying on correspondence. He had followers in Moscow with whom he was in contact. I myself was once asked by someone to carry a letter out to Trotsky. I didn't do it naturally, maybe he was a provocateur. Maybe the police put him up to it. If you read what Trotsky was writing in the period, he knew what was happening in the Soviet Union. How did he know? This so-called Letter of an Old Bolshevik of Nicolaevsky's, that was a fairly good picture of what was happening. Certainly there was active foreign espionage. I am sure that the Old Bolsheviks had no contact with the Germans, but there might have been some way in which they reached them. Those trials did the country infinite harm.

They did a lot of harm in destroying the image of these leaders. After all, Bukharin was called the "darling" of the party in Lenin's testament. Lenin called him the ablest of the young leaders. A whole generation of young Communists was brought up on Bukharin's ABC of Communism. I still think, allowing for the time it was written, that was the best primer on elementary communism. There was a very active radical movement in Germany and in England, and Bukharin was almost a saint. Now he comes up for trial and crawls before the prosecutor. That's the impression. It led to the breakup of some of the Communist Parties. It made a lot of enemies.

They did the country a lot of harm economically. By 1938 the country was in a virtual state of paralysis. Everybody was afraid to work, they just wanted to survive. It made a lot of people question the sanity of Stalin. Nobody could believe that 90% of the Central Committee were traitors. Not only Lenin's Central Committee, but this was the Central Committee which Stalin himself had put into office.

I think it led to a lot of cynicism, skepticism. Davies made a lot of the situation that there was no fifth column at the beginning of the war, implying that if those such as Bukharin and Tukhachevsky had been alive they would...
not have backed Stalin. That was all false, I think. The country would have been stronger, if there had not been such a purge. We know now that these people were not traitors. They were anti-Stalin. All right, let's suppose that they had been successful in overthrowing Stalin. What would have happened? A number of things could have happened. One of them might have taken over, and they certainly would not have been worse than Stalin. It might have been better. More likely, I think, the country could have broken up. The Ukraine would have broken away, and maybe some of the military might have taken over. Anyway, the Stalinists made the argument that whatever happened, Stalin unified the country. When the war came, it was true, they rallied. I knew people who suffered, I know one man who was luckily arrested before the big trials, in 1936, and he was imprisoned somewhere in the Arctic Circle. He was released, he came back. He did not rejoin the Communist Party, but he was anti-Nazi, and he offered his services to the country. There were many like that. There were many who would not forgive, but generally the country was united behind Stalin. Could anyone else have done it? That's anyone's guess.

Q: You seem to be drawing a paradox. You say that without the trials the country would have been stronger, and you say that it would have broken up.

HS: If there had been no trials and these people had succeeded in overthrowing Stalin, it might have happened. But they could have gone on functioning as an opposition, legal or underground, to Stalin, without succeeding. They couldn't succeed; Stalin was too strong by that time.

If they had united to overthrow Stalin, they would have then broken apart. There was a right opposition, and there was a left opposition. There were all sorts of groups. Had they succeeded in overthrowing Stalin, they would have fallen apart. There was not a united opposition. I am speculating.

Q: At the trial, Bukharin denied meeting Sharankevich. He did not meet him, and therefore he could have conspired with him. At the time, in the Soviet Union, were the conspiracy laws like the laws in the US where conspiracy could exist without the people being in physical contact with each other?

HS: You don't have to be physically present. You can do it by correspondence.

A: But can you do it without ever having communicated with another person but still be working along the same lines towards the same goal?

HS: They were accused of conspiracy, plots to overthrow the Soviet government, plots to assassinate Stalin, plots to hand over the country to the Nazis. They were also accused of being an organized opposition. Evidence was introduced at the trial that they met and discussed ways and means of doing it. That would meet any definition of conspiracy. But in the Soviet Union the laws are very broad and very vague. You can make a conspiracy out of anything.

/end of reel/
In this session, we discussed the coming of the Second World War. Lithuanian readers may be disappointed – some perhaps even shocked – that I did not raise the issue of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1940. The explanation is simply that at this time, the mid-1970s, I was paying little attention to Lithuanian history. My major interest at the time was the activity of Russian émigrés in Switzerland, and I was just completing a major article in Polish history. At the time I gave little thought to ever returning to Lithuania. On the other hand, Professor Shapiro’s commentary makes clear his own interpretation: 1/ that the Soviet Union was committed to the doctrine of collective security; 2/ that a Soviet-German war was inevitable; and 3/ that the Soviet Union was wise, even if unjustified, in seizing the opportunity to push its western frontier further west.

Shapiro’s image of Stalin’s poise and understanding in directing the Soviet war effort against the Germans contradicts much of now accepted interpretations. The literature on this subject is enormous. Even in 1975 Soviet historians had already challenged Stalin’s heroic image. A useful discussion of the subject at the time can be found in disputes about the publication of Alexander Nekrich’s book *June 22, 1941*. In our discussion of April 21, 1976, Chapter XII, we discussed Piotr Gri- gorenko, a dissident military officer, who had denounced Stalin as incompetent and criminally “myopic.” Perhaps the most recent English language account can be found in Constantine Pleshakov’s *Stalin’s Folly*. On the other hand, I have just seen an advertisement for a new Russian book that declares “the author shows the way Joseph Stalin learnt and became a creative and brave military and political leader.”

On occasion Shapiro used the word “bluff” or “bluffing,” usually with a sense of gambling behind it. Shapiro was a passionate poker player, and in this popular American card game, a participant might “bluff,” indicating that he had a much stronger hand than in fact he did.

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AS: We are discussing foreign policy in the 1930s and after. What sort of feeling do you have about the direction of the foreign policy? How committed was the Soviet Union to the policy of collective security? It was difficult to criticize foreign policy in 1936-1937, but Zhdanov could do it. What kind of different voices might you have heard on foreign policy?

HS: After Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933 and later the Seventh Comintern Congress there wasn’t any question that the Soviet Union wanted to be a member of the League of Nations, which it had previously denounced as bourgeois and imperialist, and it began to take collective security very seriously. Of course nobody took Litvinov and the Russians very seriously, apparently nobody had read *Mein Kampf*. Hitler was not being taken very seriously. I have no doubt that Litvinov meant it; I had several talks with him. He was always outspoken; in the worst period of the Stalin era, he spoke his mind. They felt war was inevitable, and their policy was to see what they could do to stop Hitler.

AS: What about different voices? Zhdanov was critical of the line of collective security in 1937-1938.

HS: They were always speaking in more than one voice, although there was really only one voice. Stalin made all the policy, but every once in a while they let out a trial balloon, especially since they considered both the British and the French treacherous. They had not forgotten the *cordon sanitaire*. Laval and Eden came to Moscow. They were terribly worried about Hitler on the one hand, and of course the Japanese. Zhdanov was chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet. He spoke in that capacity. Whenever they wanted to smoke the western powers out or to force a statement, they would have such a person, Zhdanov or at another time Voroshilov, make such a statement. There wasn’t any question that they wanted to stop Hitler, and they felt that collective security was the only way.

Before Munich, the Russians were very anxious to invoke the pact with France to help Czechoslovakia. They had trouble with the Poles and with the Romanians. Litvinov had a news conference. I asked him, “You say you want to go to the aid of Czechoslovakia. How are you going to get there given the attitude of the Poles and the Romanians?” He answered very simply, “Where there is a will, there is a way.” I have no reason to doubt that was their position. What Zhdanov said, I don’t think mattered.

AS: How public a figure was Zhdanov?

HS: Zhdanov was Stalin’s right hand man. He was a member of the Politburo. There was a rule: No member of the Politburo is allowed to speak as a member of the Politburo, except the Secretary General, unless he happens to be a minister, like Molotov. Molotov was Foreign Minister. Aside from that, they are not allowed to speak, unless there is a special resolution of the Politburo authorizing it specifically. Zhdanov went to Leningrad in 1934, immediately after Kirov’s assassination.

That was the period when no member of the Politburo was accessible. At the annual Foreign Office reception, given by Litvinov when he was Foreign Minister, Stalin never showed up. Zhdanov didn’t show up. The only persons who would show up were Molotov, as Deputy Prime Minister, and Voroshilov, who would make brief appearances because he was Minister of Defense.
Those who were just members of the Politburo never appeared. Most of the information came from the Press Department of the Foreign Ministry, from Deputy Foreign Ministers, and from Soviet journalists. They were authorized to talk.

**AS:** Was Lozovsky then Deputy Foreign Minister?

**HS:** No, Lozovsky came later; he became the spokesman at the beginning of the war. Before the trials, there was Krestinsky; I think Maisky was there for a while. I don’t remember the exact names, but they were the only people who were talking. But it was still fairly easy. If I wanted to do an ambitious piece about Soviet foreign policy, I would pick up the receiver and get the switchboard of the Foreign Ministry. I would say, “sekretariat Litvinova,” and would get right through to Litvinov’s office. Litvinov had a secretary, a woman who had been with him a long time and knew all his business. I’d say, “I’m writing such and such an article and can I speak with the Foreign Commissar?” She would ask him right there and then say, “Come at four o’clock.” I could walk right through with my press card. He would receive me with tea and a cookie. There was the understanding that it was all off the record. I would stay with him two or three hours. He was a very articulate man, very outspoken, very witty. By the time I came out of there, I knew what the Soviet line was. I was able to write a fairly adequate piece on the condition of no attribution. That was possible with Litvinov until the Soviet-German pact.

**AS:** Did you ever have occasion to speak with Litvinov socially?

**HS:** Yes. He was very easy to talk to. His English had an atrocious Lithuanian-Jewish accent, but it was perfect, grammatically and stylistically. He wasn’t afraid; sometimes I thought he’d be arrested on the spot. I’d ask him a question, and he’d say, “Well, Stalin, what can you expect out of Stalin?” Obviously derogatory. During the war, Soviet authorities were organizing a trip of journalists to Katyn after the liberation. They were trying to prove that the Germans had killed those Poles. At a reception, I asked Litvinov what he thought of the Katyn story. He put his fingers to his nose and said that it stinks, just like that. He wouldn’t pursue it, but it was clear that he had all sorts of doubts and reservations. Another thing – at the same reception – they had just instituted uniforms for Soviet diplomats. Litvinov was wearing one of those diplomatic uniforms, with a big star. I asked him, “When was the last time you wore a uniform?” He said, “That was in the tsarist army, and you can imagine how I liked that.”

Vanda Vasilevskaia [Wanda Wasilewska, he daughter of Leon Wasilewski, one of Pilsudski’s closest advisors on Lithuanian affairs – aes] was there. She was a member of the Polish Provisional Government, and she was married to Korneichuk, a Ukrainian playwright and Deputy Foreign Minister. She came over and was giving her husband hell. She said, We Poles will not let you take Lvov away from us. There was already talk about the division of Poland. No Polish nationalist or chauvinist would have done any better.

There wasn’t any question as to who I was; I was wearing an American correspondent’s uniform. Somebody came over, and she said, The Supreme Soviet has just decided to give General Berlin the Order of Suvorov. She just blew up: “Do you realize what that means to the Polish people, the man who massacred Poles?” There are no people like that now.
A friend of mine used to say that Litvinov liked to tell Jewish jokes loudly.

Litvinov liked to tell Jewish jokes loudly. His Russian was the same way. He was a great orator; once you forgot his accent, he made terrific sense. He had this Jewish-Lithuanian pronunciation.

At all receptions, it was *de rigueur*, all the foreigners had to wear white ties and tail suits. Not Litvinov. The Russians wore dark suits; they never put on tuxedoes. But when Litvinov talked to the Supreme Soviet as Foreign Minister, he wore a black shirt, no jacket, boots, trousers tucked in. That was apparently the Old Bolshevik practice.

You told me the story of Litvinov’s resignation for reasons of health.

You improved on the story. He just resigned. He told me the story himself. He was sitting in his office, tuning into the 4 o’clock news, sort of the Cronkite news. He heard that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet has today decided to accept the resignation of Comrade Litvinov as Foreign Commissar. Molotov took his place. That’s how he heard it. No reason was given for the resignation. This was the first he heard of it. And he was put on ice. They wanted to negotiate with Hitler. I am sure that even if Stalin had told him he was to go to Berlin, he would not have done it. Molotov became Foreign Minister and immediately began to fire most of Litvinov’s staff.

Litvinov was kept on ice. A few days after the German attack on the Soviet Union, Litvinov was taken out of the icebox and made ambassador to the United States, as a gesture. He was the right man to go to Washington.

Did you see Litvinov between 1939 and 1941?

No. There were indications that he was not arrested; he was living at his dacha.

What sort of treatment did the Spanish Civil War get in Moscow in those days, 1936-1937?

Publicly all that was known was that the brave working class of Spain was fighting against the fascists. The press reported that the Germans and the Italians were sending arms to Franco. It was known that the Soviet Union was giving aid. It was not publicized, but you could not load ships in Odessa without its being known. It was known that Soviet correspondents and newspapermen were in Spain. Ehrenburg was one of them. Mikhail Koltsov, the editor of *Izvestiia*. It was never reported that some of the leading Soviet army officers were there. Zhukov was there. Many of the top officers. Most of them, after the collapse of the republic, came back to Moscow to be shot. We correspondents of course knew what was happening; the press was one-sided.

Did you know that such figures as Antonov-Ovseenko were there?

Antonov-Ovseenko had an official position; he was consul-general in Barcelona. We knew that Koltsov was there, but we did not know that he was a political commissar. We knew through the French press and the English press that high Soviet officers were there, and sometimes we knew the names. General Stern. All sorts of people from the Comintern. But the Soviet public generally did not know.

After the middle of 1937, when the Soviets turned against the Trotskyites and the anarchists in Spain, weren’t there doubts expressed about collective security?
HS: Every now and then there would be an editorial expressing doubts about the sincerity of the western powers. Certainly there was plenty of doubt, but the official line was still for collective security.


HS: There were very serious incidents on the Manchurian and the Mongolian borders. There were reports in the Soviet press, although the extent was not indicated. There would be accounts that the Soviet Foreign Minister called in the Japanese ambassador Shigimitsu and protested that the Soviet air force had shot down Japanese planes violating Soviet air space. There were stories like that all the time and of course editorials denouncing Japanese imperialism. But the exact extent was not known. It was not known that divisions were involved; several hundred planes were shot down. Japan was testing the Russians. The Japanese made the mistake that the Germans were to make. They thought that as a result of the purges the Russians were so weak that they could get away with anything.

After the Soviet-German pact, the Japanese foreign minister went to Berlin and signed the Tokyo-Berlin axis. When he was returning from Berlin, he stopped in Moscow and negotiated with Stalin and Molotov for a few days. As he was leaving, we went to the railroad station. We waited and waited. The train was still standing. Suddenly he arrived with Stalin and Molotov. This was unprecedented for Stalin to show up at a railroad station and to see a foreign minister off. We knew that something big had happened. We learned later that they had signed a pact of non-intervention.

The whole diplomatic corps was there. The German military attaché, Colonel Krebs, was there. Stalin went over to him. He was a tall man. They shook hands. “You are a German?” he asked. “We Russians and Germans,” he said, “must always be friends.” He embraced him.” This was the man who surrendered Berlin to the Russians. It was quite shocking to see Stalin give this German a bear hug. He was obviously bluffing, trying to butter up the Germans.

AS: Didn’t you once tell me that Molotov was the man in the Politburo in charge of foreign affairs?

HS: The Politburo…

/end of reel/

AS: You were talking about Molotov.

HS: As you know, the major decisions are made in the Politburo – military, economic, political. The Central Committee has a number of committees which supervise the ministries. Each is under the jurisdiction of a member of the Politburo. Molotov was in charge of foreign affairs. He was really Litvinov’s boss. They were fighting all along. Molotov fancied himself an expert; he knew all about foreign affairs. He did not like Litvinov for two reasons: one, Litvinov knew more than Molotov did, and second, Litvinov was a difficult man to run.
AS: Did Litvinov talk to you about this?

HS: No. I saw so much of him; I would get cracks. This is a reconstruction, but it was generally known. Anyhow, Molotov was Litvinov’s boss.

Do you know who supervised Soviet culture after Stalin’s death? - the man you would believe least likely to have anything to do with culture – Voroshilov. We knew he was in charge. This was the rule of Gerasimov. The idea of art was of happy collective farmers smiling at Stalin. Gerasimov was the big dictator; he was president of the painter’s union. All pictures had to be approved by Gerasimov nominally. Actually it was Voroshilov. But Gerasimov was telling Voroshilov what to do, he was his brother-in-law. Gerasimov had Voroshilov’s ear, and in the Politburo Voroshilov was dictating the fate of Soviet art.

After the so-called antiparty group had been kicked out and Khrushchev had established himself, actually the most powerful man in the country after him was Shelepin. Shelepin remained so. In a way he had even more power than Khrushchev. He was a member of the Politburo, secretary of the Central Committee, Minister of State and party Control; when he stopped being head of the KGB, as a member of the politburo, he maintained supervisory jurisdiction over the KGB and the armed forces. When Khrushchev was ousted, it looked as if Brezhnev would only be a caretaker. There were grooming Shelepin, but he began to run too fast.

Now the situation in foreign affairs is rather different because Gromyko himself has been made a member of the Politburo. Gromyko is a technician, he had no power base. He was never a party leader. As Foreign minister, he is a member of the central Committee. He was an economist. When Molotov started purging Litvinov’s people, he was looking for bright young technicians. He took Gromyko and sent him to Washington as Minister Councilor with Litvinov. When Litvinov was recalled, he stayed on as ambassador, one of the youngest ambassadors ever. He was never involved in politics. He was loyal to Molotov, Stalin, and Khrushchev, whoever was the boss. He just carried out orders. Molotov was essentially a political man. Even to this day, Gromyko is a technician. Brezhnev reserves the major decisions for himself, but he is modest enough to recognize that he does not know very much. He has two experts: Gromyko and Grechko.

AS: George Kennan was talking of the “Red Colonel” a few weeks ago.

HS: I hope that he was joking. The first American military attaché was Major Philip Faymonville. At the end of the First World War, a lieutenant, he was a member of the American military unit under Graves in Siberia. He was very intelligent, perceptive, learned Russian. He acquired a lifelong interest in the Soviet Union. When the embassy was opened in 1933, Bullitt brought him as the first American military attaché. He was a highly respected man, not just a military man; he was also interested in art, literature, and ballet. He was very popular with everyone except the American embassy. And one reason was that he was very unconventional. He did not get around denouncing the Russians as bandits. His house was always full of Soviet guests. I met some of the most important Soviet military men in his house. They would not go anywhere else. They went there because they respected him.
I met Colonel Lindberg [Charles Lindberg, first pilot to solo across the Atlantic Ocean] there. He was treated as a great hero. And the chief of the Soviet air forces was there. At one point Faymonville took me over and asked me to help. I interpreted for them, and that went on for several minutes, and all of a sudden, Lindberg looked at me and asked who I was. He had not caught my name. I said I was the United Press correspondent. He just walked away. Faymonville later apologized to us.

The other people on the staff of the embassy called Faymonville a Red. He could not have been one. But the ignorant people called him that. This was particularly bad after the Second World War had started. He was in Moscow until about 1938, and after we established the lend lease mission, Faymonville, now a Brigadier General, was the expert in Washington on Soviet lend lease needs. In Moscow, the American military attaches thought the Russians would be defeated and could use no help. The ambassador Steinhardt was the same. They believed all the German propaganda.

Steinhardt was recalled. Harriman came in, and a general, Dean, was appointed head of the military mission. Faymonville came back as head of the lend lease mission. Again he started to see everybody. He was sending his reports to Roosevelt. Harriman was also reporting directly to Roosevelt. The professional military people hated him. He did not trust them, for whatever reason. So he became a "Red Colonel." He was pretty much of a lone wolf.

AS: Do you recall the atmosphere in Moscow after Munich?

HS: In the summer of 1939 I was in New York. The editor in chief looked at the teletype and asked me, “Henry, what would you say if the Russians and the Germans were to sign a treaty of alliance? That is what they are doing now. Ribbentrop is on his way to Moscow.” The next day, I left to return to Moscow. By the time I arrived, the first pact had been signed; it was just a non-aggression pact. The few Russian friends I could see were all ashamed, apologetic. They all would say this is a temporary thing, a shotgun marriage. We are going to fight the Germans sooner or later. We have turned the tables on the French and the British. Let them fight it out. In the meantime we are going to reorganize and prepare for war. That was the atmosphere among my friends.

The official position was not that they would fight the Germans, but there was a sense of shame. The strictly official position was expressed by Molotov and Stalin, and that was outrageous. At the first meeting of the Supreme Soviet, which I attended, Molotov made a speech in which he said that ideology is a matter of taste. A few months earlier he was denouncing the Germans as cannibals. That is not a direct quote; that is the sense of what he said. Later, after the “liberation” of Poland, the so-called liberation, Stalin sent Hitler saying that our friendship has been cemented in blood. That was a big bluff; the Germans were saying the same things.

I am sure that Stalin had no illusions about friendship with Hitler. The attitude toward us, the American correspondents, was a very bad one. They treated us as anti-Nazi, pro-British, pro-French. Censorship was very severe. The censors cut out references to Nazis and fascists. We could only speak of “Germans.” When the Philosophical Dictionary was published six months later, the word “fascist” was not included. That was the general attitude. We
were under strict surveillance. The German correspondents were able to file without censorship. We were kept in the dark until 1941.

AS: When you returned to Moscow, did you go by ship or plane?

HS: I went by ship. I went on the last sailing of the Gripsholm. We went from New York to Sweden. Across Sweden by train to Stockholm, by ship to Helsinki, and then by train to Moscow. I missed about two weeks of the war.

AS: Do you have any special memories of the Soviet move into Poland in September 1939?

HS: That was inevitable. It was the first hint that the Russians and the Germans would fight it out eventually. The Russians moved into there as fast as they could so as to increase the distances between themselves and the Germans. When the Germans attacked, if the Russians had not occupied the Baltic countries and half of Poland, the Germans might have reached Moscow and maybe knocked out the Red Army altogether. The way it looked was that the Russians wanted to increase the distance. They immediately started to move their fortifications. There was a so-called Stalin defense line west of Minsk. After they occupied Poland, they began to build new lines around Brest. That gave them a little more breathing space. There was a feeling that that would be the end of Poland. There was little illusion but that they would have to fight it out with the Germans.

They did stupid things in connection with their propaganda as part of the big game of bluff. As I said, they did not allow us to use the word “fascist.” They ordered Sergei Eisenstein to produce Hitler’s favorite opera at the Bolshoi, Walküre. He did it; he had to. But he did it so badly that it lasted only two nights. The first night was a command performance. There were lectures on Moscow radio about German Kultur, British imperialism. Stalin pointed out that it was not Germany that had attacked Britain and France, but that Britain and France had declared war on Germany. They were not fooling anybody, but that was the line.

AS: You have an interesting story on getting the news of the war in June 1941.

HS: We knew it was coming. It looked as though the Russians did not know it, but they did. The Soviet intelligence had reported it. Somewhere in Stalin’s desk he had reports. Churchill had warned him. Roosevelt had warned him.

On Saturday, June 21, I went to the American embassy for lunch, and someone said that we should stay around and wait for the war to start. I left in the evening. At home I received a call from the German embassy. A correspondent of FAG said he was interned at the German embassy. He invited me over, about 5 am. For censorship I could not file anything. I ran over to the German embassy. They did not let me in.

Hitler gave the order, they began their attack, and only after that von Schuhlenburg called the Kremlin. He told Molotov. Von Schulenburg was against the war; he wept when he told Molotov of the war.

I could not get a single word out. It was a beautiful day in June. The man from TASS called me and asked me whether it was true that war had begun. At 12 o’clock it was announced that there would be an important announcement. Molotov came on the air and announced that the perfidious Germans
had attacked. Not a word from Stalin. Stalin remained quiet until July 2. In the meantime the Germans were advancing. The country was not mobilized…

/end of reel/

AS: Why do you think that Stalin was quiet for ten or twelve days after the attack?

HS: You remember at the Twentieth Party Congress, in his so-called "secret" speech, Khrushchev claimed that Stalin panicked, that he thought all was lost. Maybe there was a moment of panic. I have investigated thoroughly. There are all sorts of theories. He did not panic, although there may have been a moment. He was a very cautious man; he never rushed. The Communists still are. He was not sure of the reaction of the West. He was not sure how the Soviet Union would react. He wanted to know more, to think it over. Generally he talked very little during the war, maybe three or four speeches.

I think that Molotov was First Deputy Prime Minister, they immediately formed the Committee on Defense, he appointed commanders, issued decrees on mobilization. But he did not make a major policy speech until July 2. I think that is probably closer to the truth. It is very hard for me to believe that Stalin panicked. The whole conduct of the war showed that he was in complete control. Khrushchev said many correct things, but he also said a lot of nonsense. He claimed that Stalin followed the course of the war on the globe. I found that foreign ambassadors had the highest respect for Stalin as a war leader. Khrushchev hated him; he was highly emotional. Harriman told me that he thought Stalin had full control.

Q: Why was Litvinov not purged?

HS: Most of his ambassadors were purged. I can speculate. He was never involved in any of the political intrigues. He was an old Bolshevik. He had worked with Lenin. He was not a member of any opposition group. Another thing: Stalin was shrewd. He was intelligent enough to know, and I think he had a sneaking respect for people who were not afraid to speak out. He was surrounded by sycophants. He had respect for people who spoke out while remaining loyal. Litvinov was one. I put Pasternak in the same category. Ehrenburg the same way. I have heard so much nonsense about Ehrenburg. He said that life is a lottery, most people lose and some people win. I know that he was terribly frightened. Stalin shot plenty of people, but these are some of the people who escaped. How about Molotov? Molotov’s wife was in jail; Kalinin’s wife was in jail; Voroshilov’s wife was in jail. Why some and not others?

Q: /unintelligible – presumably concerning Charles Lindberg/

HS: I remember exactly what the chief of the Soviet air forces said to Lindberg in my presence; I interpreted. “Mr. Colonel, you were the first to fly across the Atlantic alone. This is a matter of history, and this is something that no one can ever take away from you.”

Q: /unintelligible – presumably concerning the background of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact/

HS: There was a German trade expert traveling around Eastern Europe. He had had talks with Soviet officials in Moscow. In an earlier meeting of the Su-
premier Soviet, Stalin said that relations even with Nazi Germany could be improved. The Soviet Union favored having proper diplomatic relations with all countries. That was overlooked by most diplomats. The French ambassador was the first to report that something was going on.

The French, the British and the Russians were negotiating. The British sent a minor official to Moscow. Chamberlain himself went to Munich. But they were supposed to be negotiating a military alliance with the Russians, and they sent Sir William Strang, a desk officer. They were playing for time. The Russians thought that the British and the French were not serious. After negotiating for weeks and weeks on a very low level, the Russians appointed Voroshilov. Zhdanov published a statement questioning the sincerity of the British and the French. By that time the Russians and the Germans were already negotiating.

**AS:** Why did the British and the French have to come to the Russians? Why couldn't the Russians send a delegation to Paris or to London?

**HS:** For a very simple reason. The British wanted the Russians to help them, they wanted a Russian army in Europe, at the same time they were not going to lift a finger to persuade the Poles to allow the Red Army to march across. They wanted the Russians to engage the Germans without promising anything themselves.

**AS:** That's the British side, but why would the Russians not consider sending a delegation to London?

**HS:** You know how those things are done. You make soundings.

**AS:** All the action had to take place in Moscow.

**HS:** It had to take place in Moscow because the British and the French wanted it that way. If the British had hinted, why don't you send Voroshilov, Litvinov, or Molotov to London? the Russians would have done so. Maybe the Russians were right. The British and the French wanted to set the Germans against the Russians. The British would have applauded a Soviet-German war. If Eden or someone had issued a formal invitation to Molotov to come to London, he would have gone.

The Russians named Voroshilov to head their delegation, and the British sent Strang, a desk officer. When the Russian complained: Why don't you send a real delegation, they sent a larger delegation, also with Strang. A rear admiral and a few others, and they sent them by slow ship. Not by plane, there was no war, they could have flown. At the first meeting, the British declared they had forgotten their credentials. There was not the slightest doubt that the British and the French were playing for time.

*There followed a confusing section that I did not transcribe. We resume with Shapiro speaking to the question of Stalin's preparations for war/

**HS:** There were no immediately visible signs that they were actually preparing for war. They were evacuating industries slowly. They were reorganizing the army. They appointed a new defense minister, Timoshenko. I asked Faymonville why Stalin did not mobilize.

That was the game he was playing. He was gambling and he lost. He thought that he could outwit Hitler. He did not want to provoke Hitler. He wanted to
create the impression that everything was all right between the Soviet Union and Germany. If he had shown any signs of nervousness, Hitler would have attacked a week or two earlier, and every day made a lot of difference. A lot of people felt the same way.

When Lozovsky was appointed spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, he was challenged as to the TASS statement of June 14. Why that statement? Because, he said, we wanted to smoke them out; we wanted to get their reaction. An obvious answer. It was part of a big game of bluff. Let the Germans issue an ultimatum and get a few days more.

I don't have the slightest doubt that the Russians expected a war with the Germans sooner or later. They had an eighteen months' breather. Maybe if they had had another six months, then the early reverses…

/end of reel/
IV: WORLD WAR II – NOVEMBER 26, 1975
Probably the highlight of this discussion was Professor Shapiro’s account of visiting the Stalingrad front. This was a major “scoop.” Stalingrad was a major turning point in the Soviet-Nazi war, and to be the first correspondent on the scene was a major accomplishment. Whitman Bassow offers more details concerning the visit in his book, and Shapiro was obviously his major source. It is always interesting to compare a person’s memories of an event, recounted more than ten years apart to two different interviewers. My own impression is that Shapiro’s memory was quite consistent.

Shapiro concluded his account of his visit to Stalingrad with the comment that other foreign correspondents made “all sorts of accusations.” There were endless legends and rumors about how Shapiro managed to report his “scoops”; I will deal with some of these below in Chapter VII.

Here again Shapiro declared that Stalin was ready for war, that Soviet intelligence, led by Victor Sorge, a Soviet “mole” working in Japan as a German journalist, had informed Moscow of the coming attack. Even Winston Churchill had warned Stalin. But there is considerable evidence that Stalin just ignored all this, calling it dezinformacija; Shapiro himself said “Stalin never trusted his intelligence service.” On the Internet, under the name of Vladimir Dekanozov, the man who supervised the Soviet takeover in Lithuania in 1940 and then became the Soviet polpred in Berlin, we can find accounts reporting that Stalin directly dismissed Dekanozov’s warning of an imminent German attack and complained that even his diplomats were taken in by this dezinformacija.

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**AS:** We are discussing World War II. Professor Shapiro, will you tell us something about the first days of World War II? I understand that you were there when Moscow was first bombed.

**HS:** Yes, the first bombing came only about a month after the war started. A day or two after the war started, we were in the courtyard of the American em-
bassy; the American military attaché pointed at two or three airplanes circling the city and declared that that was all that was left of the Soviet air force. “If I were you, I would go down to the Iranian embassy and get a visa, because you will have to be running any day. The Germans will be here soon.”

About a week later I ran into the Iranian ambassador at a reception given by the British ambassador. I asked about a visa. He said to come down to the embassy. I asked how long it would take. He said about a month. They had to send the application to Teheran. I asked whether he thought we would still be in Moscow in a month, having in mind the statement of the American military attaché. He laughed and said, “I hope you are not one of those; you know the Russians are going to win this war.” The Germans were already in Smolensk.

The German bombing did not start until after a month. They did not do much damage. Moscow had three rings of defenses. It was very well defended. They had a lot of fighters up in the air. Most of the bombs were incendiary. There was not too much damage. They bombed until about December.

AS: Was that first bombing much of a shock?

HS: [Henry] Cassidy and I were walking near Spasso House. The alarms were sounded. You had to go into a cellar. The nearest was Spasso House. We stayed in the basement for about an hour. The all clear was then sounded. We started walking toward our apartments. A cop stopped us and asked for documents. We showed him our passports. He had never seen an American passport. I explained to him. I had my press pass in Russian. He had never seen anything like that either. We went into a school nearby. He telephoned the Foreign Ministry and read my pass. They told him to let us go.1

Bombs did fall just a few yards away. All the windows were blown in. If there had been a direct hit, we would have all been killed. Very few people were killed. Defenses were very good. By the time they got to the approaches of Moscow, they did not have that many planes to spare.

AS: Would you tell us about the evacuation of Moscow?

HS: At the beginning of October, the Germans were about fifty miles west of Moscow, and they were approaching all the time. On the morning of October 15, I could hear the guns. At about 9 o’clock, the ambassador called and said, Take two suitcases, fill them, and come to Spasso – we are about to be moved. The ambassador was panicky. As soon as the war started, he ran to Molotov and said, the Germans are going to be here soon, you have to tell us your plans for evacuation. That was Steinhardt.

We were leaving. I hurriedly packed two suitcases; my family had already been evacuated. In the first or second week they evacuated the children and women who were not working. We waited about two hours at Spasso and then about four hours at the railroad station. This was the whole diplomatic corps. We left that night, October 15. There was snow in the street. This was to be the coldest winter in 100 years.

The first story was that the government was being evacuated. That was the story which spread around the city. We were not told where we were going. Just “east.” The government was not completely evacuated. There was a special train: Some of the deputy ministers, Molotov and Litvinov were there. Voroshilov and Stalin stayed. Kalinin went to Kuibyshev.

1 In his memoirs, Henry C. Cassidy gave a different version of this story, saying that after leaving Spasso House they had taken refuge in the “cellar of an apartment house.” There the janitor had detained them and had forced them to accompany him to a police station, where he watched over them “like a cat over two mice.” When the police released the two correspondents, “Our cat went away, looking crestfallen.” Henry C. Cassidy, Moscow Dateline (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), pp. 95-96.
Five days later – this ride normally took 24 hours. We had to stop every now and then because there were trainloads of soldiers and munitions coming from Siberia. There was no food on the train, except for the American embassy. Steinhart had been so panicky he had started collecting food. Charlie Thayer was in charge. So we were fed all right. But the others did not have any. After we had been on the train for about 24 hours, everybody rushed in – these dignified ambassadors pushing each other out of the way.

I conducted sort of a Gallup poll among the passengers. All except three said that Hitler would review his troops in Red Square on November 7. The three were Sir Stafford Cripps, the British ambassador, that same Iranian ambassador, and the chief of the American Lend Lease Mission, Philip Faymonville, the “Red Colonel” we mentioned last time. They were not hysterical.

We were in Kuibyshev until the first week in December.2

AS: Would you tell us about the big panic in October.
HS: When I arrived in Moscow, it was half empty. I learned – and I heard whispers before – the rumor spread on October 15 that Stalin and the whole government had fled and that the Germans would be there the next day. There was a lot of looting; stores were broken into. A lot of people were just fleeing. There were no trains; all transport was mobilized. The roads east of Moscow were just full of people with bundles, running away from the Germans.

I left one car with a secretary and chauffeur behind in Moscow to bring things to Kuibyshev. It took them ten days to get to Kuibyshev. The looting, crime, lasted for about two days. The second or third day, Stalin went on the air. He ordered military law, extraordinary measures; he announced that Marshall Zhukov had been appointed commander of the front to defend Moscow; he ordered summary execution of anybody who spreads panic or loots. But the main thing was the knowledge that Stalin was in Moscow. That immediately restored order, like magic. All the panic stopped.

In the meantime they had mobilized the people to build ditches, anti-tank obstacles. There must have been 50-100,000 elderly people. A lot were captured by the Germans. Left in the woods to die of cold and hunger. I had some friends among them.

There was a flow of troops from Siberia. The Russians had been tipped off by their espionage network in Japan, the Sorge group. [Victor] Sorge was a German correspondent, a communist. He heard through the German ambassador that the Japanese would attack the Americans in the Pacific and not, as Hitler wanted, attack Siberia. Stalin never trusted his intelligence service, but he was apparently confident enough to move some of his best troops from Siberia to the West.

We got to Moscow on the 7 or 8 of December. We went to the front, about an hour’s drive from Moscow. We got to Klin, the home of Tchaikovsky, 50 or 60 miles from Moscow. There was a bonfire. The Germans had burned manuscripts and notes of Tchaikovsky’s. The Red Army men saved some. The next day we were taken to see General Vlasov. Vlasov was a great hero at the time. He made a very good impression. Very optimistic. Tomorrow, he said, I am going to Volokolamsk. A few months later he surrendered to the Germans.
A5: Would you tell about your trip to Sverdlovsk from Kuibyshev?

HS: Just before we returned to Moscow, my wife, her mother, and our daughter were in Altaevsk. I don't know how they survived. Word got back to me. I asked for permission to visit them. The Foreign Ministry arranged for me to get on a warplane, not to Alapaevsk, but to Sverdlovsk. Ludmilla got permission to come to Sverdlovsk to meet me.

I was met at the airport by Shaumian. He was editor of the local paper, Ural'skii rabochii. As we were driving into town, he pointed to a house and said, that’s Ipatiev's house. That immediately rang a bell – that was the house where the tsarist family was interned and shot. I said, Let's stop! He said we could not, there was a guard, munitions are stored there, but we could arrange it. And incidentally, he said, “Would you like to meet the man who shot them. It was all arranged, and I saw the man.

A5: What was his name?

HS: I had a stenographer there. The interview took place in Shaumian's office. He was about 70. He was late and apologized because he had been training volunteers in skiing. He acted like a hero. He was very proud. He said, “Look at my arm; I would like to get Hitler.”

I was able with Shaumian’s help to move my family to a hotel in Sverdlovsk. They stayed there until the next year; Ludmilla came back to Moscow.

On this trip, it was interesting to see how they worked day and night mostly in military plants, most of them evacuated from the west. The most famous, Uralmashstroii, had been there before. It was converted from agricultural machinery into a tank and airplane factory. It was so cold that they had to build fires in the ground to lay pipes and foundations. They were working day and night, mostly women. Maybe 70 to 80% of the workers were women. The only men were engineers. I heard stories of men who dropped dead. They did not leave the plants; they worked in subzero weather. It was a very inspiring thing. People like that don’t lost wars easily. There was general starvation; rations were very low. The consumer shops were closed, with the exception of those distributing rations.

The place was full of refugees. The local people resented these intruders. It reduced their own supplies. They were like foreigners. They resented the fact that some of the engineers had automobiles, while the natives had to walk. They were so far removed from the action; they did not have much understanding of the war. Anti-Semitism spread very quickly. They had never seen a Jew, but they heard that this was a Jewish war. My wife was looking for milk in Alapaevsk. There were many rich peasants there. One woman declared, “You are not Jewish are you, I won’t sell milk to Jews.”

A5: Were the factories staffed by local people?

HS: A lot of engineers were from European Russia. The managers were communists, a different sort. I am talking about a more primitive people, the housewives, the local illiterates. Certainly most of the workers were locals. I stayed there about a week, and it was very encouraging.
During the changing of the reel, we must have been speaking of the use of German prisoners of war as workers. I penciled into the typed text, “German prisoners got rations equal to the Red Army.”

AS: In December 1941 you returned to Moscow, and at first they would not let you go to the front.

HS: When the Russians were retreating, they never let anybody go to the front. When the war started, I was the only staff American correspondent in Moscow. The AP had a man, Cassidy, but he was in Yalta. It was hard to get a train back to Moscow. AP had a stringer there. Within a couple of weeks there were fifty American and British correspondents. We got together and organized an American-Anglo Press Association. I was the first president. We thought that if we were organized, we could put more pressure on the Soviet authorities.

We started well. We had a lunch. We invited Shcherbakov, a member of the Politburo, and Alexandrov, a member of the Orgburo. It was all very pleasant. Many leading writers were there. The following week they gave a party with the same people. I was talking with Shcherbakov and Alexandrov, and telling them how important it was to let us see more. They promised. As soon as the Russians started advancing, they arranged any number of trips. We did not see any actual fighting. Still the correspondents felt very frustrated. They had seen more action on the western front.

Stalingrad came the following year: in the summer of 1942, when the Germans launched their “final” offensive. They did very well at the beginning. They actually reached Stalingrad. In some places they cut Stalingrad. Stalingrad is a very long city stretching along the Volga. The Russians were fighting like hell, street by street and house by house. I heard that the Russians had launched a counteroffensive. I started writing letters to Molotov and Stalin asking permission to go to the front. Much to my surprise, I received a telephone call one day telling me to be at the airport by 9, you can go to Stalingrad.

I got up early in the morning and could not start my car. It was October; it was terribly cold. By the time I arrived at the airport, the plane was in the air. I saw the American ambassador and others coming out. They held the plane for me about half an hour, and then they took off, because General Hurley was going to the front. He was Roosevelt’s special ambassador. Stalin arranged for him to go to Stalingrad. After waiting, he asked what they were waiting for. When told he was waiting for Shapiro, he hit the ceiling. “I don’t want any damn reporters. If Shapiro goes, I won’t go. Stalin promised me a private trip to the front.” If they had waited another five minutes, I would have made it, but then there would have been trouble with Hurley. So I missed it.

But since there was already an order from Stalin and Molotov to take me there, they arranged for me, about a week later, to go by train, which was even better. To travel across all those devastated areas on a military train with troops going to the Stalingrad front. We crossed the Don. I spent about a week, not in the city itself – there was very heavy fighting there. Hitler did not let the German commander, Paulus, surrender. Goering promised to supply the front until spring. But by the time I got there, the Soviet anti-aircraft was shooting the German planes like sitting ducks. I talked to a lot
of prisoners. The Soviet commanders showed me maps and plans; it looked like an unqualified success.

They were happy to see an American correspondent there. The first dinner we had underground. One of the best meals I ever had: captured French champagne, Portuguese sardines.

From what they showed me, I was sure this was the beginning of the end. I knew the Russians were planning a new offensive. They held my story a few hours and then the chief censor called me in and told me that they would have to kill it - it was too optimistic. He did not know what I knew. I said something impolite, walked out, and sent a letter to Stalin. As few hours later, he called me back in and said he had been reading it over. If I changed it a little, he could pass it. I changed one sentence just to save his face, and it went through.

I was attacked on the German radio by Goebbels himself. A few commentators here, including Hanson Baldwin of the New York Times criticized me as a lay ignoramus knowing nothing of military affairs. According to Baldwin, this whole thing was a German trap. They were doing a holding action until the spring when they would cross the Volga and take Moscow from behind.

By January the battle was over. I went again and went into the city.

In one of the stories I wrote of Soviet troops under Marshal Rakossovsky. The censor crossed it out because they never named the commanders until after a battle was done and Stalin issued an order of the day congratulating them. The commander for Stalingrad had not been announced. I expected that, and I pulled out a leaflet which had been dropped over the German lines urging surrender. It was signed Konstantin Rakossovsky. The censor still could not pass it. He had no instructions, and the Soviet government had not yet announced officially who the commander of that front was. That trip to Stalingrad was probably my most interesting experience in the war.

In Stalingrad, General Chuikov took me around. He was very proud. He showed us the battle scenes. They really fought from house to house. The Russians took terrific losses.

**AS:** Did you ever speak with Paulus?

**HS:** No. Paulus would not talk. After the end of the battle, he and a group of generals met with a group of correspondents, but I talked with von Seidlitz, the second in command. He was the one who told me Paulus wanted to surrender, Hitler was against it, and Goering promised supplies until spring.

**AS:** When you made appeals to Stalin, how did you send them?

**HS:** That is the simplest thing. There is at the Kremlin wall, between the Borovitsky gate and Alexandrovsky park, a little building attached to the wall. That is the Kremlin post office. Anyone who wants to write a letter just takes it there. A guard takes it, looks at it, and gives you a receipt. Now there is a big line there. Most of the letters do not reach the addressee. They go to the secretaries. Most are probably thrown away. They only show the boss what they consider of interest.

When I came back from Stalingrad, I was almost murdered by my colleagues. Here were all my frustrated colleagues. Here I was covering the biggest battle of the war all alone. There were all sorts of accusations.
AS: And you were also in Leningrad.

HS: Nothing succeeds like success. Having done it once, I did it again. A year or so later. Leningrad was still surrounded on three sides; it was still largely under siege. The only way to get there was to fly over the German lines. Again I got into one of those planes. We were shot at by the Germans. We had to make a forced landing in the woods in a clearing near Novgorod. We had to wait. There were fires all around. In the morning four escort planes came in. We landed right in the middle of the city, in the square of the winter palace. The city looked like a cemetery. Very few people in the streets. Practically every house had been shelled. The environs had been flattened. The city proper was damaged very heavily, windows were blown out, craters in the walls, but most of the buildings were still standing. The only people you would see on the streets were young girls. There were vegetables growing everywhere. It was June. Every piece of ground was being used. There is a little park in front of St. Isaac’s cathedral – that was a vegetable garden.

My conducting officer took me someplace on the edge of the city. There a woman offered a glass of milk. My guide broke into tears. He had not seen milk for two years. I would not take it; I could not drink it after that. All the horrible tales you have heard about Leningrad are all true.

I was received by the mayor of Leningrad. Zhdanov would not see me. The mayor was later shot. He and the whole municipal council received me in Smolny. The next day we went to the Kirov metallurgical plant. It had no roof, but they were still working. Maybe 90% of the workers were women. This was on the Gulf of Finland. We could see the Germans across the inlet with the naked eye. This officer asked me whether I wanted to see them shoot. I said no. There is a story that John Reed once asked a commanding officer to shoot at the Germans. That is supposed to be very bad ethics for a correspondent.

When I came back to Moscow from Leningrad, the representative of the Russian Relief, Leo Gruliow, declared that he could have raised millions of dollars in the US if I had been permitted to write the story of Leningrad as I told it. They killed a lot of what I just told you. This time I was not able to restore it. The Russians were very sensitive. The Germans knew the situation, but the Soviet authorities did not want to confirm it. Even now the Soviet historians writing about the siege of Leningrad do not tell the full horror of what happened. There was cannibalism. Most of the survivors were women, which would prove that women are tougher than men.

/end of reel/

[Again I inserted text by hand into the typescript, apparently referring to discussion we had while I changed reels on the tape recorder. Here: “Peasant women in Stalingrad gave bread to starving Germans. No German would have done that for Russians.”]

AS: Would you comment on your sources during the war? The writers with whom you worked?

HS: Immediately after the war started, they organized the so-called Sovinformburo which took over the handling of the war news. TASS continued to
handle the basic news. The head of Sovinformburo was Shcherbakov, but the actual manager was Solomon Lozovsky. Most of the Soviet writers in Moscow got into uniform. They all received commissions. They were part of the Sovinformburo. They went to the front. Many were killed. Proportionately more Soviet correspondents were killed at the front than soldiers.

Since we were not allowed to go to many parts of the front, I made arrangements with many of the writers to write special stories. Among them were Ehrenburg, Kataev, Simonov, Grossman, Petrov. Ehrenburg proved to be the best. He was the best-known. When he promised to deliver a story by a certain day, he delivered it on the dot. The others promised, but most of them did not keep their promises. Ehrenburg was regular; he became the best known correspondent of them all.

When the newspapers came to the front, the soldiers used the newspaper to roll their tobacco up. They would cut up Pravda and Izvestiia. When the Red Star, Ehrenburg's paper, came, they cut up everything but Ehrenburg's articles. I know that the first thing we would read would be Ehrenburg's article.

I had trouble with him because he was not a professional newspaperman and did not know the American style. He would start a story something like this: “It was a beautifully sunny day in the Bryansk forest; the birds were singing - or whatever the birds do on a cold winter day – and I just talked with General Rakossovsky, who told me,” and then came some sensational story about the Bryansk front.

I took that and I cut out all the lyrics, all the poetry, and I began with General Rakossovsky. I used to get our published stories back. A few days later he stormed into my room at the Hotel Metropole and demanded, “Who gave you permission to change my story!” I said I haven't changed your story. I enjoyed it very much. It was a very good story. But you know if you want American readers to read your story, you cannot describe the Bryansk forest when you have something as sensational as a conversation with one of the top generals. He said, “This is my style, and I insist that you send it exactly as I write it.”

I said, “All right, I'll do that. But I assure you that when it gets to New York, the editors will rewrite it. They will cut the poetry out. Only it will be much worse than if I do it. I know a bit more about the situation. I know you personally; and I certainly want to preserve your style.” He said, “I don't care what they do with it as long as it leaves Moscow exactly as I write it.”

Before I went to the Stalingrad front, I heard of Alexander Kapler, who was a leading scenario writer. I did not know it, but he was already Svetlana's boyfriend. I asked him whether he would write a story. He did. He had a great eye for color, human interest. He wrote one of the best pieces we got. He was arrested soon after. Stalin learned he was carrying on with his daughter.

I had Simonov, who wrote very well, very perceptively. For a military analysis, Simonov was the best. Vasily Grossman was very creative, very sensitive. He was the best short story writer. He wrote very good pieces.

I used to see Ehrenburg almost every day. He lived close to the Metropole. I used to just walk in without an appointment. Grossman used to come.

It was not so much what Grossman wrote, but the stories he used to tell. Ehrenburg was more cautious. Grossman did not care. He would talk to
anybody. I understood a lot more about the Red Army and the problems of the front from hearing people like Grossman.

We were discussing philosophy, what sort of world it would be after the war. They all said it would be different. There would be less dictatorship. The Soviet Union would be more confident, much stronger. The relations with the West will be good. There will be a lot of exchanges, contact, travel.

But there was the Jewish question. At the beginning of the war, most of the editors of the major newspapers were Jewish. Of course they did not consider themselves Jewish, they considered themselves Russian, but they had “Jewish” stamped in their passports. They were fired before long. Part of it was pressure, I suppose, from German propaganda. The Germans were saying why are you giving up your lives for the Jewish commissars? They have all fled to Central Asia! This was not true. If you look at the statistics, there are more Jewish heroes, proportionately, than any other nationality except the Russians.

I was sitting with Ehrenburg, having tea. Grossman walked in very depressed. He had just seen the editor of one of the leading monthly magazines. He offered a story on the war. The editor, a friend of his, liked the story but declared that he could not accept any more stories from authors with Jewish names. That was 1943. The whole campaign started earlier.

After the war, Grossman wrote a very good novel about the war, which was first praised very highly by Pravda and Izvestiia. Suddenly there was a change of line and he was criticized. It was proscribed, and a new edition came out only after Stalin’s death.

These writers were very good sources. There were official sources, the official military communiqués. There were also other people returning from the front. Since I was the only correspondent who knew Russian they could be more frank with me.

Q: How did reports of German annihilation of the Jews become known?

HS: I went to Baby Yar. When we got to Kiev, Kiev was still burning. It was about one-quarter destroyed, not so badly as Kharkov. One of the places they took us was Baby Yar. Our conducting officer was a famous Ukrainian poet who was also Deputy Prime Minister. I cannot remember the name. He was very friendly, very warm. There were lots of people from Kiev around. There was not the slightest question that this was a massacre of Jews. They were taken to Baby Yar, a ravine, and shot. Before the Germans retreated, they burned the bodies. They gave us all the details. That’s how I wrote the story. It was the first atrocity story which I wrote. That was 1943. All the gory details which came from the Deputy Prime Minister of the Ukraine.

I arrived in New York in 1944 for a short lecture tour, and I had a meeting with the president of the United Press. The first question I was asked by Hugh Bailey was “How sure are you about the story of the massacre of the Jews at Baby Yar?” He was doubtful. The UP used the story, but a lot of people were still skeptical. Only later we learned about Buchenwald, Auschwitz.

It was only later that the Russians started glossing over the story about the massacres of the Jews. Now the story of Baby Yar is that the Nazis killed all sorts of people, some of whom were Jews.
Q: But did the Russians get the stories at the same time as you did?

HS: Yes. I think there was more sympathy among the ethnic Russians, where anti-Semites were minimal. The Ukrainians were probably more anti-Semitic intrinsically. In Russia proper there was less anti-Semitism. When the Russians evacuated a place, they knew the Germans would shoot communists and Jews. They would give priority in some places to the Jewish population. They knew they had no chance of survival when the Germans came. In some places, they helped the Jews go into hiding. In other places they would say there is a Jew hiding. What was the situation in Romania?

[Answer by a student from Romania]: In Moldavia, Jews were deported to work. Most in Bucharest were taken out for labor. I know of a couple of cases where Jewish intellectuals went into hiding for a year and a half in somebody's basement.

Q: How much did you know of Ukrainian collaboration?

HS: Not much. I knew a little more, naturally. All the Russians knew was that there were some traitors. In all the liberated areas where we correspondents went, there will still people hanging. Some of them had been collaborators. Local citizens who had worked with the Germans. But there was not really too much. That is highly exaggerated. There were some Ukrainian nationalists. There was a very strong partisan movement in the Ukraine. Voroshilov was in charge of supplying the partisans. They flew aircraft to drop materials all the time. In the Ukraine it was harder because of the flatlands. The partisans were much more effective in Belorussia.

Q: Did you talk to Finnish prisoners in Leningrad?

HS: They did not show us Finns. We talked with Germans. After the end of the siege of Leningrad, the prisoners were angry with Hitler: If Hitler had given just one more division, we could have had Leningrad! The arrogance of the Germans, especially the younger ones! The older ones were more civilized, more tactful. Soon after the war had started, we were taken to see a group of Luftwaffe officers, prisoners, in August 1941. They were so arrogant in the presence of Soviet officers! Someone said the Americans would enter the war. The Germans laughed: That Jew Roosevelt talks nonsense. Let the Americans come, they cannot even hold a rifle straight.

Q: Romanian soldiers at Stalingrad realized that they were going the wrong way and then they formed a pro-Soviet detachment. Do you know of any effort on the part of the Soviets to indoctrinate them?

HS: The Romanians were used on the weaker fronts. The Germans did not trust them. I will tell you of two incidents. When the first group of German generals were shown on the Stalingrad front, at one point a Romanian general came over and wanted to talk. The Germans pushed him back. They would not let him talk. The Romanian troops crossed the Dnestr, and they were in Odessa. In one small sector of the Stalingrad front, the northwest, there were four Romanian divisions, and they were the first to be knocked out, and I suspect that one of the reasons was that they did not really have their hearts in it. The Russian counteroffensive began there.

/end of reel/
V:

WARTIME PROPAGANDA – DECEMBER 10, 1975
Again we spent time talking about personalities. We started this session talking about Yuri Levitan and Soviet wartime propaganda. I do not remember why I opened the discussion with my question about Levitan, but Levitan’s position as an announcer of serious news was renowned. Jonas Janutis opened his memoir, Uzvakar ir siandien, with an account of hearing Levitan announcing Stalin’s final illness in March 1953.

Mikhail Kalinin, the namesake of Kaliningrad, was the Soviet chief of state. In the Lithuanian accounts of the Soviet occupation in 1940, writers speak of Ladas Natkevicius’s appeals to Kalinin and of Antanas Smetona’s letter to Kalinin. As we read Shapiro’s description of Kalinin, we can perhaps understand how those efforts could have had only little result.

Professor Shapiro’s account of Stalin’s wartime image emphasizes the aura of remoteness that I commented on in the last chapter. Particularly interesting is the way in which Shapiro keeps speaking of “exaggerations” in Nikita Khrushchev’s speech to the Twentieth Party Congress.

Especially interesting to me was Shapiro’s experience with the Polish Question during the war. Outside of class we argued vigorously about the Katyn massacre and the Warsaw rising – at that time I was deeply involved in studying Polish history – but his description of the founding of the Lublin government fascinated me. I must confess I cannot explain Shapiro’s reference to “repairing” Krakow, which suffered considerably less damage in the war than Warsaw did.

We finished with the mention of the katiusha rockets. These were a major new weapon in the Soviet arsenal, and according to Ludmilla Shapiro’s obituary in The Wisconsin State Journal, the inventor of the katiusha was a relative of hers. For an example of the wartime image of the katiushas, see Henry Cassidy, Moscow Dateline, pp. 106-8.

AS: You knew Yuri Levitan.

HS: In a country where the heroes are usually flyers, explorers, or the secretary of the party, it was certainly strange to have as one of the heroes, Yuri Levitan, a radio announcer. He was not a commentator. Every important announcement from the beginning of the war through victory was made by Yuri Levitan, an actor. He had a terrific radio voice, baritone. The minute you heard, “Vnimanie, vnimanie,” you knew that something important was coming up. I had a few good beats that way, because I was tipped off that Levitan was summoned to the radio. Once he was called to the radio, you knew that an important announcement was coming. The strange thing about him was that he was Jewish. As far as I know, he was the only Jewish announcer on Soviet radio. To this day there aren’t any others. There is only one commentator. Levitan’s name was associated with practically everything that happened for about twenty years.

AS: Soviet wartime propaganda emphasized Stalin and played down the Communist Party. Could you comment on Stalin’s role?

HS: From the very beginning, the war slogan was not for communism or world revolution as it was during the Civil War or even later. When the Russians made an incursion into North China in 1929, there were still soldiers calling for the world revolution. This time the appeal was for the rodina, and in his most famous speech of the war, Stalin invoked the monarchist generals such as Suvorov and Kutuzov. In earlier treatments of the Suvorov period, he was denounced by Soviet historians as the butcher of Warsaw. He was a great military figure. He went as far as Paris. Stalin invoked all the great figures of Russian history. It was funny to hear Stalin with his strong Georgian accent speaking of “our Russian ancestors.” He said, “Our fatherland is in danger.” Stalin was beyond nationality, just as he was beyond good and evil. Stalin was Russia. They often went into battle, “Za rodinu, za Stalinu.” People did not talk about the purges. Stalin was the number one hero.

This contradicts what Khrushchev said at the Twentieth Party Congress, that he got panicky, that he followed the war on a school globe. This was completely untrue. It was denied by all the Allied figures who had any contact with him. Harriman had the highest respect for Stalin as a war leader. He had his finger on the pulse of the war. In October 1941, when Stalin appeared on the radio, it did a lot for the morale of the people. It stopped the panic.

Of course he had a general staff. The most important member was a tsarist officer, Shaposhnikov. Stalin made himself Supreme Commander-in-Chief. That was his title. The stavka was in the Kremlin, in Moscow. There was a National Committee of Defense, with top members of the Politburo.

So between Stalin, the General Staff, and the National Committee on defense, they ran the war, not only the front, but everything.

AS: Was this National Committee on Defense a government institution?

HS: It was an ad hoc committee formed at the beginning of the war, sort of an enlarged Politburo. All the important party leaders, military leaders. It was not provided in the constitution.
AS: Do you recall when the phrase, “The Second Fatherland War,” was first used?

HS: The First Fatherland War was the Napoleonic War. I don't associate it with anything in particular. From Stalin's first speech, it was called the Fatherland War. Molotov made the first announcement of the war. Stalin was working behind the scenes. In his first speech of July 2, he referred to it as the Fatherland War. He asked for the scorched earth policy. No reference to the Revolution.

It is interesting to point out the attitude toward the Church. About a year or two before the war started, under the leadership of Acting Patriarch Sergius, Stalin started negotiating with the Church. Suddenly the anti-religious propaganda diminished. The antireligious museums were closed. They reopened, many of them, as museums of the history of religion. The Society of Militant Atheists was dissolved. Apparently in anticipation of the war, Stalin knew that the church still wielded great influence. He must have worked out a deal.

On the day the war started, I ran over to the Patriarch's office, and much to my surprise, I was admitted immediately. Normally you have to write a letter and wait. I handed in my card and said that I would like to ask the patriarch what he thought about the war. He received me immediately. He said that the Russian church has always been patriotic. It has always been on the side of Russian troops fighting for their country. He issued a pastoral letter to all the churches calling for prayer.

During the whole war, the church was very loyal. There was no anti-church propaganda until about 1943/1944, when they were sure they were winning the war. Then they slowly started renewed anti-religious propaganda. The church did not change. I remember a speech by [Mikhail] Kalinin, “We must not forget that we are an atheist state.” After the war, the church opened eight seminaries, now there are four left. The anti-religious campaign goes on, but not with the same fury as before. They tend to be more educational, persuasive.

AS: Stalin did not make many public appearances during the war, did he?

HS: He gave a radio speech on July 2. On November 7 he appeared on Red Square. He reviewed troops. It was a miniature parade. From the Red Square, I understand, the tanks went straight to the Front. That was a great morale builder that Stalin spoke with the Germans so close. I think after that he gave no more public speeches until the end of the war, Victory Day. He thanked the Russian people for their patience, and he said that any other people would have “thrown us out.” He made no more speeches, not even the first party congress after the war. The only other public appearance was the election day speech in 1946.

On his seventieth birthday, the celebration went on for weeks and weeks. On that day itself, every communist leader, including Mao, was in Moscow. This tribute went on for hours. Stalin did not even get up to say thank you.

AS: During the war, then, he was not a public figure.

HS: He did not even go to the front. He stayed in Moscow. He was very much in evidence; his name appeared in the papers almost every day. There were daily orders of the day signed by Stalin. There was a lot of propaganda about
Comrade Stalin at the front too. He was completely inaccessible, except for the top commanders. The only foreigners who saw him were at the three conferences. Churchill came to Moscow twice during the war. Averill Harriman, our ambassador, probably saw him more than anyone else. He was always accessible to Harriman, and to the British ambassador too. He did not give a single interview to correspondents. He answered some letters; he wrote no articles. His picture was always in the paper. He won all the victories. He was called the Greatest Military Genius. The world had never seen anything like him. Everything was Comrade Stalin.

After Khrushchev’s speech to the Twentieth Party Congress, everything changed. Then the marshals started writing their memoirs, and little by little he was restored. Now they said what he did, and they show that he played an important part in the war. There was a funny case in one history, a reference to the Potsdam conference cited Churchill, then Attlee, then Truman, and then declared that the “Soviet representative” spoke. Just like with Litvinov.

AS: Was it during the war or earlier that Stalin took a liking to the image of Ivan Grozny, and history began to be rewritten?

HS: That started before the war, in 1934, with the great educational reform which introduced the old educational system. Good old fashioned educational methods. Then Bukharin got hell for having written an article about Oblomov: He had called the Russians a nation of Oblomovs. Then they revived Ivan Grozny. Even today he is called just Ivan IV. Alexei Tolstoy started writing his two volume biography of Peter the Great with his obvious reference to Stalin. Stalin was seeking to trace his own work to the famous tsars. It was just Ivan and Peter the Great, not Alexander or Nicholas.

AS: Did you meet Kalinin?

HS: Yes. Kalinin looked and acted like a peasant. He was of peasant origin, very simple. He had a famous reception room where people could go in with complaints. There was always a queue, but he could not see everyone. He had regular reception hours. They still have this reception, but Podgorny is never there.

I went to one. I sent in my card, and he received me. I had no complaints. I told him I just wanted to see how it worked. We talked ten or fifteen minutes. There was a big queue outside. They let me in ahead.

He was a simple, very shrewd peasant. One of the Old Bolsheviks. Stalin started disliking him apparently very early. One of the reasons may have been that he had a Jewish wife, who was arrested. There were periods when he did not let him attend meetings of the Politburo. He was getting very old, almost blind. He was allowed to resign on grounds of illness. He was quite sick. He had not been publicly criticized. You would expect someone to get up and speak of his service. He was quite popular. Nobody got up. They just took a vote and declared the resignation was accepted.

AS: Khrushchev complained that he could not get through [Georgii] Malenkov to Stalin.

HS: Malenkov was Stalin’s right hand man. This was during the first battle of Kharkov. The Soviet army was encircled, 200,000, still fighting. Khrushchev telephoned Stalin and wanted permission to retreat. Stalin would not come
to the telephone. It is clear that Stalin intended Malenkov to be his successor. Malenkov told Khrushchev not to retreat. So they did not retreat, and many were captured, one of the biggest losses of the war. I discussed this with several Soviet military historians, and they said it was probably true. But they also said that as chief political commissar, Khrushchev could have ordered the retreat.

**AS:** I want yet to touch on Polish-Russian relations. Would you comment on the reaction to the news of Katyn?

**HS:** The first news came from Germany. That’s why the Russians reacted so violently. It was immediately taken up by the Polish government-in-exile in London. This lashed them into fury. They broke relations with the Poles and immediately launched a campaign to prove that the Germans were responsible.

This is a story of some 10,000 Polish officers. When the Germans captured the area where the Poles had been held, they dug up the graves and said that the Russians had massacred them. The Russians denied this. Some foreigners and diplomats were inclined to believe them. The Russians did not practice wholesale massacres. They arrested people and sent them off in cattle trains. They could not survive in the trains or in camps. But they did not line up people against the wall. It seemed incredible for the Russians suddenly to take 10,000 people just like that!

There were more than a million Poles interned in the Soviet Union. Why should the Russians have done it? One possible answer was that they panicked. Another possible answer, in the realm of gossip, was that Beria was in charge. Stalin was busy. Beria asked what to do with the Poles, and Stalin reportedly told him to take care of it. Beria immediately took this as an order to shoot.

Another argument on the side of the Russians is that the Poles were buried with their uniforms and shiny boots. The argument is that if the Russians had done it, they would have taken their boots. They needed everything.

At one point, after they had reoccupied the area, they took a group of correspondents there. I did not go; I did not want to get involved. I did not want to get involved. There was a reception at the Foreign Ministry. I asked Litvinov, “What do you think?” He just put his fingers to his nose and said it stinks. He walked away and would not talk about it.

**AS:** Did you meet [Władysław] Sikorski?

**HS:** He came to Kuibyshev. I met him at a reception. He was not any different from Mikolajczyk. Sikorski was a Polish nationalist, a centrist. He was to the right of Mikolajczyk. At the time the Russians were allied with the Polish government-in-exile. They let the Poles form a legion under Anders. All the Poles who had been interned were released. Anders was in Lubianka. He was allowed to organize a Polish army. Anders and the Poles refused to fight under Soviet command. They demanded their own sector of the front. The Russians could not allow that. So they finally agreed to let the whole Anders army leave by way of Iran. They fought in North Africa and Italy with the American and British troops, and very well.

There was of course speculation that Churchill ordered Sikorski to be shot down.
When Sikorski arrived in Kuibyshev, he saw Molotov and Anders. As is the case in the Soviet Union for distinguished guests, there was a command performance of the Bolshoi Theater – *Ivan Susanin*, an opera by Glinka. It was the story of a Polish invasion of Russia. The Polish army was lost in a forest, and a Russian peasant took them in a roundabout way. He knew he would be killed by the Poles. The whole thing ended in a great Russian victory over the Poles. So they showed this to Sikorski.

There is a moral here….

/end of reel/

**AS:** You were in Lublin when the Polish Provisional Government was formed. Tell us about that.

**HS:** The Polish Provisional Government was formed in Moscow on paper. First there was a committee; Vasilevskaia was on it, Berlin, Beirut, Osobka-Morawski. When they broke with the London government, they formed a provisional government. I remember at the time, after the Warsaw rebellion, when Mikolajczyk made some critical speeches in London that contradicted what he had said to me a week or two before the rebellion. He told me, “I only hope and pray that our people don’t rebel before the Russians are ready.” He knew what the military people knew. Rakossovsky had been advancing rapidly and then he got stuck. The Germans crossed the Vistula with four armored divisions. They just massacred the Russians. Mikolajczyk knew something about this. But the Polish leaders in the underground, without consulting London, staged this rebellion. They were massacred.

I saw Mikolajczyk in Moscow in July 1944. He had come to Moscow to negotiate with the Russians. He was really scared. He knew what was happening.

After the collapse of the Polish rebellion, Chip Bohlen said that the Russians have no choice but to work with Mikolajczyk. I told him, there are enough Poles right here in Moscow to form a government. I was guessing. I turned out to be right.

This was just before the Provisional Government was formed. I knew nothing of it, but I argued that they would never recognize Mykolajczyk.

In the 1930s, Stalin had most of the members of the Polish Central Committee shot. Several survived. Now they showed up. The head of the government was a socialist, Osobka-Morawski, who had fought in the underground. Also, Minc, Beirut. They were all in Moscow. They discovered a Marshall of Poland, and old cadre officer, Rola-Zymierski. He agreed to join the Provisional Government.

One fine day the Press Department called a group of us in and invited us to go to Lublin for the formation of the Polish Provisional Government. We agreed. Lillian Hellman [*a noted American playwright – aes*] was in the group. We went by train and took a roundabout route. It took us five days to get from Moscow to Lublin. By plane it would have taken maybe two hours. We played poker; Lillian Hellman is one of the best poker players.

We arrived in Lublin and the Poles took over. Everyone was in Polish uniforms. In a small building there was the whole Polish government: Berling,
Gomulka, Minc, Berman, Rola-Zymierski, Beirut, Spychalski, and several American correspondents. We lived a week in that house. We had lunch together every day. It was one of the most interesting periods I ever had; I got to know all of them.

Osobka-Morawski was naïve, a former worker. He said when he talked to Stalin, Stalin said, We Russians have done you Poles a lot of harm, and we are going to make up for it now. Osobka-Morawski said, We have done you plenty of harm too, but Stalin said, We have done more. Later he was deposed.

Everybody knew that the Russians were preparing the final offensive against Warsaw. We saw Soviet troops marching. One day I saw Zhukov in a jeep going west. After we had been there about a week – it was the end of December – I got a little impatient and I said we better get back to Moscow. The conducting officer said it would be difficult. The next day I happened to be sitting next to Rola-Zymierski at lunch. He asked how long I would be there. He said, Don’t rush, you will find it interesting. I immediately understood. He was a Pole. After lunch, the Soviet conducting officer came over and announced we were leaving the next morning.

In the meantime they had already taken us to Praga. In Praga, the Poniatowski bridge was blown up. I looked across the river. The Germans were blowing up house by house. A week or two later the offensive started.

Upon my return to Moscow, I hadn’t even started writing; a telephone call came from the embassy. Harriman wanted to see me. I went over. He asked me my impressions. I told him. I said the offensive would start any day. He of course knew; he had just seen Stalin. But he was very discrete; he never let anything out. I told him why. The next day the offensive started.

I had several very interesting conversations with the Poles. I think I have mentioned the one with Minc, where he argued that there was no future for Jews in Poland. I also talked with Spychalski. He had already been appointed mayor of Warsaw; he had been an architect. I asked whether it made any sense to rebuild Warsaw: Why not make Krakow the capital? He said, Oh no! We are going to rebuild Warsaw, brick by brick, stone by stone, exactly as it was. It would be easier to build Warsaw than to repair Krakow. He already had a plan. And that is what they did. They rebuilt Warsaw as it was. Spychalski later was arrested with Gomulka. After Stalin’s death, he was rehabilitated and became commander in chief.

**AS:** Did you speak with Rakossovsky in this period?

**HS:** The most memorable thing about Rakossovsky, I asked him soon after the battle of Moscow where he was commander of one of the crucial fronts, What do you consider your most important victory so far. He said, his retreat from Volokolamsk. This was a town northwest of Moscow. The Germans were advancing on Moscow; he threw his troops against them and stopped them.

Rakossovsky was a very handsome man. He had all the charm that you associate with a Polish officer. He received a parade in Red Square. He spoke Russian with a strong Polish accent. He was probably the handsomest officer in the Red Army. A famous Russian ballerina once said she had a wonderful dream: She was dancing at the Bolshoi, and the audience was full of Rakossovskys.
After the war Rakossovsky suddenly was relieved of Soviet citizenship, went to Poland, and became commander-in-chief of the Polish army. He ran Poland, until Gomulka threw him out.

I did not discuss the Warsaw rising with Rakossovsky, but I discussed it with enough others that I believe their story. Rakossovsky had been advancing too fast. He had overextended his lines. Then he had to stop, to bring up supplies. Suddenly four armored German divisions crossed the river and attacked him. They just made mincemeat out of him. The Polish nationalist underground did not communicate with him, it did not communicate with the communist army.

Apparently they had pretty good intelligence, but the Soviet army did not know that the Germans were preparing this counteroffensive. That was one of the reasons that the Soviet offensive against Warsaw was delayed. That is another reason why the Russians rejected the American and British offers to send planes to fly over Warsaw to drop supplies and then land behind Soviet lines to refuel and return. The Russians were so embarrassed by what had happened to Rakossovsky’s forces that they did not want to have any Allied forces there. Later, when they had cleaned it up a little, they did let some British and American planes fly over the lines.

The Polish nationalist leader, Bor, did expect the Soviet offensive to come. There were indications that Rakossovsky would keep on marching. But he was stopped. They rebelled. I pieced this together. Rakossovsky was later one of the heroes of the Battle of Berlin.

AS: Did you know [Jacob] Berman [Polish communist leader – aes]?

HS: Yes. A very powerful man. His official title was Deputy Foreign Minister. Actually I think he was running the Polish government. He was the most powerful man. An intellectual, soft-spoken, fanatical, had his finger in everything. Stalinist. He had a lot to do with the arrest of Gomulka, Spychalski, and a lot of others. Of course after the Polish October of 1956, Berman was fired. That whole group of Russian trained leaders was fired.

AS: Did you talk to [Wladyslaw] Gomulka?

HS: No. But I talked to all the others.

Q: Why did Stalin say, “Others would have thrown us out?”

HS: Those were not his words, but it was clear from what he said. At the beginning of the war, they suffered such reverses, such casualties. Every Russian had a gun. Every able-bodied citizen was given a gun. They took such a beating. It is quite possible that in any other army there would have been a complete collapse of morale. I think that is what he had in mind.

Q: You seem to stress that Russia was better prepared than what I have usually read.

HS: They expected a war. This is one of the explanations of the Soviet-German pact. Stalin overestimated French and the western ability to resist. He did not expect Germany to win so easily. He expected the war to last longer. This would have led to a general weakening of both Germany and the western Allies. That would have left Russia as an arbiter.

He also saw from the war with Finland that this was a serious business. He needed more time to reorganize, to reform the army, to rebuild. He gained
eighteen months by signing the pact with the Germans. He immediately began to reorganize. They moved carefully.

Their best army was still in the Far East, where he expected an attack. He did not think Hitler would be foolish enough to attack and have a war on two fronts. He was playing for time. Before Pearl Harbor, Soviet intelligence in Tokyo, headed by Sorge, reported that the Japanese were going to attack in Southeast Asia. Stalin began slowly pulling his best troops to throw against the Germans. To say that they were completely unprepared would be entirely wrong.

When Harry Hopkins came to Moscow to discuss Lend Lease with Lord Beaverbrook and Harriman, I talked to him once and he sounded very optimistic. He thought the Russians would resist. I thought that was the usual propaganda. After the war, I reminded him of it. He said that Stalin had convinced him that they had enough reserves, willpower, and resilience, to keep going. Had Stalin better prepared, I think Russia would have been better off.

AS: Would you comment on the use of terror to keep troops at the front: punitive battalions and NKVD divisions?

HS: Solzhenitsyn makes a point of that and quite incorrectly. He indicates that the victory at Stalingrad was largely the work of the punitive battalions. That cannot be correct. The battle lasted six months. It involved millions of men, on both sides. The Russians knocked out about 300,000 Germans. You just cannot have that many punitive battalions.

Punitive battalions were mostly former prisoners, ordinary criminals. Also some ordinary Red Army men. The whole battle of Stalingrad took such delicate planning, so much organization, it could not have been done by force. I talked to some of the soldiers. They burned their boats. They stayed in the city. You couldn’t fight house by house, street by street, with a machine gun behind you.

AS: How about NKVD battalions?

HS: They did have punitive battalions. They were used to clear minefields. Eisenhower was shocked when Zhukov told him they would throw in a few thousand people and blow up the mines. Zhukov was ruthless. He was maybe the most popular officer, but he was one of the most hated by other officers. They also used NKVD troops. Some of these were the best. Take the katiusha rocket. It was a new weapon. The only people they trusted to use it were the NKVD troops. They manned the katiushas. They were sent into the most critical areas of the front. This is something I cannot document. Certainly the troops who showed little stomach for the front were disciplined.

/end of reel/
At the University of Wisconsin we had a break at this point in our academic year: no classes between the middle of December and the end of January. Accordingly, my seminar did not meet with Professor Shapiro for almost two months. In this intervening period, however, Shapiro and I had intense discussions focusing on criticisms of his work in Moscow. Working through Soviet censorship demanded both caution and daring, and although several correspondents, such as Eddy Gilmore, Harrison Salisbury, and Edmund Stevens, won Pulitzer Prizes for their work in Moscow, such a critic as Walter Cronkite complained that no journalist working with censorship should receive this high journalistic award.\footnote{According to Bassow, Moscow Correspondents, p. 138, Cronkite said of Gilmore’s prize, “to give a Pulitzer Prize for reporting that passes through censorship – any censor of any kind – that you don’t even have a chance to correct – that’s giving the prize to censorship. That’s giving the Pulitzer to the idea of Soviet censorship. I found it terribly offensive.”}

In Shapiro’s case, given his longevity in Moscow and his major “scoops,” his mixture of caution and daring did not satisfy all, and he resented what he considered unwarranted criticism. Whitman Bassow has spoken of him as having been “thin-skinned.”\footnote{Ibid. p. 256.}

In January 1975 Shapiro came to me with complaints about a new book that raised just all these questions. The book was a memoir by Jerrold Schecter, who had worked in Moscow as a correspondent for Time, an American weekly news magazine.\footnote{Jerrold Schecter, An American Family in Moscow (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975.)} Shapiro gave me a carbon copy of his eight-page response to Schecter’s book, and I decided to include this “response” as an illustration both of the type of criticism and attacks that Shapiro faced in Moscow and also of his response to such criticism. I should probably note here that I have below omitted Shapiro’s harsher comments and sarcasm as not contributing to the concerns of this work.

Besides offering Shapiro’s response to some of the stories that circulated in Moscow’s foreign community, his letter to Schecter also illustrated some of his methods and his reasoning in developing stories. Schecter’s comments were on our minds for the rest of the academic year – even though we did not discuss this with the students – and they echoed what Shapiro said about his journalistic colleagues and competitors after his trip to Stalingrad: “There were all sorts of accusations.” (See our discussion of November 26, above in Chapter IV.) Schecter’s book in fact brought up the essence of just such accusations.
To be the doyen of a small, intensely competitive group of news gatherers and at the same time to be an especially successful correspondent, as Shapiro was in Moscow, could not be an easy, comfortable sinecure. To be the doyen was to be the target of complaints as well as a channel for communication. In his very first mention of Shapiro in his book, Schecter showed resentment at Shapiro's position of authority among the foreign correspondents in Moscow. At a gathering of the correspondents at the American embassy, Schecter sat in a comfortable chair normally reserved for Shapiro. In his book, page 21, Schecter wrote: “Realizing it was Shapiro’s place of honor, I shifted seats. He smiled and sat down.” Schecter registered no complaint of Shapiro’s behavior on this occasion, but he was obviously angry enough about his embarrassment at this incident that he chose to mention it as his text’s introduction to Shapiro.

At first glance, Shapiro’s own opening complaints about Schecter’s account may seem petty, dealing as they do with recounting several stories that Shapiro himself liked to tell, but they lay the groundwork for his angry reaction to Schecter’s book. Schecter, like Whitman Bassow and others, had called Shapiro on the telephone to check on details for several incidents; Shapiro was then unhappy with Schecter’s retelling of those stories. As the veteran journalist that he was, Shapiro demanded accuracy in details in his stories, and he regularly complained when others made mistakes in telling stories in which he was involved. (As an example, see his comments below in chapter VII on the published accounts of Golda Meir’s meeting with Ilia Ehrenburg in Moscow.) He opened his letter to Schecter with three such complaints.

The first of these stories dealt with the way in which Shapiro learned of the German invasion in June 1941. Shapiro mentioned this in our discussion of November 12 – see Chapter III above. Schecter wrote that Hermann Poerzgen, a German journalist, called Shapiro on the morning of June 22 and declared, “Please watch.” According to Schecter, in the context of a previous conversation between the two, Shapiro understood this to mean that the Germans had attacked the Soviet Union. Schecter’s point in this story would seem to have been that even with this information in hand, Shapiro could not get the story through Soviet censorship until Molotov had made a formal announcement that the Germans had invaded; Shapiro complained that Schecter had not repeated the story accurately.

Shapiro wrote, “While you were writing your book you phoned me to ask about the innocuous Poerzgen story and the beginning of war. It was a simple question of fact which, even after I explained it to you, you managed to misreport some of the details.” What had Schecter misreported? I have two other accounts of this incident written by Shapiro. According to Whitman Bassow (p. 94), who was obviously quoting Shapiro, Poerzgen declared, “What we expected has happened. I am interned at the embassy and I want to say Auf Wiedersehen under better conditions.” In the fall of 1977, Shapiro gave me a much fuller account of this incident, which I have added at the end of this chapter. As Shapiro indicated in his letter, his complaint concerned Poerzgen’s words more than it did the Schecter’s picture of the essence of the communication.

Shapiro’s second complaint again dealt with wording, but this time the issue revolved around subtleties in reporting. At issue is the question whether the noted Soviet poet, Evgenii Yevtushenko, had in fact sent a telegram to Brezhnev and Kosygin, protesting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Schecter wrote (p. 57): “When Shapiro asked Yevtushenko if a telegram to Brezhnev and Kosygin
existed, the poet complained of a poor telephone connection and advised Shapiro to call back. Shapiro was not able to reach Yevtushenko again and wrote a story saying that the poet had denied sending the telegram.

Shapiro responded with an elaborate comment:

I have no way of knowing whether you got the Yevtushenko story from what you considered a ‘reliable’ source or you embellished it for your morbid objectives. What happened was this: I telephoned Y to check the story sent to me from UPI headquarters and thinking mistakenly, as I did that time, that Y was an official court dissident who would not have been inclined to send such a message, I asked him whether he had written such telegram to Kosygin. His immediate reaction was ‘I did not send it to them.’ ‘But is there such telegram?’ I asked. The telephone connection was perfect. But he said, ‘This is a bad connection, please hang up and call back in a minute.’ For the next hour I called back every few minutes. I heard the bell ring loud and clear, but he refused to pick up the receiver.

He knew me well enough then and, if for some mysterious reason, he wanted to keep the story ‘secret’ all he had to do was to say something like ‘why bother me with such nonsense…’ and I would have dropped it. Whereupon I reported the story exactly as it was and ended with my own conclusion to the effect that it appeared he actually had sent such telegram to Kosygin. I quoted his exact words – “I did not send it to the London Times” – and did not use the language you put in my mouth that he denied he had sent the telegram to Kosygin. His authentic reaction and the telephone trick clearly indicated that such telegram was in existence.

Here Shapiro’s complaint was that Schecter had not appreciated his, Shapiro’s, wording. He had reported that Yevtushenko had denied sending the telegram to the London Times, but that indeed Yevtushenko had probably sent such a telegram to Kosygin.

Schecter’s third story (p. 71) seemed innocent enough: “Henry Shapiro, the UPI bureau chief, described the extreme paranoia of the Stalin years: a bathtub overflowed in the apartment of his upstairs neighbor, a famous writer, so Shapiro went up to tell him the water was seeping through the floor. The neighbor refused to open the door because he feared any contact with an American journalist.” Shapiro’s response: “The famous writer was Naguibin and he lived on the floor below not above me as you would have it. It was my bathtub that overflowed not his. And he himself, after Stalin’s death, told me his mother did not let him walk up one floor to my apartment because she was afraid of that ‘dangerous American imperialist.’ Shapiro himself then admitted that the three stories were “inconsequential,” and declared, “I would not have bothered to write you about them had it not been for your other sick attempts at creative writing concerning my persona.”

Shapiro’s more significant complaints responded to Schecter’s picture of the way Shapiro behaved in dealing with other foreign correspondents together with innuendoes that the Soviet authorities had essentially harnessed him to their propaganda through a system of special privileges and perquisites. Schecter made a number of harsh criticisms: that Shapiro had succumbed to Soviet controls on the journalists, that he had divided the foreign journalists into competing camps and had required newcomers to commit themselves to one or another, and that
Shapiro had benefited by special privileges given him by the Soviet authorities. All of these charges echoed what Shapiro said about his journalistic colleagues after his trip to Stalingrad: “There were all sorts of accusations.”

Schecter’s comments began with an account of the “courtesy call” that he made to Shapiro’s office when he, Schecter, first began to work in Moscow. “Shapiro’s office was decorated with pictures of himself with W. Averill Harriman and Nikita Khrushchev. Shapiro was a younger man, thinner and balding in the pictures. Sitting before his plain, cluttered desk, I could see how the Russians had dealt with him over the years. The Soviet effort to exert control over journalists had worked its way into his own system through a kind of osmosis.”

Schecter went on to quote Shapiro as having told him that the press corps was divided into two basic camps, UPI and Agence France Presse against Associated Press and Reuter. To join Shapiro’s camp, Schecter would have to agree to share “information, samizdat material or scoops from Russian sources.” Schecter refused to commit himself, writing “Sharing a story is a violation of all the canons of American journalism. Being first and right is the rule to follow.” Nevertheless he had to recognize that in Moscow, the journalist had to defend himself against provocateurs, protect his sources or face expulsion. All the foreign journalists needed informal supporting networks, and he himself had to make some compromises. Nevertheless, Schecter made the final sharp comment on Shapiro (p. 187): “The camp system gave him his own sense of power.”

Schecter went on to suggest that Shapiro received rewards from Soviet officials for “sitting” on stories of dissidents: “[Shapiro] sometimes declined to put a story on the wire. Instead he would get the details of a protest and keep it in his top drawer.” If UPI complained that he had not filed the story of that protest, Shapiro could immediately use his prepared documentation. Soviet officials in turn “rewarded” him “with advance information about Soviet space shots” or “the right to call the head of the Press Department for such answers as whether Prime Minister Kosygin was sick or whether a foreign head of state was really in Moscow when his arrival had been reported by rumor alone.” (pp. 186-187)

Since Shapiro’s response ran these topics together, I want to begin with just a brief note on the “camp system.” Whitman Bassow, who had worked with Shapiro, defended Shapiro (pp. 253-54): “Jerrold Schecter, Time correspondent from 1968 to 1970, has accused Henry of devising and using the camp system as a means of controlling the correspondents, an unfair charge.” The system, according to Bassow, had its origins during World War II in the efforts of an AP correspondent, Henry Cassidy, to help other correspondents who had to compete with Shapiro. When I asked John Rettie, a former Reuters correspondent, about his memories of the camp system, he declared that in his time, 1956-1957, the six or eight foreign correspondents in Moscow cooperated more than they competed. By the 1970s, as the number of correspondents in Moscow grew and their access to sources of information expanded, the “camp system” was crumbling.

Shapiro’s response actually went to great lengths in explaining his practices in exploiting contacts and developing stories. He began with one of his favorite comments concerning journalists coming to Moscow for the first time.

You are making the assumption that most of the less qualified correspondents than you make – the history of the Soviet Union begins when they arrive and
ends when they leave. You attribute to me the invention of the cartel system. If you had bothered to inquire into the situation a few years earlier you would have known that for many years there were long periods of universal cooperation among the competing media, mostly of my doing, because we were all fighting a common enemy, the censorship, etc. and I thought that in balance the system benefited all of us.

If you had taken the trouble to have consulted some of the newsmen of the pre-Schecter historic epoch, you would have known that the system flourished particularly well during the Khrushchev era and I was the main contributor to the common pool even though I often cut my own throat. Ask any of the correspondents now in Washington who were in Moscow before Schecter and they will tell you how Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders used to approach me at receptions to chat and answer questions. They did not because of my blue eyes but because they had been accustomed to seeing me for years. I was for many years the only western correspondent who needed no language interpreter and, like the A.F. and Reuters men, I was invited to all official receptions from which all others including the N.Y. Times, were often excluded.

After each conversation all the correspondents would gather around me to listen to my notes. At my initiative we then agreed when to file and since this was before the teletype age, we would draw lots on who was to order the telephone first. The lots did not always favor me, and I was often clobbered on my own story. We not only shared such news but the agencies agreed not to spend their nights at the Central Telegraph to wait for Pravda and Izvestia and to protect each other when someone violated the pool terms. Such violations began occurring as more and more new men arrived, the filing was done from home so there was no way of controlling fulfillment of the pool agreement.

Much to my regret the cooperative system finally broke down, not only because of the frequent violations but because gradually the press corps found itself geographically divided into three ghettoes and some members of the press corps proved less cooperative than their predecessors. Most of the labor had been done by the agency bureaus and the principal beneficiaries were the specials, the weeklies, and the broadcasters. Some of the non-agency men contributed almost nothing for years, and they were happy enough to rewrite agency copy. On the rare occasions they dug up something of their own, they kept it for themselves.

You boast of your wisdom in rejecting what you call the Shapiro camp system. How do you reconcile that with your repeated assurances that UPI was your favorite and you gave some of your better stories only to the Kutuzov group? At least I had no reason to doubt your word when you told me of your scoop on Kosygin’s trip to China was shared with us alone as was your ‘exclusive’ on Mao’s death into which you explained you had been conned by an official informer whose specific job was to feed you so-called information. Why do you irresponsibly and maliciously refer to the Shapiro system which ‘made work difficult’ and not to the AP or Reuters systems?

Shapiro especially resented what he called Schecter’s “osmosis” theory. He began by objecting to Schecter’s description of his office: “In describing your first ‘courtesy’ visit to my office you drew attention to the Harriman and Khrushchev por-
traits, both done by LIFE photographers. [Note: *Time, Schecter’s employer, was a part of the Time/Life stable of magazines – aes*] Perhaps there is some more bizarre reason for singling out H. and K. Why not mention the fact that three of my walls were covered with portraits of the persons I interviewed for several decades, e.g., Gandhi, McMillan, Ben Gurion, Bohlen, Bulganin, Kadar, Ceaucescu, Adlai Stevenson, Yevtushenko, Svetlana Alliluyeva’s children, Japanese Premier Sato. Any profound Freudian reason for picking H and K which escapes me?”

He then went on to Schecter’s suggestion that the Soviet authorities had influenced his work:

Your ‘osmosis’ theory impugning my professional integrity is criminally defamatory. Since you based that theory on length of residence, why limit its application to me alone? Why not apply it to your favorite newsman, Ed. Stevens, who got to Moscow long before me and is still there. His term of service as translator, stringer, staff correspondent, *rentier*, and merchant (unlike my own work as press association slave) exceeded mine. Is it possible you did not know that?

“Why not apply it” to my great friend Hermann Poerzgen whose experience in Moscow dates back to the 1920s, including 10 years as a Soviet prisoner of war, and is still there enjoying universal respect. No osmosis in these cases and in many others I could cite! But what is the use?

Shapiro called the suggestion that the Soviet Foreign Ministry’s Press Department had given him special privileges and stories “more scurrility.” On the question of his scoops on Soviet space shots, he wrote, “For your information – I did not get a single story or score a beat (and there was a substantial number of them) on space from the Press Department – aes. A cub reporter with a week’s experience in Moscow knows that the function of the P.D. is not to disseminate but to suppress news. In point of fact, with two possible exceptions, I DID NOT initiate any of my numerous space beats myself. They all came from the UPI pool which you exploited to the hilt and now pretend it was professionally harmful. All the stories, except two, came from other correspondents, repeat correspondents, members of our pool, i.e. Germans, Italians, Yugoslavs, Hungarian, Czechs, etc. They were mostly men whom some of my American competitors could not communicate with, either because they had no common language or because of what you might call ‘big power chauvinism”

Shapiro went on to explain the “two possible exceptions” in his stories about the Soviet space program: “The two space stories I initiated myself came from Gherman Titov, whom, early in the space age, I first met at the U.S. embassy and later at Kremlin receptions. All he told me was that something was coming up shortly. The rest was blood, sweat and tears. I called members of the pool and all the Soviet sources I had. Confirmation or what I considered confirmation came from Soviet newsmen who usually covered space. When their office numbers did not answer I got after their families and in each case I learned that they had gone off to Baikonur. I immediately informed members of my pool, and between all of us we managed to get the story. Anybody, AP, Reuter, yourself could have had those stories if you had taken the trouble, knew Russian and other languages, and had bothered to cultivate obscure but well-connected non-American newsmen. Perhaps there is some merit in staying in Moscow more than 2 or 3 years like Stevens, myself, and a few others, unlike the brief tours of duty of most Americans.”
As for the right to call the Press Department, Shapiro declared: “You are at least, and incredibly enough, fractionally right that I learned that Kosygin was ill directly from Zamiatin. The occasion was the visit of my foreign editor, Phil Newsom, whom the great man agreed to receive. When Newsom and I asked about those repeated rumors that the troika would be fired immediately after the Nov. 7 celebration, something of which you too tried to palm off on me, he said that they all had the flu and added ‘Wait until the anniversary celebrations and you will see them all. The rumor mongers will be sorry.’ He also authorized me - something P.D. officials seldom permit – to attribute the statement to an official spokesman.”

Not all of Shapiro’s conversations with the head of the Press Department, he hastened to add, were pleasant: “Another time I was privileged to talk with Zamiatin was a few years earlier when he got me out of a dinner party, soon after the Ginzburg trial, to warn me of dire consequences if I attended a press conference called by Ginzburg’s mother. He also called the AP, Reuters, France-Presse, the N.Y. Times and several others with the same warnings. But would you be interested in what happened in the pre-Schecter era of Soviet history?”

In dealing with all the foreign correspondents in Moscow, Shapiro repeatedly emphasized his own years of experience. As he wrote to Schecter, “Perhaps because of long experience and some familiarity with the ways of bureaucrats I was able occasionally to extract a little more information than others.” Shapiro also referred to his experience in explaining his caution in dealing with stories about dissidents in Moscow. He paraphrased Schecter as saying that “those miscreants from the UPI and at time Reuters held back on stories involving abuses in Soviet prison camps ... insisting it was a matter of ‘news judgment.’ And crime of crimes, ‘Shapiro... sometimes declined to put a story on the wire.’ Etc., ad nauseam.”

This charge particularly angered Shapiro; this struck at the core of his integrity as a reporter. As he wrote to Schecter, “In the first place I should like some documentation on this. Did I ever tell you that I held up or declined to send certain stories of the type you mentioned or is your concoction based on some malicious gossip you may have heard from some competitors?”

To this he added, “It may also interest you to know that long before you discovered the Soviet Union, I was the first to report Solzhenitsyn’s letter to the Writers’ Union, the first and only one for several days to write about a meeting at the Writers’ Union after the Siniavsky trial. At that meeting, addressed by trial judge Smirnov, many of the writers raised holy hell about the trial and practically drove Smirnov off the platform. I was also the only one to discover the obscurantist, anti-intellectual, anti-Semitic Shevtsov novels on which I wrote at least two excoriating articles.”

Shapiro admitted to missing one major “dissident” story. The problem of challenging the official line in Moscow and trusting unsolicited reports had always been a problem for the foreign correspondents. Whitman Bassow has referred to it as being held hostage for even news agency stories from other sources. The classic dilemma came in the early 1930s with the problem of reporting famine in Ukraine. Government sources denied the existence of a famine; reporters had conflicting views but many dared not file the story. In the failure which Shapiro acknowledged concerned an unsolicited manuscript:

One morning, when I arrived at my office, I found on my desk a long statement by Academician [Andrei] Sakharov sharply criticizing the Kremlin
without any indication as to where it came from. Later I learned that a Dutch correspondent had put it there, and he had actually filed it. It was the first of its kind, and it did sound incredible. The world had not yet accustomed to underground anti-Soviet pronouncements by members of the Academy. I did not exactly know who Sakharov was. I did not know his address or telephone number. Neither Sakharov nor any of the other distinguished intellectuals, such as the Medvedevs and not even Solzhenitsyn, had become the great public figures accessible to the press, that they became later. I could not send a story from secondary sources of such sensational character without having it confirmed. Nor did I know where the Dutchman had got it until much later. Had I known the original sources, I might have sent it out, but in the meantime I had it on my top drawer pending confirmation.

“The N.Y. Times did not wait that long and published it. By the time I became convinced of its authenticity, it was too late. Press associations do not appreciate stories the Times had used a few days or a few weeks earlier, although with the wisdom of hindsight, in this exceptional case, my editors might have used even a late report. As far as I know, neither the AP nor any other agency carried Sakharov. Because of the Sakharov mishap and probably as the basis of some malicious gossip he heard, one of the young, intellectual dissidents wrote a nasty piece for samizdat in which he criticized Gwertzman of the Times, the AP manager and me – particularly me – for allegedly not playing ball or not playing enough ball with the dissidents. I could not blame the man whom I had never met and knew nothing about me because like all dedicated undergrounders, he was risking his freedom and perhaps life for his cause and he expected all western correspondents to do the same. Had he called on me, as two of the more distinguished dissident leaders did, in connection with another matter, he might have accepted my explanation.”

The correspondent of the New York Times who broke the story of the Sakharov manuscript, Raymond Anderson, had decided to take the chance. He knew Russian well, and he had read the manuscript. As Bassow recounted the story (p. 250), the Soviets made no immediate response, but when Anderson and his wife took a vacation, the Soviet government informed the New York Times that Anderson would not be allowed to return, “because he was dealing with matters unrelated to journalism.” Anderson subsequently became an Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Wisconsin, and a number of us in Madison had ample opportunity to hear both Shapiro’s and Anderson’s accounts of this event. I must say that there were many who contrasted Anderson’s daring to Shapiro’s caution.

Before leaving the subject of Shapiro’s angry response to Schecter’s book, it is perhaps in order to note three compliments that Schecter gave Shapiro: “He had a fantastic memory”; “Shapiro had an unsurpassed depth of background and a finely tuned sensitivity to changes in Soviet policy”; and “His range of contacts and sources was massive, and if he decided to go after a story he had no peers.” To this we might add Bassow’s ultimate judgment (p. 255): “One of Shapiro’s legacies was the dozens of young reporters he trained over the years. Usually they were eager, smart and ambitious, but on arrival they were not versed in the complexities of Soviet history and politics. He taught them prudence and skepticism, the need to verify information, and awareness that they were awesomely ignorant about the country they were covering. Above all, he taught them to understand that the history of Russia did not begin the day they sat down at the typewriter in the UPI bureau.”
Another example of criticism that Shapiro had to deal with came from completely
the other side of the ideological barricades of the Cold War. A Ukrainian writer,
Vitalii Korotich, visited Madison in, as I recall, the fall of 1976 and gave a public
lecture. The following day he met with a small group of interested university fac-
ulty members, at most perhaps seven persons. I was the chairman of that small
session, and several months later I was absolutely shocked when Shapiro showed
me an account under Korotich's name, published in Literaturnaia gazeta, that ran
the two meetings together and insisted that Shapiro had interfered with Korotich's
public talk. This type of attack on foreign correspondents was definitely in Lit-
eraturnaia gazeta's style; in Bassow's words (p. 209), the newspaper "frequently
attacked American reporters for transmitting 'lies and slanders' about the Soviet
people." This attack on Shapiro fit this pattern. Unfortunately I do not have the
text of that article – it is probably in the Library of Congress's holding of Shapiro's
papers, where there is a separate file bearing the name "Korotich, Vitaly, 1977,

According to my memory of these two sessions in Madison, there were no un-
toward incidents at either Korotich's public presentation or at the smaller meet-
ing with faculty members. What happened at the small gathering that I headed
was that Shapiro spoke of anti-Semitism in the Ukraine, and when Korotich tried
to evade discussion and change the subject, Shapiro, the persistent newshound,
wanted to bring him back to the topic of Ukrainian anti-Semitism. No one be-
came angry, and Shapiro later told me that after the meeting, Korotich went to
Shapiro's home for more discussions and "drank my vodka."

Korotich's article infuriated Shapiro, and as the following letter that Shapiro sent to
me shows, Shapiro became angry with me for not having reacted strongly enough.
I quote the letter in extenso:

*minor corrections of typographical errors in the text – aes

May 14, 1977

Dear Al:

I have the impression that you did not read that hatchet job attentively enough
and do not quite appreciate how malicious and unfounded it was.

To begin with his tour de force "... I knew that for many years HS was bureau
manager for UPI in Moscow, from which he disseminated information about
us to the whole world. Was it he who for long years persuaded his readers
that Ukrainians drink the blood of Jewish infants?"

A little earlier: "... I know that Shapiro, dissatisfied with the good atmosphere
of our talk, deliberately sowed evil and misinformation in the audience..."

A minor detail. Three times, he says, I screamed loudly "Why are all Ukraini-
ans anti-Semitic?" I did not let him speak, he says, but interrupted him – the
first time when he said, "I do not understand and I reject this question. At
home, with the same force, I punch in the nose all provocateurs who try to
tell anecdotes about all Georgians selling wine ... all Russians guzzle shchi
from their latpy, all Jews are crooks..." Then he goes into all kinds of hero-
ics. He allegedly told the "audience" about his father's arrest by the Gestapo,
the hiding of Jews from the Nazis. I did not hear him say such things. Nor
did I hear myself ritually scream three times "Why are all Ukrainians anti-Semitic?" Nor did I ask the question about Babi Yar. Who did? Was it one of the Yugoslavs or our Japanese friend?

My only contribution on the occasion was:

1. After his boasts on book publication, I asked how come the Nazi-type book Yudaizm bez ukrasheniia was published by the Academy of Sciences. He answered correctly – the book was denounced and withdrawn. I had asked Khrushchev the same question, and his answer consisted of four-letter words, not about me but about the author.

I thought I was helping Korotich when I mentioned a similar book by Shevtsov in Moscow, not Kiev, and explained that that too was denounced and proscribed. I had discussed these books lengthily with Furtseva, several Soviet writers, and briefly with Brezhnev himself. They acted ashamed and apologetic and did not call me a “chauvinistic penguin.” Was there any reason I should not discuss such things with a jerk like K because it might embarrass him? (Actually, he was not embarrassed at all, or he would not have accepted my invitation to visit me at home for two hours during which he acted like a long-lost friend.)

If such questions cannot be asked of visiting Soviet intellectuals, I shall no longer attend any of the Wednesday colloquia.

2. At one point I suggested that historically there had been more bytovoi anti-Semitism in the Ukraine than in Russia proper, if for no other reason, because most of the Jews lived in the Ukraine. I was talking about czarist Russia and the Civil War period. That is where all the pogroms were and that is where Makhno and Petlura butchered about 200,000 Jews. (As a historian, do you think I am all wet on this?) I saw nothing wrong in talking about this before a vast audience of 6 persons – a university, off-the-record colloquium. This question too I have discussed with my friends in the Ukraine and in other parts of the USSR. Nobody ever accused me of asking "Why are all Ukrainians anti-Semitic?" and nobody threatened to punch my nose. Nor did Korotich until four months later. At my home he said "anti-Semitism is an outrage. It is contrary to Marxism-Leninism. It only hurts the Soviet Union, and I cannot see why it is tolerated." Did he really have a sense of guilt about what’s happening in his beloved Ukraine? Was he acting the role of a provocateur? Or what?

Incidentally everything I said at that Wednesday meeting, I wrote out of Moscow at one time or another. And nobody in the Soviet Union called me a chauvinistic penguin (what poetic language) and nobody that I know was offended.

Again, if you think that there is a germ of justification in anything I said for Korotich’s pogromist drivel, you can consider me silenced forever on such occasions.

Sincerely,

Henry /signed by hand/

P.S. In any decent publication other than the rag Litgazette often is, the mere fact that Korotich pretended it all happened at a tvorchesky vecher, a sort of mass meeting which I turned into a Nazi-type Munich beer hall brawl, would have destroyed all his credibility. And the fact that he accepted my hospital-
ity at home a few minutes after those “lies” about the Ukrainians should be enough to expel him from the Writers’ Union, if not worse. But do you think they will bother to investigate, even after my letter to Chakovsky? Korotich, by the way, is a saint compared to Chakovsky, one of the most despised editors in the Soviet Union, who also happens to be a Jew biologically.

Korotich’s account and Shapiro’s response seem to need little comment. As a witness and participant in the events that he described, I declare here that Korotich’s account constituted a total fabrication.

These two criticisms of Shapiro amply illustrate the type of problems that he faced during his long service in Moscow. Bassow at one point considered him perhaps too sensitive to these sorts of attacks. Be that as it may, I will conclude this chapter by simply noting that I subsequently took steps to block any invitation for Korotich to return to the University of Wisconsin. This of course can be construed as censorship on my part, but I would emphasize the word “invitation”: The university, I declared, should not put up money to support any further visits by him.

Addendum:

In the fall of 1977, Shapiro and I again discussed the Poerzgen incident. I do not remember the exact context; we may well have been discussing the diplomatic questions involved in evacuating the respective embassies of countries that have gone to war with each other. In any case, I quote here from his letter to me of November 3, 1977.

As you probably know, all the rules and niceties of protocol and international custom were invoked when the war started.

At the crack of dawn, I had a phone call from my best German friend, Hermann Poerzgen, who told me “what we expected to happen has happened. I am calling from the Germany embassy. You can come and see me if you like, but I cannot leave the embassy. Thanks for your friendship, and I hope we meet again under better circumstances.”

I was too busy for the next few hours to go to the German embassy, and when I got there it was too late. I was not admitted. All the German (and Austrian) nationals were interned at the embassy – diplomats, correspondents, trade representatives.

Later I learned that members of the embassy staff – it was just a skeleton staff since von Schulenburg had sent wives, women employees, children and minor employees back to Berlin a few days earlier – had been called to the embassy a few hours before the war started and asked to stay there.

Extra guards were placed around the embassy, the telephones were cut off, and the Germans were kept there for a day or two, after which they were taken to Leninsky Gorki for internment until exchange arrangements were made for Soviet staffers in Berlin. The Germans after the first hour or two were allowed no contact with outsiders except for representatives of the foreign embassy which handled their interests. (I forgot which embassy it was.)

Similar procedure was followed with Soviet staffers in Berlin. Through a third country in each capital it was agreed to send both embassy staffers to Turkey by train where the exchange was to take place.
The Germans in Moscow were put in a special train and taken to the Turkish border to await the arrival of the Soviet diplomats when they were exchanged.

The Italian diplomats were on the same train as were the Romanians. But Romanian ambassador Gafencu was offered Soviet hospitality if he wanted to stay in Moscow and form a Romanian government-in-exile. He refused and took his embassy back to Bucharest via the German train.

From Poerzgen and German diplomats whom I saw after the war, I learned that the exchanges took place without incident. The Soviet personnel on the train to Turkey, according to Poerzgen, were courteously correct.

The next day, November 4, he sent me another letter on the same subject:
I wrote you a note yesterday via the campus mail on the Soviet-German embassy personnel exchange at the outbreak of war. I wrote it from memory, but I checked my notes when I got home and had part of those notes confirmed by Hilger’s *The Incompatible Allies*.

Some of the embassy officers who lived outside the embassy were placed under guard at their residences all day of June 22 and were requested to move to the embassy in the evening. Hilger argued with the Soviet foreign ministry official all day that the embassy was too small to take in all the German personnel. (It had shrunk to about 100 since families and minor officials had been removed to Berlin all week long.) Permission was finally given for the surplus Germans to be interned at the former Austrian embassy which the Germans had taken over after the Anschluss.

June 24 the Germans were taken to Kostroma on the Volga (not to Gorki-Leninsky where the other enemy diplomats, e.g., Gafencu, were) where they were kept in a workers’ rest house for 5 days after which a special train them to Leninakan on the Armenian-Turkish border. The trip to Leninakan took 8 days.

According to Hilger the train personnel and people at the stations where the train stopped were not – repeat not – unfriendly even though they knew whom the train carried.

The Germans were kept in the train at Leninakan for seven days until Soviet personnel from Berlin crossed the Turkish border at Svilengrad, Bulgaria, on July 13, 1941, when they (the Germans) were permitted to leave the Soviet Union.

These two letters offer testimony to both his prodigious memory and his carefulness in checking on detail to correct his memory. Both of these considerations figure strongly in Bassow’s as well as in Schecter’s comments on Shapiro’s work.

NB: I also want to add a few comments yet on the use of letters such as I have cited in this chapter. Shapiro typed his letters and then added corrections and handwritten comments. Therefore, should Shapiro’s papers in the Library of Congress include the original of his letter to Schecter or copies of his two letters to me that I have quoted in this chapter, an industrious researcher may actually find differences from the texts as I have reproduced them here.
VII: THE POSTWAR STALIN YEARS – FEBRUARY 4, 1976
After our midyear break in classes at the University of Wisconsin, we resumed our conversations with Prof. Shapiro on February 4, 1976. Again, I found in my records the outline of topics to be considered. To remind the reader, a week before a given session, Prof. Shapiro and I would agree on the topics to be taken up at the next meeting of the seminar.

Atmosphere at the end of the war
Economic reconstruction – Varga, Voznesensky
Zhdanovshchina – Lysenko
Anti-cosmopolitan campaign – Golda Meir
Ehrenburg
Cold War
The Leningrad case
Stalin’s 70th birthday
19th Party Congress
Doctors’ Plot
Stalin’s Death
Succession

Ehrenburg. *The Postwar Years, 1945-1954*
Gruliov, *Current Soviet Policies*, I
Ulam, *Stalin*

I gave this outline to the students before the first meeting of the seminar, and I had them read an article from *The Atlantic Monthly*, dated October 1947, in which Shapiro reported on the intellectual atmosphere in Moscow, where he was of course then living. For copyright reasons, I cannot reproduce the article here, but I will briefly summarize it.

Shapiro’s essay revolved around his perception of the Zhdanovshchina, Andrei Zhdanov’s campaign in the immediate postwar years to sharpen ideological struggles with the West. Zhdanov was the third in a line of prominent party leaders
in Leningrad. Leningrad had been a base for Grigorii Zinoviev, one of Stalin's major opponents in the 1920s. Stalin had installed Sergei Kirov in Zinoviev's place, and after Kirov's assassination in 1934, Zhdanov had taken the leadership of the party organization in "the city of Lenin." In 1940, Zhdanov had directed the Sovietization of Estonia, and during World War II he had directed the defense of Leningrad.

Shapiro called Zhdanov Stalin's heir apparent; as he speculated, if Stalin should pass from the scene, Zhdanov and Viacheslav Molotov would lead the new regime. The new ideological campaign, Shapiro declared, was not a physical purge; the regime was now "mature" enough to deal with inefficiency and incompetence with less drastic measures. During the war, Shapiro continued, the regime had let down its guard and perorations against western culture, but now writers, ideologists, and other creative workers had to show the superiority of Soviet culture and ways over the culture and life in the capitalist world. Shapiro ended with the thought, "It will not be surprising if a revival of the doctrine of world revolution follows."

A native of the Baltic region, to be sure, could insist that Shapiro's thoughts about the "maturity" of the Soviet state crumble before the memories of partisan resistance and deportations, but Shapiro was viewing the whole of Soviet history from his vantage point in Moscow. Yet even there, his essay in the Atlantic Monthly would contradict what he said in our discussion of February 4 about the purge of the "Leningrad camp" in the party, not to mention the "Doctors' plot" that we discussed in the next session (Chapter VIII).

Shapiro's comments represented an odd mix of the hopeful expectations that many Soviets nurtured toward the end of the war together with the uncertainties that arose when people thought about the meaning of the new demands for cultural and ideological purity. Naïve and rosy as some of the hopeful judgments may now sound, they were common, although by no means universal. Shapiro himself did not completely share them. According to Harrison Salisbury, who admitted to sharing the rosy thoughts at the end of the war, both Henry and Ludmilla Shapiro had warned that life would be more difficult. He quoted Ludmilla Shapiro as exclaiming, "How can you talk about easier times? It is bound to be worse." She emphasized problems of economic reconstruction of the country from the ravages of the war, but the Stalinist system carefully intertwined political and cultural repression with questions of economic reconstruction.

Behind all these considerations lay concerns about Stalin's intentions and the problems of succession. Zhdanov had been the heir apparent for some time, but with his death, Georgii Malenkov rose to attention. When Malenkov gave the keynote speech to the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952 – a speech normally given by the party leader – he appeared to be the anointed heir.

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AS: I would like to begin today by discussing the atmosphere toward the end of the Second World War. There was a hope for relaxation, was there not?

HS: There was - throughout the war, especially after the Soviet victories. After Stalingrad, when it became clear that the Soviet Union would win the war, there was a hope that a New Deal would follow the end of hostilities. A
New Deal in terms of a more liberal economy, greater freedom of movement, including freedom to travel abroad, improved relations with the West, especially the United States.

I remember the day victory was announced. The Soviets celebrate Victory Day a day after the American victory day. When the Germans surrendered to Eisenhower, the Russians would not accept that, because they wanted surrender on their front. There was a second capitulation. The same German generals came to Berlin, where they surrendered to Zhukov.

Well, when it was announced in the order of the day by Stalin, there were hundreds of thousands of people within minutes in Red Square. Red Square opened up into the Square of the Revolution, where the American embassy stood. They were marching toward the American embassy. If an American showed up in uniform, he was taking his life into his hands because the Russians would grab him toss him into the air, and shout, “Long live America.” My office was in the Hotel Metropole. It was just a walk which normally took two minutes to the embassy. I experienced all that.

When I got to the embassy, George Kennan, who was charge – Harriman was out of the country – got up in the balcony and delivered a speech in Russian, saying that now we must continue working together after the war and make sure that it doesn’t happen again. A nice little speech. Certainly the Americans were extremely popular. There was this hope that you were talking about. It was reflected in this first major spontaneous demonstration that I saw in the Soviet Union. Every Russia was on the streets.

It soon became clear that it was not going to be that easy. Although the Soviet press did not carry all the news, still there were enough stories to show that relations were not the best. There were divergences of opinion over Poland and the Baltic countries. In 1947, when the Conference of Foreign Ministers was held in Moscow, it was clear that relations would get not better but even worse. Soon after the conference, which ended in failure, there were a series of decrees which poured cold water over these hopes. I remember that one particular decree, which was of special interest to the diplomats and the correspondents, what you might call the Special Secrets Act, made it criminal to talk to any Soviet officials. All contact with Soviet organizations had to be arranged through the Foreign Ministry, and any news which was not officially published was considered a state secret. If that law had been applied, every foreign correspondent would have been in jail for espionage. Take for example trade negotiations. An American trade delegation arrived in Moscow to negotiate. A correspondent talked to the American delegation: “We are discussing the following subjects…” If that was not in the press and I sent it, I would be committing economic espionage and I would be liable to prison. Fortunately, they did not apply it. That was too absurd.

Also, speaking from a personal point of view, there was a draconian, certainly barbaric, decree prohibiting marriage between Soviet citizens and foreigners. That of course had no retroactive effect, but it created such an atmosphere that it made impossible for foreign citizens to get their wives out. The climate was such that it became impossible. So all those hopes which the Soviet people had were dashed. The Cold War was on, and relations became increasingly worse.
AS: How many American correspondents were there in Moscow in the late ’40s?

HS: The number decreased drastically. At the end of the war, there must have been about 20-25 correspondents. By the time Stalin died in March, 1953, there were only three American organizations represented in Moscow: the AP, the UP, and the New York Times.

AS: So it was you, Eddie Gilmore, and Harrison Salisbury.

HS: Yes. Gilmore had an assistant, Tom Whitney.

AS: Was Edmond Stevens there?

HS: Stevens was not there. Stevens was in Rome. Stevens left before the war ended. He had a lot of trouble getting in during the war. He sneaked into the Soviet Union aboard [Wendell] Willkie’s plane. He could not get a visa into the Soviet Union because he was in Finland when the Russians entered, and he had been writing very anti-Soviet stuff. Then he was in Romania. He could not get in. He got aboard Willkie’s plane which came in from Cairo. As soon as the Russians were attacked, Stevens became pro-Soviet. He landed in Kuibyshev, and he was able to persuade the authorities. He left immediately after to Rome, where he wrote another anti-Soviet book, called Russia Uncensored, for which he received a Pulitzer Prize. From Rome he was consistently writing anti-Soviet stuff. He couldn't get in until a year or two after Stalin’s death. Then there was an influx of foreign correspondents.

AS: Did you have any feeling about popular opinion about the war with Japan during the summer of 1945?

HS: The people did not know that there would be such a war until the last minute. But there were rumors, reports. I wrote in May, just before the war with Germany ended, to my editor in New York, asking for maps of Manchuria and Mongolia. He caught the hint. So he cabled back, When would you need those maps? I said in July. I knew that the Russians would enter the war against Japan three months after the end of the war with Germany. We were very anxious to get them into the war. General [Douglas] MacArthur was sending messages all this time, urging Roosevelt to persuade the Russians to enter the war. But the people in general did not know about it.

Armies coming from the West were moving on the TransSiberian railroad, and the rumor spread. A lot of people were disappointed. A lot of the men had been in the war since 1939, the time of the invasion of Finland. Now they were being shipped to the Far East. They knew there would be more war. Nobody realized that it would take so little time. After all, the Russians only fought for a few weeks.

There was jubilation after the war with Japan, but nothing that compared in the remotest way with the victory over the Germans. Japan was not really an enemy. It was not associated with occupation, concentration camps, the massacre of prisoners.

AS: At the end of the war, the Soviet government faced tremendous problems of economic reconstruction, and it had problems with peasants.

HS: Well it was a gigantic problem. If you drew a line from Leningrad to the Black Sea, everything to the West of that line was destroyed. As the Germans retreated, they blew up cities, block by block, house by house. In the villages,
they would draw a ring of machine gunners around the village, set fire to the huts, and machine gun anybody who tried to escape.

Anyway, you have the end of the war, with a terribly depleted population, twenty million more women than men. Housing, which had been very bad anyhow, was bad; millions of people lived in dugouts. In the countryside there was no manpower; the women had to do everything. They took over everything. There were no horses. They had to begin with a very primitive kind of agriculture, with a plow. These women were pushing plows with their own hands. There was no seed, no fertilizer, no machinery. So you had starvation for several years. There was a little help from UNRRA in the Ukraine and Belorussia, but it did not amount to much. So there was very severe rationing, shortage of everything, a lot of speculation.

In the meantime, a lot of the peasants made paper fortunes. They would sell a kilo of potatoes, normally 10 or 20 kopecks, for over 100 rubles. Many of the peasants had thousands of rubles. There was not much they could do with it, because the stores were empty. Stalin found a way to get all those rubles out. He simply decided to exchange the money, devalue the ruble, and to exchange new rubles at a very unfavorable rate. People who had thousands of rubles were afraid of being arrested for speculation. They got rid of that kind of inflation by simply confiscating the money.

There was very severe rationing of goods which went on until 1948. Then rationing was abolished. That meant they had enough bread. There were still shortages of basic goods for some time – clothing, bread.

Then there was the reconstruction of industry. Most of the industry had been wiped out. Some of the factories had been evacuated. They decided to keep the evacuated factories on the spot and to rebuild the old ones. After a few years, they recovered very fast. A few years after the war they had twice as much industrial output as they had had before the war. But the consumers continued to be neglected. The peasants were terribly exploited. They got miserable payments for the crops they delivered in compulsory payments to the state. They had little to buy.

When Stalin died, Khrushchev, in his first speech on the agricultural situation, disclosed that in the case of livestock, there was less livestock than there had been in 1913. Immediately there were reforms. The compulsory quotas were reduced. The prices paid the peasants were increased. All the old debts were forgiven. They gave them loans. As you know, the situation now has improved, but it is still far from normal.

**AS:** Would you comment on some of the economic controversies of that time – such as those around [Evgenii] Varga and [Nikolai] Voznesensky?

**HS:** There was Voznesensky. He was deputy prime minister and chief planner at one time. He was fired. He just disappeared suddenly. Later we learned that he was shot. There were some economic disagreements, but the main thing that was held against him was that he came from Leningrad. A whole group of Leningrad leaders were shot, because they were allegedly advocating greater decentralization, more separation of power of the Russian Federation from the rest of the Union, to make Leningrad the capital of the Russian Federation. That was considered bourgeois nationalism, treason. They were all shot. But there were also economic considerations.
Then there was Varga, the famous Comintern economist. He wrote a book in which he described how other countries had financed the war. The book advocated some reforms in Soviet economic theory and practice. That was immediately declared wrong. Varga was fired as director of the Institute of Economics. He had to apologize, and the book was banned. After Stalin died, he was rehabilitated, and the book was republished. He was not arrested.

There were the controversies about how to rebuild the Soviet economy; some of the men were advocating a new deal for the peasants. Many people thought in terms not of abolishing the collective farm but of changing the structure so that it would be a real collective; the local peasantry would be able to run the collective rather than take orders from the center or from the local party leadership. That was all considered heresy. Stalin and the party were not giving up any power. There were no serious economic reforms until Stalin’s death.

A5: What about the cultural side of all this. Would you tell us about the Zhdanovshchina?

HS: Cultural developments did not matter much during the war. Immediately after the war, they started firing Jews from all, not only the sensitive areas, but major editors. Within two or three years there was not a single Jewish editor left in the country. There was a very rapid, steep rise of anti-Semitism. The usual legends began circulating: That the Jews had fled to the Urals, to Central Asia, that they were not fighting. Actually, in terms of medals for bravery and heroism, the Jews were only next to the Russians proportionately. But there were a lot of Jewish engineers evacuated with the factories to the Urals, and they stood out.

At one point, 1942, Maurice Hindus came in. I pointed it out to him. He denied that there was any anti-Semitism there. A few weeks later, he went out to Ponedelkino, and he talked to some of the writers. He was amazed at some of the things he heard.

At a meeting of composers, the minister of culture made a speech. The most popular war songs were written by Jews. Among the serious composers, there were no Jews, but the popular songs were written by Jews. The minister said that this was unacceptable; these songs were all written by Jews. One composer, not a Jew, stood up and said, I am very astonished, Comrade Khrabchinkov; I am sure what you just said does not represent the views of the Central Committee.

Soon after the war, you had this campaign against the so-called cosmopolitans. Steep rise of Great Russian nationalism, chauvinism. Suddenly the Russians discovered everything; the Russians invented everything; the Russian language was being corrupted by all these cosmopolitan elements; foreign words in the language were removed. A type of roll was called frantsuzskaia bulka; they changed the name to moskovskaia bulka.

The anti-cosmopolitan campaign was not directed exclusively against Jews. It was also applied to Ukrainians, Belorussians, and so on. But the most important figures, the most important victims of the campaign were Jews.

You have a strong censorship with an emphasis on nationalism, a rewriting of history with all the emphasis on particularly Russian – as opposed to...
Soviet – contributions, a minimization of the cultural contribution of the non-Russian nationalities, a crackdown on the great composers and writers for alleged formalism. There was an attack on Khachaturian, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich. In the theater many plays were banned. In science, Lysenko was given new power. And that went on until Stalin died, as a result of which Soviet culture suffered tremendously.

Some of the best books were banned. Vassily Grossman wrote a very good book about the war which was first published and praised very highly. Then it was suddenly attacked and banned. Grossman refused to rewrite it. Fadeev wrote a very good book about the war; he was criticized. He was a member of the establishment; he rewrote the book. At lot of good books were banned. There was complete stagnation. Nothing of any distinction was published. The theater, which was the best in the early ‘30s, now had very little left.

AS: How did you as a correspondent work in this particular period?

HS: It was very difficult. Most of my Russian friends were afraid to see me. Between the conclusion of the Soviet-German pact and the beginning of the war, all Americans were kept at a distance. When the war started, the intellectuals again became very friendly. After the war, it became increasingly hard.

During the war, I would see Ehrenburg almost every day. After the war, I would not see him anymore. To show you the pressure and the unhealthy atmosphere: There was a reception in the Kremlin in 1948. Ehrenburg had just had just written a violent article against Zionism. Golda Meir asked me, Is Ehrenburg here? I said yes. I went over to him and brought him over. He started speaking Russian. She said, I don’t speak Russian; I speak Yiddish or English. Ehrenburg was drunk. He used to like to drink, wine particularly. He said, “I hate to see a Russian Jew speak English.” Completely irrational. He said a few other offensive things which I refused to interpret, and he walked away. Golda Meir says it was a British correspondent; it was myself. I told the story to Bedell Smith, and he wrote about it. He gave the impression that he arranged it.

Ehrenburg was a real cosmopolitan, a real civilized man. For him to say such an absurd thing showed the depth to which some of the Soviet intellectuals had sunk. I did not see Ehrenburg again until after Stalin’s death. I was on my way to London, and there he was in the airport in Copenhagen. He was on his way to some peace meeting in Stockholm.

He was a pioneer. He did great work. He was the first one to break out, to write about anti-Semitism, about liberalism. The Thaw was not very good as a novel, but as a sociological story, it was pioneering.

He came over to me. He was sort of apologetic. He hinted that he was sorry that all these years it was so difficult, maybe you will understand, maybe you understand. He had been under terrific pressure.

AS: You were a witness to Golda Meir’s reception in Moscow.

HS: The account she gives and the accounts you read in the newspaper were basically correct but highly exaggerated. My wife went with Mrs. Meir to the synagogue and sat with her upstairs. (The one synagogue in Moscow is Or-
thodox.) After the services she went back with her to the Hotel Metropole. A few people followed her.

In the Soviet Union when somebody in the street sees a crowd following someone, you join the crowd. There was a lot of that. Anyhow, by the time they got back to the Hotel Metropole, after about a ten or fifteen minute walk; there were a few hundred people. Some of them were very Orthodox, fanatical a bit. They touched the hem of her skirt. There weren't too many. The story spread all over the place, and the impression was that there was a terrific outpouring of Soviet Jews for Golda Meir.

A5: Are you saying that perhaps not even a majority of this crowd was Jewish?

HS: No. The majority was Jewish, but there were a lot of non-Jews among them. And there were not thousands, there were hundreds. There were some real scenes there that you might have expected in the nineteenth century. Very religious, Orthodox Jews would come over and try to touch her. Somebody would bring a child over to touch her. She was representative of the Messiah.

Moscow has a population of maybe three hundred thousand Jews. Most of them were irreligious. Most of them were completely assimilated into the Russian culture and indifferent to Zionism. Later it changed. Anti-Semitism developed, and particularly after the Six Day War, there was an increased awareness on the part of ethnic Jews about their Jewishness.

Golda Meir went to the synagogue on Jewish New Year's Day. The synagogue was crowded: That means 1500, maximum 2000 people, and that out of a population of 300,000. Later, after the Six Day War, you would have on those Jewish holidays, maybe 10 or 15,000 people outside the synagogue, on the streets, singing Hebrew songs. They were not religious people. They were people who suddenly discovered their Jewishness. The situation in that respect has changed.

After this so-called demonstration around Golda Meir, on November there was a reception which Molotov was giving as Foreign Minister. Golda Meir was there, and Mrs. Molotov came over to her. I was watching. Mrs. Molotov took Mrs. Meir by the arm, and they walked into a corner to talk. Mrs. Molotov was Jewish, but she was an Old Bolshevik. Like her husband, she joined the party before the revolution. She suddenly displayed much interest in Jewish affairs. She spoke Yiddish. She probably had not spoken it in 30 or 40 years, but it suddenly came back to her.

She said, I am very glad you are here. I think it is very good for everybody the fact that there is a state of Israel. A few days later, Mrs. Molotov was arrested. The rumor spread all over Moscow that the Jews were disloyal. There was a terrific demonstration. Stalin was very angry. That particular demonstration led to all kinds of unpleasant developments, including the dissolution of all Jewish cultural institutions. One fine day, the Jewish theaters were closed - the libraries, the printing presses, the clubs, and they have never been restored.

A5: What do you think triggered the change in the Soviet position on Israel in 1948-1949?

HS: We can only speculate on the basis of the known facts. Certainly it was in the interest of the Soviet Union to get the British out. Supporting the state of Israel was one way. It was successful. The British got out.
What the Russians got, from their point of view, was something much worse since the Americans came in. In 1948, as soon as the UN declared the partition, all the Arab countries started a war. Everyone thought the Israelis would be thrown into the sea. The Israelis were getting most of their equipment from communist countries, especially Czechoslovakia, and certainly the Czechs would not have done it without Soviet approval. To that extent, the Soviet Union...

/end of reel/

**AS:** We talked before about Stalin's rare appearances in public during the Second World War. He did not appear much in public even after the war, did he?

**HS:** He appeared more during the war. He appeared November 7, 1941, on Red Square, to review the troops when the front was fifteen minutes away from Moscow by streetcar. The troops marched past him and straight to the front. I think he appeared just once more on radio and television. He appeared once at the end of the war at the Supreme Soviet. He appeared at the party congress. Not only did he not have public appearances – sometimes, very rarely, you would see that he had been to the theater the night before. You would see a picture in Pravda of Stalin and the other members of the Politburo, without their wives as was the custom, shown in a box at the theater, usually the Bolshoi, and it was usually a ballet or an opera.

Then there was his seventieth birthday [in 1949 – aes]. All the crowned heads of world communism were there including Mao Tse tung. Everyone thought that Stalin at last would appear. The celebration had begun several weeks earlier. Special songs, books, and plays had been written for the occasion. Trainloads of gifts came from all over the world. There was a gala meeting at the Bolshoi. One after another – Mao Tse tung, the leaders of other communist parties – paid tremendous tribute to this greatest man who ever lived. You would expect after all this to have this greatest man to stand up and to say at least, Thank you, comrades. Not a word. He just sat there taking it all in. It was not even on television. Radio carried the speeches.

Then something the world had never seen. For weeks and weeks the papers were full of letters and resolutions from organizations in all parts of the world sending congratulations to Stalin. Then they opened a museum of gifts to Stalin, not a whole museum but the Museum of History on Gorky Street. They took a whole wing, and they exhibited the gifts to Stalin. They were really gifts to write home about, from all parts of the world.

His name seldom appeared in the paper. We heard that he spent increasing time in the Caucasus, planting, experimenting, with new plants. He was completely out of circulation. He was of course in touch by telephone and teletype. The country was run increasingly at the beginning by Zhdanov, until he died, and then Malenkov. Malenkov was the effective ruler of the country until 1953. Then of course Beria and Molotov replaced him.

**AS:** So you would say that in the first years after the war, people thought Zhdanov to be Stalin’s obvious successor, then after his death, Malenkov.

**HS:** There had been a certain amount of rivalry between the two of them. Malenkov had a better chance because he was Stalin’s private advisor. He was always near Stalin, whereas Zhdanov was in Leningrad. Zhdanov’s power was
always eroding. It is possible that had he lived another five years, Malenkov would have supplanted him. Malenkov was there, very able, very well educated. Stalin had complete confidence in him. There was no question in anyone's mind that Stalin intended him to be his complete successor.

I remember a few days after Stalin died, there was a big photograph of the new rulers. The bottom was a long message from Mao Tse-tung. The photograph had been doctored. It showed Malenkov between Stalin in Mao. The people in between were rubbed out. The impression was that Malenkov was the successor, and he was for a few weeks.

AS: Do you have any thought about the speculation that the Malenkov-Zhdanov rivalry had anything to do with the Leningrad case?

HS: I think not. There is naturally speculation. Zhdanov was ruler of Leningrad during the war. The people liquidated were members of the Leningrad committee. The main reason in Voznesensky's case was a Kremlin intrigue. He was a member of the Politburo, and it had something to do with his economic position. The others in the Leningrad organization were really advocating sort of increased autonomy for Leningrad. Later I heard that Stalin, who was a Puritan in many ways, objected to the way these people lived. But that may be gossip. I think the rivalry between Malenkov and Zhdanov was not a major factor.

AS: At the Nineteenth Party Congress in 1952, Malenkov delivered the keynote address. Did Stalin appear at all?

HS: Stalin was there. This is another indication that Stalin intended for Malenkov to succeed him. It had never before happened in history that the General Secretary did not deliver his report. He did not do his job. After all, what was a party congress? The congress meets to hear a report on what happened since the last congress. Who gives the report? Naturally Lenin or Stalin. Stalin was not there. He sat there listening to the speech, but after a while after he had already decided to let Malenkov deliver the speech, he must have had second thoughts. A few days before the congress met, Stalin published a letter answering questions of a certain economist: *Economic Problems of Socialism*. This of course stole the whole thunder. Everybody was talking about Stalin's new discovery. That dominated the congress.

At the end, just before they adjourned, Stalin did stand up and make a brief little speech. He thanked the foreign communist parties for having supported the Soviet Union through all these difficult years. We can assure our foreign comrades that we are going to fulfill our duty to them. That was his last public appearance.

AS: Do you recall any other highlights of that Nineteenth Party Congress?

HS: I remember one thing which plagued Malenkov. He announced that the problem of bread had been solved in the Soviet Union forever. Khrushchev, when he made his first famous speech on agriculture, said that: He had the impudence; he knew that he was lying; he knew it wasn't true; he knew that we had less than in 1913. What kind of nonsense was that? The collective farmers were getting two kopecks for a kilo of flour, and he said that the problem of bread had been solved forever.

The general speech was about reconstruction, but later that thing acquired special significance. After Stalin's death, they revised the figures which Malen-
kov had given. His figures turned out to be false. They published new figures which were much lower.

That was a strange thing about Stalin. I suppose that he felt so much beyond good and evil that it was enough that his spirit was around. He did not speak any more. He never gave interviews. He answered one or two questions from foreign newspapermen. He didn't travel anywhere, just from Moscow to his dacha and then to the Crimea.

**AS:** According to Khrushchev, Stalin contributed actively to his own public adulation.

**HS:** The history of the communist party which was in use at the time: Stalin wrote one chapter on the ideology. As new editions came out, it was announced that Stalin was the author of the whole history. It was also a false history of the communist party. Stalin took credit for that. It was published in millions of copies. With it went all the hoopla about the brilliant contribution to history which Comrade Stalin had made.

Of course he did not write it all. But the main point in that book was that he was the great hero of the revolution. Lenin helped, but Stalin almost single-handedly made the Russian revolution. During this period a lot was taken out of the editions of Lenin's works which were being published. And of course statues: You could not spit without hitting a statue of Stalin or a monument. Thousands of factories and schools were imeni Stalina.

There were all sorts of jokes. Jokes for which you could go to Siberia for ten years. To celebrate Pushkin's anniversary, they put out a new portrait: Stalin reading a volume by Pushkin. The Lenin mausoleum was renamed: Mavzolei Lenina imeni Stalina. He certainly demanded it all.

**Q:** You would say that while he was getting all this public attention and adulation that he was not really actively involved in the management of the government.

**HS:** Yes. I think that he followed what was going on. He could have stopped anything he wanted; he could have started anything. He delegated day by day management of the party and the government to Malenkov and Molotov. I think it was perhaps partial senility. He had accomplished his object.

I think he had three strokes. The one which led to his death was the only one made public. According to fairly substantiated reports, he had one when he came back from Teheran [in 1943 – aes]. And he had had one earlier. He had high blood pressure. He drank a lot of wine, mostly Georgian wine. He probably ate too much. Still he was very tough.

If you consider his early years: starvation, exile, underground work, all the responsibilities. He worked very hard. During the war, Harriman was telling me, any time during the day or night, if something happened, if a message from Roosevelt came in, Harriman would call the Kremlin and Stalin would see him right away. Considering all that, he lived to be 74. That's not bad. He had high blood pressure. He drank a lot of wine, mostly Georgian wine. He probably ate too much. Still he was very tough.

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One reason I think he hesitated to appear in public was that he was very conscious of his Georgian accent, and he was more of a Russian nationalist than any Russian ruler had ever been. He was very self-conscious. He was very shy in public.
Q: Would you lay the blame for the Cold War on the Russians or the Americans?

HS: I don't know any useful purpose is served by saying that one or the other started it. The objective conditions were there. The misunderstandings started before the end of the war. There is some correspondence between Roosevelt and Stalin which showed annoyance on both sides. You had a vacuum in Europe, a vacuum in the East, and you had the emergence of two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Conflict was bound to occur. It just developed inevitably.

Stalin was a very good student of history; he knew his history. One reason he did nothing the last few weeks before the war – he did not mobilize although he knew a war was inevitable – he knew that in 1914 when the tsar ordered mobilization, the Germans immediately attacked. Another thing, it was a big game of bluff, to put Hitler off another few weeks, another few months. But he lost that game.

At the end of the war, he knew what had happened at the end of the First World War, the cordon sanitaire – all the western powers ganged up and established this belt of anti-Soviet states. They were all anti-Soviet. He was also afraid of the atom bomb. Whatever Truman had in mind in dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, we practiced what the Russians call atomic blackmail. The Americans were frightening the Russians to stay put. Stalin distrusted everyone anyhow. The situation reached such a point that it really did not make any difference who did what first. It was there. It was inevitable, unless you had very wise statesmen. Stalin was full of complexes at that time.

AS: What would you say about FDR's understanding of Russia?

HS: Roosevelt seemed to be very impressed by Stalin's astuteness, his toughness of course, his knowledge of military affairs, and his ability to organize the war effort. He thought that he had been able to win Stalin over. Roosevelt probably exaggerated his own charm. At one point he thought that he had won over Stalin, and Stalin would be more pliable after the war. Of course Stalin was a lot tougher than FDR thought. But he had a lot of respect for him. He did not like Churchill.

Roosevelt had very serious disagreements with Churchill, although American and British policies were basically the same. He thought that Churchill was rather old fashioned, a British imperialist. He exaggerated his own importance and would to recognize that Britain was not a world power any more.

Apparently Roosevelt and Stalin got along very well on a personal basis. Roosevelt lived in the Soviet embassy in Teheran. The Russians had a compound in Teheran that was like a fortress. It was built in the 14th century. High stone wall. They even had their own water. Stalin told Roosevelt that Soviet intelligence had discovered a German plot to assassinate Roosevelt, and it would be unsafe to have him stay at the American embassy. The American embassy was rather modern, and it did not have this fortress character. Roosevelt accepted that, and later after the war they documented it: There was a plot. The US even thought there was a plot to assassinate the three of them together. The OSS [US intelligenсe, the predecessor of the CIA – aes] had its own man who had infiltrated the German intelligence.
Anyhow, Roosevelt stayed at the Soviet embassy. That part of Teheran was under Soviet protection. After the German attack, Iran was occupied by Britain and the Soviet Union. The Russians had the northern part, and the British had the southern part. There were a lot of Soviet troops in the area. That is one reason the meeting was held in Teheran; no other place would have been safe. The Russians could guarantee Roosevelt's safety.

Roosevelt and Stalin had some private talks. I got this from Bohlen, who was there as interpreter. That made the British very angry. Stalin showed his contempt for Churchill most of the time, and he acted as if Roosevelt was the more important man. Diplomatically he should have treated them as equals. The British were annoyed.

Q: How did the Soviets justify their military spending after the war?

HS: Justification is very easy when you control all the media, all the means of communication, propaganda. The argument was very simple: The Americans had taken over Japanese and German imperialism. The Soviet Union must be stronger than ever, we must not be caught unawares. The general propaganda was as simple as that.

The argument was that the only reason that the United States joined the war and opened the Second Front because it looked as though the Russians could win the war all by themselves. The Americans got in to stop the Russians.

Q: When did you know of the Sino-Soviet split?

HS: I knew from prewar days that Stalin did not like Mao, did his best to overthrow him, but did not have that much clout with the Chinese Communist Party. He disliked Mao. In Yenan, during the war, when the Chinese communists were living in caves, the Chinese themselves had what they called the Russian group in the Chinese Politburo. They distrusted some of the Chinese leaders trained in Moscow. There was always that feeling. It was not generally known.

When Mao came to Moscow at the end of 1949, he had a big hassle with Stalin and for two weeks, Stalin refused to see him. It was generally known that there was such an antipathy. But that the break would come so soon was a bit of a surprise.

I remember a conversation with George Kennan in 1952, when he referred to China as a Soviet satellite. I took strong exception to that. I said I could not see how he could call China a Soviet satellite. The Russians did not do much to help the Chinese get into power. On the contrary, they impeded. They made a treaty with Chiang. They recognized him. They urged the Chinese Communists to fight the Japanese and not to start a civil war. They were very reluctant. Stalin knew that if Mao took power, he could not control him.

Then in 1957, on the anniversary of the revolution, Mao was there, and there were all sorts of leaks about differences between them.

Q: You spoke earlier about the impact of the Zhdanovshchina on cultural life and referred to Fadeev's [novel] Molodaia gvardiia. Did you know Fadeev personally?

HS: I think he was a convinced communist. He felt that the party was paramount. It was against the interests of the party to have that first version out, and so he changed it. Grossman refused; Grossman was not a communist. There
were others who refused to do it. Fadeev did it. He remained a member of the Central Committee. The only way out for him would have been to resign from the Central Committee. That means suicide, practically. Eventually he did commit suicide after Stalin's death. A sense of shame and a realization that he had been wrong all along.

There was something in that first version that either Zhdanov or Stalin did not think was right. Take the old arguments with Trotsky or Bukharin. To a non-communist, each one makes sense in his own way. The question is who has the power to decide. You could say that everything Bukharin said was correct, but he was not in power. There is a certain amount of casuistry. The Central Committee decided that there was something wrong with Fadeev's book and ordered him to rewrite it, which he did.

Pasternak was not a communist. The Writers' Union first accepted Dr. Zhivago and they were going to publish it. Then an Italian communist publisher was in Moscow, and he gave him the manuscript legally. Then the Central Committee changed its mind, decided against publication, and asked Pasternak to request the Italian publisher, Feltrinelli, to recall the manuscript. He refused. This was of course after Stalin's death.

Another writer, a member of the party, might have done what the party asked. I am not sure that Feltrinelli would have given it back. The secretary of the Writers' Union went to Rome and pleaded with Feltrinelli. Feltrinelli refused and published it anyhow. He was kicked out of the Italian Communist Party.

Q: In this postwar cultural policy, besides limitations on new publications, what kinds of controls were there on things already published?

HS: Some books that were already published were banned: no new editions and copies already published were removed from the libraries. I think during the anti-cosmopolitan period the works of Jewish writers disappeared. Every now and then, they would be an article in the literary journal attacking so and so. The librarians were so well trained that the moment an article appeared in Pravda or Izvestia criticizing someone for ideological reasons, they would automatically pull the books off the shelves, even if they did not have specific orders. Of course in many cases they got orders from Agitprop.

A personal example happened with my daughter. She was working on her PhD for Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley – aes] on Evgenii Schwarts. She would get requests from her professor for copies of works not available in this country. She would do this. He wanted a few pages from Leskov. She got everything but Leskov. That was rejected. They said they would not copy a magazine article. She asked for permission to read the article and make notes. They produced this magazine article. In the article he made some reference to the Jewish problem, a fairly innocuous reference, but it still was the Jewish problem. She copied the whole thing anyhow. I am sure that in that case the librarians knew that the word “Jewish” and the word “problem” were there.

During the purge, the minute there was the slightest negative mention of any of the top leaders, their pictures would come down in offices. It might have been a mistake, and they would have to put it back. Some of the office managers, to be absolutely sure, took all the portraits down except for Stalin's
STALIN’S DEATH AND BERIIA’S FALL – FEBRUARY 18, 1976
My outline for the next meeting of the seminar was short:

**Topics:**
- Doctors’ Plot – Accompanying atmosphere
- Stalin’s death
- Succession: Triumvirate, Beriia’s fall, Malenkov
- Geneva Conference

**Reading:**
- Khrushchev Remembers
- Deutscher: Russia after Stalin.
- Shapiro. L’URSS après Stalin.

In this discussion, Professor Shapiro told the story of his scoop on reporting Stalin’s death. In a day of cell phones and satellite transmission, it may be difficult to comprehend a situation where correspondents were dependent on limited telephone service that could be easily monitored. The Soviet government improved international telephone lines for the Olympics in 1980, but after the games, it again reduced the service. When I was in Vilnius in 1988, I had to order an international telephone line, and likely as not, I would be awoken at 3 or 4 in the morning to place the call.

Stalin’s death obviously represented a turning point in Soviet history, but contemporary observers did not agree on what the new direction might be. For many the fall and execution of Beriia appeared to be a continuation of Stalinist practices; for others, like Shapiro, the new atmosphere created by Georgii Malenkov as Stalin’s immediate successor held considerable promise for better times. Malenkov, however, almost immediately surrendered command of the party structure to Nikita Khrushchev, and Khrushchev reasserted the power of the old structure by eventually forcing Malenkov out of power. On the other hand, neither Malenkov, nor later Khrushchev, suffered the fatal consequences of defeat that had characterized the Stalinist system.
Of the four leaders of the Soviet Union whom he had occasion to observe, Shapiro, in our discussions, showed the most sympathy for Malenkov. In 1953-1954, he was enthusiastic about Malenkov’s style and practices. In the articles that he wrote for his only book (L’URSS après Staline), he affirmed, “In the nine months that followed Stalin’s death, the Malenkov regime has committed itself so deeply to policies of internal reform that any reversal would invite disaster.” The regime, he continued enjoyed “the overwhelming support of the country’s population,” and he declared, “A free and unfettered referendum, if that were possible, would give Malenkov a comfortable vote of confidence at the moment.”

His statements included cautionary conditions – such as “at the moment” – and he fully recognized that promises were not yet accomplished facts, but his positive views, contrasting the new regime to Stalin’s rule, were clear.

After Khrushchev had forced Malenkov out of his position as head of the government, Shapiro emphasized the fall of Beriia as the major turning point after Stalin’s death. In his book, Shapiro had identified Beriia as the evil force behind the governmental terrorism of Stalin’s last years: “Since a world without enemies was unnatural to Stalin, it was up to Beriia to produce enemies.” Beriia’s fall “and the liquidation of his NKVD empire,” together with the reduction of the security police from a “ministry” to a “committee,” he declared, marked the beginning of a new era: “Socialist Legality is not an empty phrase; it has utterly transformed the mood and temper of this country.”

In our class discussion, Shapiro criticized Harrison Salisbury’s account of the events in Moscow immediately after Stalin’s death. I remember that his stories that Beriia had Moscow surrounded by tanks were sensational at the time. Shapiro disagreed with this account. Writing in 1989, Whitman Bassow insisted that there existed between these two men a rivalry “that has endured for decades, long after both men had left Moscow. Undoubtedly, Shapiro was jealous over Salisbury’s reputation as a Russian expert because of his many years with the Times, his Pulitzer Prize, and numerous books on the Soviet Union.” Salisbury, Bassow declared, was better known. And what Salisbury did write about Shapiro? “… a chubby little man with broad forehead, Stalinesque mustache and a Rumanian accent… He was, in his way, a brilliant man, but his Byzantine mind, which often aided him in dealings with the Russians, sometimes affected his relations with his colleagues.”

I would say only that while Shapiro criticized Salisbury, it was at Shapiro’s home that I met Salisbury.

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AS: We are discussing the events surrounding Stalin’s death today. Would you tell us about the atmosphere in the last months of Stalin’s life?

HS: Stalin was not much in evidence in the last few months. No one saw him. He showed up only at the most important ceremonial occasions. He spent a great deal of time, we know now, down in the Caucasus, planting oranges or something, playing in his garden.

Nobody knew right away that he had had a stroke. Correspondents used to gather at the Central Telegraph about midnight every night and wait for the morning papers to arrive. We were there one night. My driver had gone over
to Izvestiia to pick it up. He came up and he signaled me to go out on the street with him, which I did. He told me that Stalin had had a stroke. How did you know? He said that he had been down at Izvestiia and everyone was running around whispering, Stalin had a stroke and he is dying. I questioned him: He was a very intelligent guy and he knew the facts of life.

So I chanced it, and I wrote several bulletins, addressed to Rome, Berlin, Stockholm, New York, London, about a dozen of them. I handed them to a girl receptionist. In those days you had to go through censorship. She looked at it and tore them all up, and threw them back in my face. She was a nineteen-year old komsomolka, and Stalin was immortal. It couldn't be true, she said, she hadn't seen it, she hadn't heard it anywhere.

It was held up for two or three hours, until TASS came out with a bulletin that Stalin had a stroke. It was clear that he was dying. The bulletin was signed by three or four doctors. The language was such that there was not much chance. I knew that he had had two previous strokes.

He was dying for two or three days. There was the same trouble when he finally died. I got tipped off about three or four hours before it was officially announced. I had a clear line to London, at $3 a minute. I was holding it since the news seemed so important. Then I got the tip that he had died. I went into the telephone booth, but the moment I said “Stalin,” I was cut off. The conversation was being monitored. Then I thought of a trick. We had a very good editor in London. So instead of trying to tell him that something had happened, I asked him a question, “Do you know what happened?” He said, “Stalin died.” We were cut off. I just managed to say yes. So I got the story out a couple of hours before it was officially announced.

In the morning when the news came out, there was a lot of grief. It is hard to believe now, but people wept on the streets. They wept at the funeral. You would see grown up men, army officers. There was a feeling of panic. It would happen now. The mood was a very melancholy one.

AS: Would you tell us about the problems of crowd control.

HS: His body was in state. It was March. There was a very cold spell. Hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of people started marching. The streets of Moscow radiate out from the Kremlin like the spokes of a wheel. People were marching. Every now and then, at intersections, there would be trucks to control the movement. There were soldiers and police. People kept on marching. It took hours. From Mayakovksy Square to the Trade Union hall took two or three hours, and the crowd kept on pushing. At about the Central Telegraph on Gorky Street, the pressure was so terrific that they pushed people against the trucks. Everything broke down. Several hundred people were killed. That was never published, but plenty of people saw it.

The body was in the Trade Union building. That was where they usually displayed people. People would go in. There would be funeral dirges. Important people would take turns every few minutes guarding the body.

The second day they invited the diplomatic corps and correspondents. We were taken right to the door; we did not have to wait out in the cold for several hours. The whole thing left me with a very strange feeling. It was too early to see that deStalinization was already beginning. We know now that
the moment he died, they began to discredit him. But there was something shabby about the whole business. The flowers did not look fresh. The little staircase from the ground floor to the ballroom where the body was lying left a strange feeling. It wasn’t what you would expect.

Then there was the funeral on the 8th. There were rumors that Beriia had a couple of divisions ringing the city.

As for the immediate impact on the people, they had lost their father. They had lost their leaders. What is going to happen now? Was the United States going to attack? Who is going to lead us? For thirty years, he had been the source of all good and all evil, although you did not talk about the evil. But there was such a hard tough guy such as Molotov, whose wife was in jail, and he broke down and wept. There were tears rolling down his cheeks while he was delivering the funeral oration on Red Square.

Well it did not take very long before people realized that it was good riddance.

There were three orators at the funeral: Malenkov, Molotov, and Beriia. They were the triumvirate immediately after the death. They reorganized the whole system. Voroshilov was made president. Molotov was the first deputy prime minister and foreign minister, and Malenkov was prime minister and first secretary. Beriia was deputy prime minister and chief of the security forces; Kaganovich and Mikoyan were deputy prime ministers. There were communiqués every day. There was one very strange communiqué saying Comrade Stalin has fallen, etc., etc., and we must not give way to panic. We must rally around the Central Committee. Everyone was wondering why panic, there was no sign of panic. A very strange phrase. And to this day I don’t understand why. But maybe they too felt that without Stalin they would be lost.

AS: Would you tell about the Doctors’ plot?

HS: It came up in January 1953. Stalin died in March. There were strange happenings before we knew that the doctors had been arrested. There was a rapid upsurge of anti-Semitism. People stopped buying drugs, even cotton wool, because there were rumors that the Jewish doctors had poisoned the well. Then one find day, there was a big sensational announcement that nine doctors, the most prominent doctors in the country - one was the chief doctor for the armed forces, one was the Kremlin doctor – had been arrested.

We knew that doctors were being fired right and left, especially Jewish doctors. There was a communiqué that nine, most of them Jews, accused of being agents of Joint and the CIA, were in cahoots, planning to assassinate the leaders of the Soviet Union. Immediately very excited editorials called for blood, get even with these Zionist conspirators. That sort of thing, very remindful of the purges. Though now the whole focus was on the Jews. It got to be worse and worse.

They were preparing a trial. According to press reports, a woman doctor happened to notice something fishy. She looked around and being a good loyal patriot, she reported it to the authorities. They investigated and found the evidence. If Stalin had lived, they would certainly have been tried and shot. There might have even been pogroms against the Jews.
AS: Some say that a campaign was being prepared against the Jews.

HS: There are people who actually swear that they saw barracks being built in Central Asia. I have fairly credible reports that that was true. They were preparing to resettle all the Jews from European Russia, as they had the Volga Germans, some of the Caucasian people, the Tatars from the Crimea. This has not been published anywhere – there was one rather prominent historian, a member of the Academy of Sciences, a Jew, who prepared a letter to Stalin, and he asked prominent Jews to sign it, condemning the Jewish conspirators. All of a sudden they were all Zionists and CIA agents. In order to insure their safety, he asked that all of the Jews be moved from Russia to the East.

I know that one man, a friend of mine, was asked to sign it, and he refused – that was Ehrenburg. There was one more, a poet named Vilmatovsky, who refused to sign it, but on other grounds. He said, I don't consider myself a Jew. I am a Russian. Culturally he was a Russian, but his father and mother were Jewish. Luckily Stalin died, and suddenly the campaign stopped. In the meantime, they did all sorts of things: They three all the Jews out of Moscow University, all the professors. They were not admitting Jews to any of the ideological institutions; they were firing them left and right.

A few days after Stalin’s death, my wife was looking at the paper. Something very strange: A picture on the front page of Izvestiia of students at a university with a Jewish student identified. This was the first time in many years we had seen a Jewish name with a positive context. For several years, whenever Jewish names appeared, they were always negative – speculators, rootless cosmopolitans. That was a straw in the wind. Then a week or two later there was an editorial in Izvestiia about how dangerous the cult of personality can be. That was the first mention of the cult of personality. How modest Karl Marx was. How Lenin was, too. Only under fascism was The Leader glorified. Obviously they meant Stalin, although they did not use his name. That was the beginning, one after another of such articles.

I concluded from that that they were all for deStalinization. What they quarreled about at the 20th Party Congress was the way in which Khrushchev did it. If he had been a little more moderate – in the official speeches they all said some derogatory things about Stalin, but moderately. In the secret speech Khrushchev made him a common criminal. Of course he discredited the whole party, and I think that was one of the quarrels which finally resulted in the expulsion of Molotov and the others.

Soon after Stalin's death, I had a telephone call early in the morning from Joe Clark, an American communist correspondent of the Daily Worker. He was a foreign editor of The Daily Worker. He started laughing hysterically. I had been arguing with him about the doctors' plot and the charges against the Jews. Beria had organized the death of Mikhoels because he was so popular. This fellow was defending it. A year or two later he left the Communist Party in disgust. Anyway, he laughed hysterically, and declared the doctors had been exonerated.

Then when they declared that the doctors had been exonerated, and they published the names, there were fifteen names, not nine. It was clear why they had not given all fifteen names originally, because if they had given them all, the majority would not have been Jews. So they left six ethnic Russians out.
Anyhow, the woman who was supposed to have discovered the plot was immediately fired. Then they blamed a man called Riumin, the chief investigator, for having started the whole thing.

Later there were two contradictory rumors about Beriia – that he was the one who had started the whole business and that he was the one who had freed them.

Not all the fifteen survived. Two died in jail, apparently under torture. The survivors were all rehabilitated; they got back their jobs. That was the end of the doctors’ plot.

After that the atmosphere kept on improving. Jewish names began appearing in the newspapers in a more positive way, and they stopped the campaign against rootless cosmopolitans. Little by little the campaign against the personality cult went on. They started investigating the camps, and they started releasing the politicals. That increased until after the Twentieth Party Congress, when they released everyone. There was an amnesty after Stalin’s death, which was traditional after the death of a tsar, after Lenin’s death. The amnesty applied only to ordinary criminals.

Before the revolution there was no capital punishment in Russia except for political prisoners. After the revolution, it was the same thing. They had no provision for capital punishment except for traitors, spies. Ordinary murderers would get a maximum of ten years. Later it changed. Now they have capital punishment for ordinary criminals, and they raised the maximum punishment from ten to fifteen years.

By the end of 1956 there were no political prisoners. There is a new category of political prisoners now. But they are not accused of being connected with any alleged plots against the system. They are mostly dissidents. Some are members of religious organizations, sektanty. Some are dissident Baptists. The charges against them are not worship, but that they are anti-state. There are dissident intellectuals. But whereas there were maybe 5,000,000 prisoners at one time under Stalin, now even the dissidents, Solzhenitsyn and people like that, say that there are about 10,000.

**AS:** This amnesty of 1953 led to a brief rise in the crime rate in Moscow, didn’t it?

**HS:** Yes. That is true. We used to walk about Lubianka, on Dzerzhinsky. When you walked on that square, you had to walk very fast. Suddenly people were walking in the middle of the square. In the old days, there were always lights. Apparently they were working all night. In the first few weeks after Stalin’s death, it was dark. After the amnesty the lights went on again. It had suddenly become dangerous in the markets, pickpockets; there were a lot more burglaries. These were ordinary criminals, serving up to five years, petty criminals, and hooligans. The murderers were not let out. So they started rounding them up again. I am sure that most of those released were sent back. Then the lights went out again.

Now they have regular hours. That is one of the things that Khrushchev did. He introduced the eight hour day, 9-5. Under Stalin, you could never find anyone of any importance in a ministry until one or two o’clock. Stalin used to work most of the night, and all the important officials had to stick around in case he wanted them. As a result, people did not work mornings. Khrushchev introduced the 9-5 day and the 6 day week. Now it is difficult to get
anyone after five or on the weekends. That was the story of the amnesty.

AS: Now a triumvirate was formed to succeed Stalin. Would you characterize the triumvirate?

HS: There was no surprise about Malenkov. He was one of the party secretaries, and it was clear that he would be one of the successors. Stalin had designated him. At the Nineteenth Party Congress, Stalin, who was supposed to deliver the Central Committee report, asked Malenkov to do it. That was the clearest sign that he would be Stalin’s successor. Anyhow he was Stalin’s deputy. So he automatically took over both of Stalin’s jobs, prime minister and first secretary of the party.

Molotov, as the first deputy prime minister and foreign minister, and Beria, as first deputy prime minister and chief of the security organs, were the other two. The actual power was in the hands of these three men.

The day after the funeral, there was a big picture in Pravda with a cable from Mao Tse-tung. Condolences to the party and the people of the Soviet Union. The picture showed Mao with Stalin and Malenkov. This picture showed Mao with Stalin on his right and Malenkov on his left. Mao was promising allegiance to Malenkov just as he had to Stalin. It was discovered that this was a faked picture. The original showed Vyshinsky as foreign minister signing the treaty of alliance with China and behind them stood Stalin next to Mao. Between stood four others after which came Malenkov. They rubbed out everybody in between.

Malenkov remained first secretary for about ten days. Then it was announced that he was released from his obligations as first secretary and Khrushchev was appointed. It was clear that there was a struggle for power, and the other two did not want another Stalin. So they arranged -it to deprive him of leadership of the party.

I think they all picked on Khrushchev because they considered him a rather weak man. He was hardly known to the country. He was already a party secretary, but there were several others. They thought they would all be better off with him as party secretary. It turned out to be a historic mistake. He fooled them; he turned out to be craftier that all of them, and before long, four years later, he removed the others. I think that was why he was made party secretary: They wanted to diffuse power, they wanted to deprive Malenkov of the power, and they wanted to have someone they could control.

AS: Didn’t Malenkov come out with a rather novel program of emphasizing consumer goods?

HS: Most of the things for which Khrushchev later got credit as the great liberalizer were really started while Malenkov was still in power. This series of articles I wrote show that it was really Malenkov. He made the first public speech talking about normalizing relations with all countries, and he talked about all kinds of liberalism. It was of course continued by Khrushchev.

After a while it became obvious that there was still fighting going on between the three of them. Stalin died on March 5. Early in the summer we started hearing rumors that Beria was in trouble, that he was even arrested. I was having lunch with the Swedish ambassador one day — he was the doyen of the
diplomatic corps, very well informed – he had been there about 17 years. He
told me a strange story. He had received a dispatch from Stockholm telling him
that the new Soviet minister in New Delhi, upon presenting his credentials to
the president, Benediktov, spoke of being instructed by Malenkov and Molotov.
Any official statements usually mentioned all three. The Swedish ambassador
in New Delhi noticed that the Soviet ambassador had left out the name of Be-
riia. He was apparently the only one. Stockholm inquired of its ambassador.
The Swedish ambassador in Moscow had by this time heard from his own
sources that Beriia had been arrested, but he would not believe it.
Immediately after I finished lunch, I ran over to Beriia's house. Most of the
members of the Politburo lived in the Kremlin, but Beriia did not. Beriia had
a private mansion about ten minutes' ride from the Kremlin. It was heavily
guarded with a very high fence. No one was allowed to walk in front of the
building.
It so happened that a few months earlier, I was driving a car on that street on
the opposite side from Beriia's house. My car stalled. It was a very wide street,
Sadovaia. Within split seconds, I was surrounded by a dozen cops demanding
that I get moving. I couldn't, so they pushed the car. Even if I had been an
Oswald with one of those rifles, I wouldn't have shot at Beriia.
The sidewalk was also very clean, probably washed with soap. Now when I
went to the house, there were no cops. Lot of fallen leaves. It wasn't clean.
The windows were all closed. So I knew that something was happening. It
was clear, he was out.
That was a Friday. The next day, Saturday, there was an opera performance.
The pictures the next morning showed the whole Politburo in the govern-
ment box, and it enumerated the members, all of them except Beriia. Beriia
was out. It showed that Beriia was out and that the others wanted to show
solidarity. A few days later it was of course announced that Beriia was ar-
rested as a spy and a traitor.
They cleaned up the whole organization. Most of his top aides ere removed.

/end of reel/

A5: Would you tell us about Beriia?
HS: Beriia had no special policy except the promotion of Beriia. He had amassed
considerable power, and I think that he was preparing to seize power.
A5: Excuse me, would you comment on Harrison Salisbury's account that Beriia
had ringed Moscow with tanks when Stalin died.
HS: Harrison Salisbury is Harrison Salisbury. He was one of the few American
correspondents in Moscow. There were three of us. While he was there, he
wrote what was true. He wrote of people weeping in the streets, very graphic
street scenes. Months later, after his return to the United States, he changed
his line completely.
Entre nous, he wrote a lot of falsehood, creative writing. For one thing, he said
that it was so cold that they had fires on the street and they served borshch.
People were standing for hours freezing, and so there were mobile kitchens
serving borshch. Absolute fantasy. The most they would have done in a situation like that they might have served hot tea. In the first place, borshch is not a Russian soup. The Russian national soup is shchi, a cabbage soup. Borshch is Ukrainian, Jewish of course. The Jews popularized it in the west.

I walked the streets as much as anyone. There was no borshch. He wrote of the sorrow, which was perfectly true. Six months later, when he was in New York, he said that while he was walking through town, the workers were taking a portrait of Stalin down. He heard one of the workers say, “Now we are rid of that son of a bitch.” Absolutely impossible. Even if they had meant it, it could not have happened. He built it up. He did that with much more serious things.

AS: Let’s return to Beriia.

HS: Ok, back to Beriia. Now the country was run by those three. Nominally the first man was Malenkov, then Molotov, then Beriia. Of course, Beriia had more power than any of them, because he controlled the police and also the armed forces. As a member of the Politburo. Later when Shelepin was in the Politburo, he was also in charge, as a member of the Politburo, of both the police and the armed forces.

One day a staff colonel of the Soviet army ran into a friend of his, and the friend asked him, Are you going to visit the maneuvers? Which maneuvers? Don’t you know? There are four divisions maneuvering right outside Moscow. This was the first this staff colonel heard about it. Beriia had four police divisions moving against Moscow. He was preparing to seize power.

Salisbury talked about the tanks around Moscow. That was untrue. There were troops, of course. Moscow is a garrison city. There are several divisions deployed in and around Moscow. Salisbury made it into a lot more than it was. This story about the four divisions was something else.

Beriia was preparing to take power. And he was doing all sorts of things trying to endear himself to various sections of the population, obviously in hopes of seizing power, because he had no base. In the party he was nothing; he had never been a party leader. In Georgia he was very unpopular. Somehow or other, through the means at his control, he managed to plant stories that he was responsible for this or that. I got the story from a lot of stories. There were a lot of people who believed that Beriia himself had ordered the exoneration of the doctors. As a matter of fact, he was the one who supervised their arrest to begin with. He had Stalin’s ear; he was a fellow Georgian; and he was one of the few men whom Stalin trusted. He could see Stalin any time he wanted. He was the one who went to Stalin with a dossier, and he said, Here I’ve got evidence. And it was Stalin who ordered the arrest of the doctors on the basis of evidence supplied by Beriia.

Later, when the doctors were exonerated, they blamed a rather minor official of the security police, saying that he had concocted the whole business. This is impossible in the Soviet Union; a minor official can’t build up a thing like that which meant the arrests of thousands of people and the breakup of the medical services. It so happened that the top medical people were Jews.

Here was Beriia who had all that power, his own little fortress. He was the only one with actual divisions under his command. The security services had their
own army. They had control of the border guards and were responsible for internal security. Beria could order a regiment or a division to march against the Kremlin. Malenkov or Molotov could not have done it.

Apparently what triggered the alarm among the others was the fact that those four divisions were allegedly engaged in maneuvers. There were maneuvers, but they were maneuvers to seize power. So they got organized, apparently all of them together, and they decided to remove Beria. Most of what I am going to tell you came from Khrushchev. Someone who heard it told me.

According to Khrushchev, the situation was as I described it. Here I was, he said, first secretary with no power. It looked dangerous, so we decided to arrest him. How do you arrest someone who always has a bodyguard, has an army around him? They managed to keep the secret, but they must have taken Beria’s first deputy, General Serov, into their confidence. After Beria’s arrest, he became chief of the security forces. They had to make sure that Beria’s aides were properly taken care of.

As first secretary, Khrushchev called a routine meeting of the Politburo, to which Beria was of course invited. Khrushchev said he went to General so-and-so, commander of the Moscow garrison, who had been in jail under Stalin. He said, Can you give me four colonels to arrest Beria? I’ll give you eight colonels. Bulganin, who was minister of defense, had one of his offices in the General Staff building off the Arbat. Bulganin could drive from the Kremlin to the Ministry of Defense building every day in his marshal’s uniform. It was arranged for Bulganin to have these four colonels call on him at the ministry, get into his car, and drive into the Kremlin, which was guarded by Beria’s people. The Minister of Defense could go right through without showing a pass. Bulganin and four colonels were whisked through the Kremlin gate, and they went up to the Politburo meeting.

Then Beria arrived, and he left his bodyguard downstairs. They were all gathered. Malenkov stood up and read a resolution condemning Beria as a spy. He pressed a button. The four colonels in the next room moved right in. Beria resisted, so they knocked him on the head. They covered him in a rug, a huge Kremlin rug, and these four colonels carried him downstairs to the general’s car, Maslenikov. They carried him to Maslenikov’s headquarters. With the help of Serov, they rounded up some of his top assistants in other buildings.

They did have a few tanks. Actually, on the day he was arrested, we saw those tanks right outside the American embassy. We did not know what they were. This was just a few blocks from Beria’s house. That’s how they arrested Beria.

The army took command of the border guards. All the armed forces of the Soviet Union are now under the direct control of the regular army. Functionally the border guards, with the green caps, are KGB men, but they are responsible to the armed forces.

Beriia was apparently tried and shot sometime in December. The arrest was in July. They investigated and cleaned up the whole organization. They purged a lot of the old timers and appointed new men.

**AS:** Would you comment on your own position through this time?

**HS:** I was virtually a prisoner the last few years of Stalin’s life. There were four Ameri-
can correspondents who had Russian wives. There was also Bob Tucker. Tucker came with the OSS, attached to the embassy, during the war. But when he married this Russian, they fired him. Tucker had to leave the embassy. He was working first as a sort of secretary-translator for the Associated Press. Then he edited a daily translation of the Soviet press. He was a private citizen.

We couldn’t leave. I didn’t leave Moscow for five years, because if I had, they would have arrested my wife. I had a cop outside my door. There was a car at each end of my block, with four men in it, following us, day and night. I was attacked in the press. At one point, the American embassy told me to leave the country because they thought I was in danger of being arrested. I said I wouldn’t, as long as I could not get my family out.

A few days after Stalin’s death, all that was finished. The cop disappeared, the cars disappeared. A lot of old Russian friends whom I had not seen for years started coming around. The atmosphere changed radically.

Bohlen came in as ambassador. He was an old friend. He asked me to give him a list of all the Americans with Russian wives. He said the first thing he was going to do when Molotov received him was to raise the question of the wives. He did. And Molotov said, We shall look into it. I told Bohlen that was encouraging, because until then the line had been that these are Soviet citizens, and they are none of your business. Now Molotov said he would look into it. I thought this was very encouraging. As few weeks later they began to give permission to these wives one after the other. My wife was the last one to get permission.

She left in June. I was not ready to leave, because I had trouble with my successor. I was still a loyal United Press man, and I had to wait until my successor came. It was [Walter] Cronkite. But I thought I had to get my family out before they changed their minds. I put Ludmilla and Irisha on a plane to Stockholm, and they waited there for about two months. Then I joined them in Stockholm. From there we went to Sicily for a few weeks of rest. I had just arrived, after five years without a vacation, and I had to write a series of articles, fifteen very long pieces. I had no files with me. These were published in a book. Those stories were of course written under pressure. The situation looked a lot better than it turned out to be.

I stayed in Cambridge for two years, at Harvard, I went to the summit conference in Geneva in 1955, and there I was persuaded that things were really happening. The Soviet New Deal. So I went back alone for two years. Later Ludmilla had become an American citizen, and she joined me.

AS: Perhaps we could turn to the struggle between Malenkov and Khrushchev.

HS: In the beginning it was between Malenkov, Molotov, and Beria. They had suffered enough under Stalin, and they did not want another Stalin. They thought Malenkov had too much power, being both prime minister and party secretary, so they decided to give a more innocuous person whom they could control the job of party secretary.

Well they picked on the wrong man, because Khrushchev, who was not an early Bolshevik, not much educated, only four years of a village parochial school. He only joined the Communist Party in 1918 – Molotov was an in-
intellectual giant by comparison. Malenkov was a graduate of the Institute of Philosophy. Beria was not much of an intellectual, but he was an architect by profession. Khrushchev turned out to be smarter than the three of them, and he ousted them.

Khrushchev was particularly down on Malenkov. Malenkov was probably the ablest of the three. He was the best orator. Oratory really died with Stalin. Nobody was allowed to speak; rabblerousing was out of the question. Most of the people at the top were former workers or peasants, without much education. Stalin himself was a terrible speaker – What he said made a lot of sense in the Soviet context of the period, but he had a heavy Georgian accent, and he was a terrible speaker. That gave him an inferiority complex, and I think that is the reason he so seldom appeared in public.

Molotov stuttered. It was pretty bad, but eventually he controlled it. He conquered it more or less.

Malenkov was a born orator. It was a pleasure to listen both to his voice and to his diction. He was as close to a Soviet intellectual as there can be in politics. Of course there are great intellectuals in the academy, writers, but Malenkov was very well read, very able, witty. So there was that resentment. He also probably showed it against Khrushchev.

Also during the war there must have been resentment against Malenkov because he was Stalin’s right hand man. He took the blame for a lot of things that Stalin did. In his secret speech at the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev, as political commissar of the Ukrainian front, called Stalin to ask for permission to retreat. Malenkov picked up the receiver and told him Stalin could not come to the telephone. Apparently Stalin told him to tell Khrushchev to keep on fighting. Khrushchev put the blame on Malenkov.

There must have been other situations like that, for example, the battle of Stalingrad where Khrushchev was the key political officer. Malenkov was the middle man, and I am sure he got the blame. Given Khrushchev’s temperament, I am sure he had a lot of hassles with Malenkov.

I must tell you, when Khrushchev was in Norway in 1963, there was a reception. At one point Khrushchev and the top Norwegian officials went into the next room for a banquet. After the banquet, the Norwegian ambassador to Moscow came out and told me that one of the guests who sat with Khrushchev was a former prime minister, and a conservative leader. The socialists were now in power. When he was introduced to Khrushchev, he said he was the opposition and asked, What do you do with your former prime ministers?

Khrushchev said there was Bulganin. He was just a bookkeeper; he could not even add up a column of figures. But he was not too bad as a bookkeeper until he got water on his brain, and we had to get rid of him. How about Malenkov? Well, Malenkov could deliver nice speeches if other people wrote them for him. But he was incompetent. So we gave him a job as a manager of a hydro-electric power station out on the Chinese border. He spoke in a very derogatory way about the two of them.

The next day they took Khrushchev to a fertilizer plant outside Oslo, a model plant. Very clean, properly ventilated. The director said, How do you like it? Khrushchev said it was all right, but it was too small. We would not even be
able to find a manager. The Norwegian prime minister said, Why don't you appoint Malenkov? Oh, for Malenkov it's too big.

He was vindictive. A lot of what he said about Stalin was partly that, vindictiveness. Of course he had a lot of reasons for making that speech against Stalin. But the way he made it is what antagonized the others, Molotov and Malenkov, because as it turns out he was not discrediting only Stalin, he was discrediting the whole Communist Party, the whole country. What he was saying was the country was run by a bandit for thirty years. The Chinese would not have done it that way.

**AS:** Didn't Malenkov and Khrushchev disagree on the question of consumer production?

**HS:** In his first speech, Malenkov talked about putting more emphasis on the production of consumer goods. But there was a division of opinion in the Politburo. Molotov too was opposed to such emphasis. Molotov made what was almost a vicious speech against the policy; he kept insisting we have to arm.

Malenkov said that heavy industry is still the top priority, but we must pay more attention to consumer goods. Khrushchev was talking that way too. It was mostly Molotov who talked against consumer goods. He did not think they could afford it at the time. So Khrushchev was in favor of all sorts of concessions to the peasants.

When the decision came, he naturally attacked Malenkov. He did it publicly. That is one thing they did not do before. Whatever differences they had, they kept secret. But Khrushchev was going around to receptions making nasty remarks about Malenkov and Molotov to foreign ambassadors. It was clear that there was no sympathy.

Molotov is still alive. He is close to 90. Malenkov is still alive. Bulganin died last year.

Mikoyan is the only one who retired with dignity and honor. He formally resigned on grounds of health, and he received some recognition. He has an office in the Kremlin.

Kalinin, I think, was forced to resign. In form it was also because of ill health. Not a single word of recognition. In Mikoyan’s case, it was unique

I attribute Mikoyan’s unique career to a lot of things. He was very flexible, a weasel-like character. He knew enough not to antagonize anyone. I think the main reason is that as an Armenian, coming from a small country, he was not anybody’s rival. Stalin looked upon most of the members of the Politburo as potential rivals. As an Armenian, Mikoyan was out of the running. He was very smooth. He ran with whoever was in power. He was never in any opposition group. Actually he was very close to Stalin at one time.

When Khrushchev started his campaign against Stalin, the first speech criticizing Stalin at the 20th Party Congress was made by Mikoyan. Mikoyan guessed which way the wind was blowing, and he immediately sided with Khrushchev. Then when he saw that Khrushchev was on the skids, he was a member of the group which got rid of him. He was very shrewd.

**AS:** Did you ever have occasion to meet him?
HS: I met him many times, and I talked with him. He was a great charmer, very handsome, swarthy, good figure, fine chiseled face. He talked terribly. It was very hard to understand him.

In 1963 there was a July 4th reception at the American embassy. I was standing with Khrushchev, and Thompson, the American ambassador, came over and said to Khrushchev, I must apologize for my Russian. Khrushchev said, Oh your Russian is better than Mikoyan’s. When he makes a speech at the Supreme Soviet, we have to translate it into Russian.

There was that sort of banter between them. If Stalin had said that, Mikoyan would have shut up. But Mikoyan used to answer back. On the same occasion, I asked Khrushchev, “What is your secret weapon.” Khrushchev said, I am prime minister of the Soviet Union; I don’t need a secret weapon. Mikoyan stuck his tongue out, That’s his secret weapon. Can you imagine saying that to Stalin?

So they were friends, or at least Khrushchev thought he was his friend.

/end of reel/
IX: THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA – MARCH 3, 1976
In this session, we discussed Nikita Khrushchev’s “secret speech” to the Twentieth Party Congress. Professor Shapiro argued that it was not “secret,” but he himself used the word. Khrushchev gave the speech to a closed meeting of party representatives, but the news that the speech had taken place leaked out quickly together with assorted details. The foreign correspondents in Moscow had to decide whether this was a true story, a provocation aimed at compromising one or more of the journalists, or simply a wild, baseless rumor.

The foreign correspondents constantly faced serious tests: In Moscow’s constricted but heated news environment these rumors and stories essentially constituted a treasury of “urban folklore,” stories that could suggest both pro-governmental and anti-governmental conclusions. The party’s Agitprop, its agitation and propaganda network, could put out stories to compete with the jokes and anti-governmental stories afloat abroad. Which stories could journalists believe and perhaps gamble on? Could they trust their sources, some of whom undoubtedly had government support? To report the story and be wrong would be a catastrophe – this could even lead to expulsion and the closing of the office of the agency for which the correspondent worked. If the story turned out to be true, this sacrifice might well be worth the cost, but not to report it and then find out that it was true could mean undermining their reputations, not to mention their standing with their editors.

In the case of the “secret speech,” the correspondents anxiously weighed the evidence. They could not expect official confirmation; should they gamble? Would the censorship pass such a story? Shapiro had enjoyed a “scoop” in reporting Khrushchev’s opening speech to the congress – as Whitman Bassow told the story, Shapiro obtained his text directly from Sovinformburo, the official agency for distributing government texts to foreign reporters. Sovinformburo, however, did not have a text for Khrushchev’s “secret” speech.

Finally a Reuters correspondent, John Rettie, traveled to Stockholm and broke the story of Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin. According to Bassow (p. 179), Rettie “was forced to leave the Soviet Union,” but Rettie himself – in an email “interview”
informed me that he later left the Soviet Union of his own volition because of his unease about the purposes of KGB pressures on him. As for the story of the speech, Rettie remains convinced that someone high in the Soviet government, probably Khrushchev himself, wanted to the story to be “leaked.”

One other interesting aspect of this discussion was Shapiro’s story of his interview with Khrushchev. He never obtained an interview with Stalin – Ilya Ehrenburg once indicated that the reason for this was Shapiro’s Jewish name – and his extensive interview with Khrushchev was all the more dear to him for that. He repeatedly told me that he was saving the text for his memoirs. At various times he talked of specific things that Khrushchev on this occasion had told him, but I have never seen his full text of this interview. I presume it lies among his papers in the Library of Congress.

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AS: Today we are discussing the Khrushchev era. When did you first meet Khrushchev?

HS: At the Stalingrad front. He was what they called euphemistically a member of the military council of the front, which means that he was the chief political commissar of the front. The important sectors of the front had as members of the voensovet either members of the Central Committee or members of the Politburo. They had to countersign the orders of every commander, even the top ones like Zhukov. Zhukov always had Bulganin looking over his shoulder. Kaganovich had the Caucasian front.

I was the first foreign correspondent to go to the Stalingrad front. I was entertained by the commander underground. Khrushchev was at the table there, and he threw his weight around. It was clear that he was the commander in a sense.

I got the same impression at Geneva at the summit conference. Khrushchev was party secretary at the time, and Bulganin was the head of the delegation. Chip Bohlen, our ambassador, came out of the first meeting with Eisenhower and Khrushchev, and he said, It is perfectly clear who is the boss of the Soviet delegation.

I met him a few times, maybe shook hands at receptions, but I really got to know him in 1955 when I returned to Moscow after an absence of two years. I came by train from Helsinki. My assistant from Moscow telephoned me and said there is a reception at the Canadian embassy for Lester Pearson. I went from the station to the Canadian embassy. I couldn’t believe my eyes: The whole Politburo was there.

That was the year the Politburo started going around. In the course of the years I developed a pretty nice relationship with Khrushchev. I felt I knew him rather well. I was able to trade anecdotes with him. I was the only permanent resident correspondent whom he received for a private interview.

AS: When we talked about this before, you indicated that you thought Khrushchev might have been made party secretary in 1953 because he did not seem to pose a challenge.
HS: Molotov was a pre-revolutionary intelligent. He was not as well educated as Lenin. He had higher education. He came from a pretty good bourgeois family. His name was Skriabin, and he was related to the composer. Another rival was Malenkov, a product of the Soviet era. He was a graduate of an institute of electronics and also an institute of party philosophy. He was an extremely well read man. Beriia was a graduate of an architectural institute.

AS: To what do you attribute Khrushchev’s rise to power?

HS: First his education. All he had was four years of a village parochial school, on this side of the Russian border with the Ukraine. He was not a Ukrainian. His father was a miner in the Donbass. He did not join the Communist Party until 1918. He was very aggressive, very bright, very intelligent, a sharp mind. After the revolution he became very active in a local party organization; he was secretary of a committee in the Donbass. At one point he was sent to the Industrial Academy in Moscow.

They started early to pick up bright young workers and send them to Moscow to study. As God would have it, who was one of his fellow students but Al- leluieva [Stalin’s daughter – aes]. Khrushchev, being what he is, was elected a member of the party committee, and she was a member of it. Like a good hostess, she invited him to dinner at the Kremlin. That was the beginning of a beautiful friendship. He apparently impressed Stalin. When he finished the academy, he did not go back to the Ukraine, but was kept in Moscow as an assistant, right hand man for Kaganovich, who was at that time secretary of the Moscow district party committee.

Khrushchev grew. The purges came along. The younger people rose very rapidly. He was sent to the Ukraine to finish the purge down there, and he became a Ukrainian. Then he was brought back to Moscow as one of the secretaries of the Central Committee. When Stalin died, Khrushchev was one of the secretaries, but nobody every thought of him as a successor to Stalin. People were betting on Malenkov.

Apparently the others in the Politburo thought highly enough of him that he presided at Stalin’s funeral. The three top rulers apparently did not trust each other. I think the reason Khrushchev was appointed was that they considered him a sort of country bumpkin. They thought they could run him. You know the rest; he fooled them all.

He was made first party secretary after Stalin’s death in 1953, and by 1957 he kicked them all out.

AS: Would you tell us about your decision at the Geneva conference to return to Russia?

HS: I left at the end of 1953. I had no intention of going back there to work. I was still at Harvard in 1955. The UPI asked me to go to Geneva to cover the summit conference. There was Chip Bohlen, Clifton Daniels, and they were telling me what a different place Moscow had become, how much more interesting, how easy it was to work, how accessible the Soviet leaders had become. It looked very promising, a lot more promising that it actually was.

Since the UPI had been after me all along to go back, I decided to go back for a few months alone, I did. Then I started traveling.
A5: Would you tell us about your trip to London with Khrushchev?

HS: Naturally, being the senior UPI correspondent, they asked me to accompany Khrushchev on this his first trip to the West, not counting Geneva. Khrushchev and Bulganin began a whole series of voyages. Bulganin was head of the delegation as prime minister. Khrushchev’s only official position in the government was as a member of the Supreme Soviet. As party leader he had no protocol standing. But it was very clear from the very beginning that he was in charge.

Anthony Eden made a speech of welcome. Bulganin gave the formal answer, and we thought it was all through. But Khrushchev said, “Wait a minute. I want to say something too.” Khrushchev would make a speech and it was full of meat, full of anecdotes. Bulganin would make just the formal protocol remarks. I got to know him fairly well on these trips. I went with him to France, to Vienna to meet Kennedy, Yugoslavia, both trips to the United States. He liked to see familiar faces, and he liked to talk to me because no interpreter was needed. He liked to tell ribald stories in slang, most of which I did not understand. But I laughed anyway.

We were in Austria. The chancellor, Raab, was there. The local mayor, at lunch, gave Khrushchev a hunting rifle. Khrushchev picked it up and said, “This is a conspiracy. I am supposed to be a man of peace. You give me a rifle, and all those photographers will take a picture of me with a gun. What is Shapiro there going to write for the imperialist press? Chancellor Raab said, Oh no, Herr Shapiro is very well known as an objective correspondent. Khrushchev said, But he still works for the imperialist press – and there is a Hearst man. You can imagine all the rubbish he is going to write. He did that to people he knew. He did that to the American ambassador – “Oh there’s the American ambassador, we are going to bury you.” That is how that famous remark occurred, which in the Russian idiom does not mean anything more than we are going to outlive you. It was of course completely misinterpreted.

A5: There were some stories that Khrushchev tippled a bit too much at parties.

HS: It happened pretty badly once, on his first trip to the West, if you call Yugoslavia the West. They all got drunk there – Tito, Khrushchev, Molotov. They all came out holding each other. Then a few more times, but not as badly.

Then either because doctors told him, or he himself realized that that is no way for the leader of the communist world to behave, I can safely say that for most of my sojourn in the Soviet Union, Khrushchev was not even remotely tipsy.

He would have a glass in his hand, usually fruit juice. He would go from guest to guest and have a sip. It was not vodka, but fruit juice. He was as sober as I was. But the legend had already developed.

It was strange that he didn’t drink in that period, because there was not a single Russian I knew who did not drink more than was good for him. During the war Molotov, Foreign Minister at the time, went over to the Swedish ambassador and accused the Swedes of cowardice. You pretend to be neutral, and you help the Germans. The Swedish ambassador said, What were you doing in 1939 and 1940? The next day the Swedish ambassador was of course kicked out. Molotov was speaking from the middle of the floor. Vyshinsky tried to have Molotov surrounded, but he said, Get away from here, I know
what I am saying. At that point the British ambassador just toppled over the table, and he had to be carried out, Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr.

If the stories you hear about Khrushchev were true, it would not be anything unusual, but they were not true. At least he stopped. Maybe when he was alone with the Politburo, maybe they drank. But the legend had been established.

AS: Let’s turn to the Twentieth Party Congress. You have told me that Khrushchev’s secret speech was neither a secret nor a surprise.

HS: DeStalinization started soon after Stalin’s death. He had by Soviet standards a rather shabby funeral. A few weeks after his death, there was an article in Izvestia about the modesty of Marx and Lenin. This is the first time they used the phrase “personality cult” – how wrong it is for a Marxist to develop his own personality cult. Marx gave somebody hell because they tried to name something after him. Personality cult was characteristic only of fascists. Stalin’s name was not mentioned, but of course it was perfectly clear. Little by little they started the erosion of some of the things that Stalin had done.

More along those lines was expected at the 20th Party Congress. After it started, almost everybody denounced Stalin. First was Mikoyan, then Molotov, Malenkov, everybody. They talked about the abuses of the personality cult. After the general sessions were over, they went into executive session, at which Khrushchev delivered his so-called secret speech. There was nothing in the press about it. A day or two later it was all over the country that Khrushchev had gone to great extremes in denouncing Stalin. The text of the speech was sent to all the ruling parties even the Yugoslavs. A digest was read at meetings all over the country, including one at Moscow University for the student body, open to all. A French student told me all about it.

A day or two later there was a reception at the Kremlin, and Chip Bohlen called me over and asked, Have you heard? We exchanged information. The censorship suddenly got very tough. When I tried to telephone, the minute I would mention Stalin I would be cut off. The Yugoslavs leaked it, and Bohlen’s report went to the State Department which leaked it to The New York Times. The story was more or less known with a few weeks.

Sometime in May the State Department released the full text. At the time I was on a train, and the UPI told me to go to Washington – I was in Cambridge – and the train got there at 8 in the morning. They asked me at the station to proceed directly to the State Department. They were handing out the text. There were rumors that this was a fake. I dictated a story, the gist of which was that this must be a genuine text because it confirms everything I heard from Soviet sources soon after the speech. The text was never published in the Soviet Union, but enough was said – particularly at the 22d Party Congress – about Stalin’s crimes that practically everything in the text appeared in the Soviet press in one form or another. But to this day you hear here that the Russians have never heard about the secret speech. No Russian saw the complete text, but they did not need it.

AS: The rehabilitation of many of Stalin’s opponents had already begun before the Twentieth Party Congress.

HS: It began slowly immediately after his death. They appointed commissions. One of the first things they did was to abolish the NKVD in form and es-
tablish the Committee on State Security, KGB. That in form demoted the organization, and then they deprived it of several functions which it had had before. They took away all the industrial enterprises which were run by the police and put them under the jurisdiction of the ordinary ministries. Then they took jurisdiction of the border guards and put them under the jurisdiction of the army. Then people started coming out of the camps. The camps were not completely depopulated until after the 20th Party Congress. To this day the camps don’t exist. They still have camps for criminals. According to the dissidents, there are still some 10,000 politicals.

Everybody was for deStalinization. But I think that they were shocked by the extremes to which Khrushchev went. They were ready to denounce the personality cult, the abuse of power, and all that, but not to admit that the confessions were obtained by "illegal means," which means torture. I think that was Khrushchev’s personal contribution. The speech was all his own. The language, the emotion, the venom were all Khrushchev’s. That, I think, was part of the struggle between the more conservative people and him. They were right. Millions had grown up with the legend of Stalin, and suddenly they were told that for thirty years they were ruled by a bandit.

AS: Were you in Moscow at the time of the Polish and Hungarian risings?

HS: Yes. It took a few days for Moscow to decide to suppress the Hungarian uprising. There was a split in the Politburo. I think one of the biggest advocates of suppression was Marshall Zhukov, who was then Defense Minister. Before the actual invasion, there was a reception at the Kremlin where Zhukov told Bohlen, We are going to crush them like egg shells. That is when I think Khrushchev was trying to moderate the more extreme people. Finally they went in.

It was a big blow, naturally, to Soviet prestige to think that the people who led the rebellion were communists. Later of course they mixed them all up, communists and fascists, as they always do. But actually it was a communist party rebellion. It is true that once they went on the streets, all sorts of ordinary criminals and anti-communists joined in, but basically the rebellion was organized by the Communist Party.

AS: Do you remember any public expressions of opposition by anyone to the intervention in Hungary?

HS: There were no public expressions. There were rumors that the Politburo was split. It took them a week or two to intervene. Later Khrushchev hinted that there had been a conflict of opinion. There were no dissidents yet. I am sure that there were people who thought it was all wrong.

AS: Would you comment on the development of the anti-party faction in 1957.

HS: Yes, the June Plenum. It was clear that the situation was not as harmonious as they pretended it to be. There were differences of opinion on the allocation of resources. About 1954 Molotov was making very harsh speeches against what seemed to be Khrushchev’s efforts to normalize relations with capitalist countries. The Twentieth Party Congress showed differences of degree. I am convinced they were all in favor of some form of deStalinization, but Khrushchev was going wild, taking over. Not just on the question of Stalin. He was always making speeches, he was boasting. Malenkov and Molotov, whatever you may think of their characters, were rather dignified people, very disci-
plined. They did not make public displays of themselves. There must have been a lot of personal animosity.

In 1957 they decided that Khrushchev was going too far. They decided to get rid of him. They had a majority of the Politburo. It never happened in Soviet history before that the Politburo could not get rid of somebody. So they were already speaking of collective leadership. They had a majority. They voted to kick him out, to make him minister of agriculture.

They had not counted on his …

AS: We were talking about the opposition in the anti-party faction.

HS: It was fairly easy to organize the ouster of Beria because everyone was against him. In the case of Khrushchev, the Politburo was split but the majority was against him and became known as the so-called anti-party group. That included Bulganin, Voroshilov, Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich. Apparently, when they decided to oust him, he declared he would not accept it because they had not elected him. The Central Committee had. So they hurriedly convened the Central Committee.

By this time most of the members of the Central Committee had been hand-picked by Khrushchev. Not only that, they were mostly younger people, and they were anti-Stalin by this time. So they supported Khrushchev. The result was that the minority of the Politburo expelled the majority. Khrushchev of course consolidated his power. From that time on, he became more unruly. He became less and less the head of a board of directors which acted collectively and more and more of a one-man despot. This finally led to his overthrow.

An interesting thing in connection with Molotov – they all got jobs and it’s the first time since Lenin’s death that you had such a turnover in the Politburo without arrests. They all got jobs. Molotov got a very important job as ambassador to Mongolia. Malenkov became manager of an electric power station on the Chinese border. Later, when Molotov complained that his health was suffering living in Mongolia, he was appointed ambassador to Holland. But the Dutch would not have him, and so he was made a member of the International Atomic Energy Commission in Vienna.

The Twenty Second Party Congress was called primarily to adopt a new party program. A 20-year economic plan was being discussed. Molotov, while still in Vienna, wrote a letter to every member of the Central Committee, denouncing the new party program as being defeatist, anti-Marxist, and pacifist. That was enough to hang him. He came back to Moscow, and he was put on pension. He is still alive.

At the Twenty Second Party Congress, the party program was practically forgotten. Khrushchev began to bury Stalin all over again. One of the speakers demanded that the anti-party group be expelled from the party. Someone else suggested a monument to the victims of Stalin’s purges. And of course they decided to remove Stalin’s body.

But in connection with Molotov, someone suggested that he be expelled from the Communist Party. On November 7 of 1961, I asked Khrushchev at a
Kremlin reception whether Molotov had been expelled from the party. There had not been anything in the press. He said it’s in the hands of Comrade Shvernik. Shvernik was chairman of the Party Control Commission. On December 6 there was an annual reception at the Finnish embassy. I went over to Khrushchev and asked him whether Shvernik had already made a decision about Molotov. What decision? He had forgotten what he had told me before. “I am the secretary of the party, and I decide. I have already thrown him out.”

That was how I learned of it. I wrote that, I put it delicately because I thought it was just one of those outbursts of Khrushchev. I conveyed the idea clearly enough. Not a word was said about that until 1964. In the spring of 1964 there was a Central Committee meeting where Suslov made what was up to that point the most violent denunciation of the Chinese. Among other things, he said they want us to do in our beloved leader. The Chinese would have us listen to such nogoodniks as Molotov, whom we have expelled from the party. That was the first official report, reference to Molotov’s expulsion from the party. That is how they do things in the Soviet Union.

AS: I know you always discount the role of the military, but would you comment on Zhukov’s role in dealing with the anti-party faction?

HS: Zhukov had nothing to do with the anti-party faction. On the contrary, he was the one who, when Khrushchev insisted on a meeting of the Central Committee, stood up and said, “On behalf of the Soviet Armed Forces, I want to say that they are fully behind Comrade Khrushchev.” He said a few words in denunciation of the group. I said so at the time, and I still believe it to be true, that was Zhukov’s commission of suicide. The moment he said that, that was an assertion of an independent agency of power. He was speaking for the armed forces. He was very foolish. I expected his downfall then.

Zhukov was a very strong man. He was the most popular soldier in the Soviet Union. He probably made the greatest single contribution to victory. Very intelligent. He had been disgraced after the war by Stalin because he was too popular.

After a while, Stalin decided Odessa was too good for him, and he sent him to the Urals. Immediately after Stalin’s death, Zhukov was brought back to Moscow and made Minister of Defense. He was very much in the public eye, he made speeches. He was even elected to the Politburo, the first time a professional soldier was elected. He was throwing his weight around. One fine day Khrushchev decided he was going too far, and he kicked him out.

The official charges as published in the press were that he tried to put the interests of the armed forces above the party. When I talked to Khrushchev soon after the ouster, I asked him about it. Khrushchev made clear that he thought that Zhukov had Napoleonic ambitions. He said, “The trouble with Zhukov was that he considered himself another Stalin. Well, he wasn’t even a half a Stalin or a quarter of a Stalin.” I said he certainly was a great soldier. Khrushchev said, “I wouldn’t stress that too much, because there were better soldiers.” I asked who, and he said Malinovsky. He had just appointed Malinovsky.

You may ask, if the army was put in its place, why did they recently appoint another general to the Politburo? Grechko. Well, Grechko is relatively un-
known in the Soviet Union, he is over 70, he is not a popular hero, and they consider him safe enough. Moreover, since Brezhnev had decided to give more time to managing defense, as well as foreign policy, he is taking two technicians. Gromyko and Grechko would not normally be in the Politburo, and he has them to help with technical expertise.

During the war, many western correspondents said that the army would take over after the war. Being a bit of a gambler, I made a lot of bets and won them all. I said all the military decisions were being made by civilians. Stalin would never allow the development of a man on horseback. It has always been the policy. A man on horseback is almost inconceivable in the Soviet Union.

When Khrushchev and Bulganin went to London in 1956, Randolph Churchill telephoned me and wanted to see me. He came to my hotel and showed me a column which he had written. The real boss of the Soviet Union was not Khrushchev but Zhukov. So I told him what I just said to you. Khrushchev could fire Zhukov in five seconds. Finally he said he wished he had talked with me the day before.

I think the army exercises no political power in the Soviet Union. Grechko is a rubber stamp. He has a vote, but he is less equal than the others. The decisions are really made by four or five people – Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny, Suslov, maybe Andropov. The others simply go along.

**Q:** Do you think there was a deep seated hostility toward Stalin among the members of the Politburo?

**HS:** It is a matter of degree and of speculation. Some of them really loved Stalin. Kaganovich, Molotov. I am not sure about Malenkov. Molotov was one of the three funeral orators: His wife was in jail, and yet he broke down and wept. Others were terrified! Voroshilov, Mikoyan. They were terrified and tried to guess what he wanted, and they told him what he wanted to hear.

The country as a whole was not anti-Stalin, especially the younger generation. Stalin had been in power thirty years. A big legend had built up. The abuses, the crimes that were committed, were not associated with Stalin, except by former communists who knew better.

**Q:** How was the secret speech prepared?

**HS:** The text was never published. Most of the contents were contained in a précis which the Central Committee prepared and sent to all party organizations in the Soviet Union.

One of the secretaries of the Central Committee drafted it and showed it to Khrushchev. He may have rejected some things. I talked to Khrushchev’s best speech writer, Oleg Troyanovsky, now ambassador to Japan. He told me the way Khrushchev used to work.

He had four stenographers going all the time. When he was not making a speech, he was dictating. He would write his own speeches. It would be typed out, shown to experts, and then would come back to him. He would review it. Roosevelt used to work like that. The language was Khrushchev’s, but very often when he would deliver the speech, he would shove it away and ad lib. That was when he was more interesting than ever.
The digest was prepared by the Central Committee, and the Central Commit-
tee sent it out. In addition all ruling party organizations received it.

Q: Khrushchev traveled abroad to build up his international prestige. Do you
think that his standing at home was strong enough so he did not have to
worry about it?

HS: For the first trips to Yugoslavia and Geneva, there he carried his strongest
potential rival with him, Molotov. And Zhukov was with him in Yugoslavia.
By the time he went to England, it was the general policy of the Politburo to
encourage contact. It started with Malenkov.

That reminds me of an incident in Graz. Khrushchev was telling his host
what a beautiful place it was. Unfortunately, “I can’t spend very much time,
but I would hope to spend two or three months.” Chancellor Raab ques-
tioned whether his government would allow him to stay so long out of the
country. Khrushchev said, “My government would be happy if I stayed away
forever.” That shows how confident he was.

AS: What was the occasion for your long interview with Khrushchev?

HS: Well, I had been writing to him ever since I returned in 1955. No answer.
Then in Moscow I pestered him at every reception. He promised several times.
Finally in the fall of 1957, at the national day reception of the embassy of Af-
ghanistan, I went over to him and said I was still waiting. He said, Yes, I am
in debt. Mikoyan was standing right next to him and said, You promised him
– why don’t you see him? Khrushchev called over the head of the press depart-
ment and said to make an appointment. I had seen hundreds of such tricks,
and I forgot.

Two or three days later I had just gotten up about 8.30 and was shaving. The
telephone rang. The chief of the press department said, The First Secretary will
see you in a half an hour. Show up at the Central Committee building. I did
not have an electric razor, so I cut myself. I rushed down to the Central Com-
mittee, and while driving, I formulated the questions in my mind.

I was met downstairs by the chief of the press department and taken upstairs
to the fourth floor. There were guards all over the place. It was a long cor-
ridor. All the secretaries had their rooms there. They all had their names on
their doors. There were about six or seven secretaries. There was an ante-
room. I waited about five minutes, and they took me in.

There was a room about the size of this whole floor, with a desk in the corner.
It was clean. All the communist leaders I have ever interviewed are never in
a hurry. Their desks are always clean. Maybe because they think their visitor
might steal something.

There were no interruptions. I was told the interview would last an hour. When
the hour was over, I said maybe I should go. He said, What’s your hurry?
There were only two pictures in the room. One was Marx and the other Len-
in. In the middle of the room there was a big desk, covered with green. He
came over and sat down. There were only two other persons present, Ilichev
and a stenographer.

I started asking questions. He was so sharp that before I finished asking my
question, he was ready with an answer. I had not submitted any questions. I
had just named the areas. I had said I wanted to ask questions on 1. domestic policy, 2. foreign policy.

It would have been a lot of nonsense if I had not known Russian. He would make a speech, and I would interrupt him. Someone else would have had to wait for an interpreter. I needed no translation, and when I thought I had enough, I would stop and start with something else. After about two and a half hours, I got up to leave. Khrushchev then told the stenographer to close the book and said that we would have a private conversation, not for publication.

So I stayed another hour. I am not going to tell you what we discussed because that will be in my book.

Censorship was still in force at the time. Now there isn't any. When it was over, I asked the press chief, When can I have the official text? He said in about a week. I said that I could not wait. TASS had already announced that the secretary received UPI correspondent Shapiro. Already I knew that there would be a hundred messages. Ilichev told me to write it anyhow.

I had taken very few notes. I would look at him and just put down a word or two. I went home and reconstructed it all. I handed it into the censorship. They kept it for four hours and then gave it back with only a few words deleted. All the words I put into quotation marks remained. They took out his reference to Zhukov.

A week later when I got the text, I compared, and I saw that I had managed to do it. The censors had passed everything. Off it went.

William Randolph Hearst, Jr., was there with his task force. He can't write an English sentence. He had his task force. He wanted to interview Khrushchev. Before I left Khrushchev's office…

/end of reel/
For this discussion I again found the syllabus that I distributed to the students:

Agricultural policies
Cultural Policies
   Atmosphere of the 50s
   Dudintsev, Pasternak
   Camp literature
   Turnaround
Foreign Policy
   Personal diplomacy and summitry
   Eisenhower
   Vienna
   Cuba
22nd Party Congress
Fall

Culture and Foreign Policy were two of our major themes for this meeting. Shapiro’s own feelings came out strongly: his sympathy for Pasternak, his criticism of Solzhenitsyn, and his enjoyment in dealing with Khrushchev, even as he criticized the Soviet leader.

The Khrushchev years were the period in which the Soviet Union began to open up to western visitors, and of course western foreign correspondents increased in number and found greater opportunities to develop stories for their agencies. These years also saw the development of cultural exchanges and the exchanges of scholars. In the fall of 1959, the Soviet Union opened the Baltic to foreign tourists. I was first in Vilnius in August 1960, and many Lithuanians were amazed to see an American traveling alone. On the other hand, I could stay in Vilnius only three days, and I could not travel outside the city.

The trial of Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot, stands out strongly in my own memory of this period. The western press was allowed to attend the three day trial and to use film cameras and tape recorders. For some inexplicable reason,
Foreign Correspondent: Henry Shapiro in Moscow, 1933-1973

perhaps simply harassment, the journalists were not allowed to send their films and tapes out through the usual channels. As a result, they recruited tourists to help them. Under these circumstances, essentially convinced that this was a simple harassment and not a major issue, I myself carried out the UPI, CBS, and NBC films and tapes of the second day of the trial when I left Moscow for Brussels. At the time I did not realize that I was helping Professor Shapiro.

Shapiro here mentioned Philip Mosely. Mosely was then a professor of international relations at Columbia University. A graduate of Harvard who spoke Russian, he had studied in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, had been an American advisor at the Potsdam Conference in 1945 and received credit for having been the one to insist that in the establishment of occupation zones in Berlin, the American zone should extend several blocks to the east of Tempelhof airport. Without this extra open space, the Soviets could have seriously impaired air travel into Berlin during the Berlin blockade. Another reason for Shapiro to make special mention of Mosely was that Mosely was my major professor in my doctoral work at Columbia University in the 1950s.

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AS: Our topic for today is the Khrushchev era. Prof. Shapiro, would you agree that Khrushchev made his personality felt the most strongly in agriculture?

HS: He drew a lot of attention, even before Stalin died. When he was the secretary of the Central Committee in charge of agriculture, he was the champion of the agrogorod. The kolkhozes were going to be amalgamated, several into one, and instead of villages, they were going to have towns into which the peasants would be moved, and buses would take them into the fields. That article appeared in Pravda while Stalin was still alive, but a few days later it was repudiated. Apparently Stalin did not like it. There was a note to the effect that that article did not reflect the view of the Central Committee but that it was published only for discussion purposes.

After Stalin’s death, when Khrushchev became first party secretary, in one of his first speeches, agriculture loomed very large. That is when he introduced some of his reforms. He was very critical of Malenkov because at the Nineteenth Party Congress, Malenkov had said that the problem of bread has been solved forever. Of course he accused Malenkov of having faked figures.

Anyhow, a number of very important reforms were instituted. He painted a very dismal picture of agriculture after Stalin’s death. He said it was worse than it had been in 1913. The livestock were less than in 1913. These reforms were supposed to give the peasants a big boost. They did; they forgave their debts, they reduced the compulsory deliveries of grain to the state, they raised the prices. That was his beginning as an agricultural reformer.

Then of course he advocated the development of the virgin lands, which have saved the country a few times. There has been a lot of criticism of him for it, on the grounds that the area was not suited for it. Actually, so far it has worked out very well. They expect one good crop every three years. At least twice or three times, it was the only area that had good crops.

He started this agrogorod business again, but that was stopped. It was apparently a failure. He became known jokingly as the kukuruznik, Nikita Kukuru-
znik, because he had advocated the planting of corn. Since he fancied himself a great agricultural expert, he failed to investigate the climatic situation. That was a failure. He had other reforms that also failed.

AS: The agrogorody movement meant considerable losses in livestock, didn't it?

HS: That is an exaggeration. People were not afraid to speak up now. Even in the Central Committee there was opposition. Khrushchev was not a Stalin. It did lead to slaughter of cattle, because the peasants were afraid. They thought it might be like another collectivization. There was a campaign to persuade them to deliver their horses and cows to the state. They started slaughtering the cows. But that was stopped in good time, because they realized those private cows are very important to the economy.

Suddenly they had to change the whole propaganda in order to convince the peasant that it was not meant that way. If you want to give your cow to the sovkhoz, that's all right, but it is perfectly voluntary. By the time Khrushchev was ousted, the government did all it could to persuade the peasants that there would be no changes.

Khrushchev played an important role in agriculture, but one of the reasons for his ouster was his agricultural policy.

AS: You consider the virgin lands policy successful, but otherwise you consider that he was unsuccessful in agriculture?

HS: It was. It was unsuccessful in the first place in the planting of corn where it would not grow. In many places, the soil is as good as in Iowa, but the precipitation is not stable, and there is a much shorter growing season. He also started plowing up pasture land. You know how long it takes to develop decent pasture land. Very nice pasture lands were plowed under. Then he monkeyed with all systems of plowing, iarovizatsiia. All of a sudden he re-discovered Lysenko, who had been disgraced after Stalin's death. I would say that some of his agricultural measures were a failure. And then he got the blame for the harvest failure of 1963. It was a failure as bad as the one of last year. There was no rain. But it would have been a lesser failure, if Khrushchev had not been laying down the law.

AS: Let us turn to cultural policies. Would you talk about the atmosphere of the ‘50s? You knew Pasternak, didn't you?

HS: Pasternak of course is regarded as the best Soviet poet since the revolution. He was very popular as a poet not to the people as a whole, but to the intelligentsia, because he is a difficult kind of, sort of academic poet. He was published regularly under Stalin. A lot of people wonder how he got away when Mandelshtam didn't, but that's another story.

AS: He was doing mostly translations.

HS: At one point, he stopped writing poetry. After the Yalta conference, Stettinius came to Moscow. Mosely was with him. I pointed out Pasternak, and he wanted to be introduced. I took him over and introduced him to Pasternak. I asked him what he was doing. He said, translating Shakespeare, Schiller. I asked him, Aren't you writing any poetry. He said, "Do you think I am crazy?"

His translations were great, considered the best translations ever of Shakespeare and of the German classics. They were being produced. Even in the
worst period of *Dr. Zhivago*, after he was persuaded to give up the Nobel Prize, he was making 100 to 200,000 rubles a year through his translations. People usually compare Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn. There is no comparison. Pasternak never took an anti-Soviet position, regardless of what he thought privately. I consider *Dr. Zhivago* anti-Soviet; a lot of people don’t.

He wrote *Dr. Zhivago* without concealing it from anybody. Not only that, he had every reason to believe that it would be published in the Soviet Union. That was the most liberal period, after the 20th Party Congress. Actually, it was accepted by the Writers’ Union and the publication house. The publishing house appointed an editor to work on it. I think one chapter was published in a magazine. Then there was a change of attitude on it.

In the meantime he had given the manuscript to Feltrinelli. Feltrinelli was a top Italian publisher, a member of the Communist Party. He used to come regularly. He got the manuscript from Pasternak and agreed to publish it. But then the party changed its position, and sent Syrkov, the secretary of the Writers’ Union, to Rome to get the manuscript back from Feltrinelli, but Feltrinelli refused. He published it. The rest is history. He made millions of dollars.

I used to see Pasternak regularly. He told me that he had to write and to publish *Zhivago*. He said, if it weren’t published, I would hang myself. That is hyperbole of course, but he felt strongly about it.

If you read the book, you know there is a lot that does not fit in, a lot of excursions into religious philosophy. I asked him about that. He said his father had been a painter. He did illustrations of the classics. He did rather politically daring illustrations. He said he did it on purpose. The censor would cut it out, and, having fulfilled his quote of cuts, he would leave the rest in, which he really wanted in.

Boris Pasternak had the same idea. He thought he would put in all those religious essays which would immediately provoke the censors. They would cut it out and leave all the rest in. It didn’t work this time.

Anyhow, you see, he was not officially condemned by the Soviet authorities. He was condemned in the press, but it was not like in the case of Solzhenitsyn. Pasternak was attacked. There was one meeting of the *Komsomol* in which the leader of the *Komsomol*, Semichastny, in the presence of Khrushchev, said some nasty words: If he doesn’t like this country, we will be glad to see him get into the capitalist paradise.

After that, Pasternak wrote a letter to Khrushchev in which he said that to send me out of the country is tantamount to a death sentence. I am a Russian. I have made some contributions to Russian literature. Please let me stay.

There was no official threat. So they left him alone, and they kept on publishing him all the time. That was a very hopeful period, which was marked by the first publication of Solzhenitsyn. And there were several other attempts to revive Soviet literature, which had had a pretty good heyday in the ’20s. But at one point the Soviet authorities got frightened, the movement was growing too rapidly. Students were speaking up at the universities. All sorts of questions about dialectical materialism, about inequalities, about injustices, and so on.

So they decided at one point to crack down at the beginning of 1962. Khrushchev called several meetings of writers at which he denounced people like
Ehrenburg, Evtushenko, Voznesensky, and so on. That was the beginning of the decline of the thaw. The young dissidents today blame Brezhnev. They forget that Khrushchev started the liberalization, but he put an end to it too. What they see today is a continuation of the process. It as a very hopeful, optimistic period. There were all sorts of new experiments. All of that is gone. But certainly it is nothing like the Stalin era.

AS: Would you talk about [Vladimir] Dudintsev?

HS: Dudintsev was one of the first. By profession he was a lawyer. He held a job that was the equivalent of a county district attorney. He had the ambition to be a writer. He suddenly broke into print with *Not by Bread Alone*, the first criticism of the whole bureaucratic system. Artistically it was mediocre; he was a very bad writer. But coming at that time, it looked like a brave new experiment. It became very sensational, very popular. That was in 1956.

In the fall of 1957, when I saw Khrushchev, I asked him about Dudintsev. He said he would see him the next week. “He is a pretty good fellow, but I assure you that the next book he writes won’t be that kind.” Dudintsev’s popularity crested, and he didn’t produce any more. He wrote a few short stories, which didn’t amount to much, and then he worked for years on a book, which was supposed to be on the theme of the struggle against Lysenko. But he could not get it published. By this time, Khrushchev had rehabilitated Lysenko. Then the point came, after ’62, that they put a ban on that kind of book.

Dudintsev never got published. Last time I saw him, a few months before I left, he was complaining that it was hard to make a living. The most he could do was a new edition of *Not by Bread Alone* in 1970, but by that time it was rather tame. So he stopped writing, and he is a district attorney again.

AS: Would you talk about the development of the literature on the camps, the camp themes, in the ’50s?

HS: Well, there was a whole series. The most dramatic, both artistically and politically, was *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. People looked upon that as a sort of green light. Then the story spread rapidly that Khrushchev put it through the Central Committee.

The beginning came with Ehrenburg. Ehrenburg was a few steps ahead of the others when he wrote *The Thaw*. Then Evtushenko had a few poems. Then Dudintsev. There were a few minor ones.

There were a few by generals; the one by Gorbatov was the best. Then there was a historian Nekrich, who wrote about the harm that Stalin had done. There were also some plays that criticized Stalin.

AS: Would you comment on the Twenty Second Party Congress?

HS: DeStalinization began very slowly after Stalin’s death, and then it jumped ahead rapidly after the 20th Party Congress, and then it stabilized. After the Twenty Second Party Congress there was a new campaign for deStalinization.

The Twenty Second Congress was in 1961. And there was apparently too much of it. The authorities decided that the popular reaction was such that they got a little frightened. A year later Khrushchev got the intellectuals together and started cracking down.
On the camp theme, Evgeniia Ginzburg was a member of the party. She describes how she was arrested, what happened on the train to Siberia, camp life, and all that. It was all rather detailed, and of course rather a depressing book, a sort of minor *Gulag Archipelago*. But she wrote it was a good communist; she saw that what was going on was a travesty of communism. It was in the past, and the new brave world was being built again. Her description was quite realistic, but she had missed the boat. By this time, Khrushchev had started cracking down. So the book was never published in the Soviet Union. She is still a member of the party. She is not anti-Soviet like Mrs. Mandelstham is. There were several others like that which were never published. They were just a year or two too late. You can't write anything about the camps any more.

In that period there was also a lot of anti-Stalin stuff, against Stalin personally. And then they started slowly, slowly rehabilitating Stalin. Not rehabilitating him completely; I don't think that will ever happen. But as a war leader, a lot of top generals, marshals, started writing their memoirs. Zhukov too, one of the victims of Stalin. They denied Khrushchev's assertion at the 20th Party Congress that Stalin was an ignoramus in military affairs. They stopped the anti-Stalin books, but in military books they started a recognition of Stalin's achievements as a war leader, without in any way exonerating him for the purges. This is still the policy of the Central Committee. They don't justify the purges.

**AS:** Did you attend the Twenty Second Party Congress?

**HS:** I attended the first two days while Khrushchev was speaking. The rule has been that all foreign correspondents are invited to the opening session. I heard Khrushchev's speech which went over two days.

The 22nd Party Congress was supposed to be for the adoption of the new economic plan and the new party program. Instead, Khrushchev turned it into a new campaign against Stalin. That stole the play from the party program.

After Khrushchev had made his reports, we were not allowed to come back. Only communist correspondents were admitted. I knew what was going on because I had an arrangement with a British correspondent who was a pretty good newspaperman. Whenever something interesting happened, he would run down and telephone me. By that time there was no censorship anymore, and you were free to get it out.

Take for example when Khrushchev was denouncing Enver Hoxha, the Albanian leader, Chou En Lai walked out. That was quite a story. This was when Khrushchev disclosed for the first time the anti-party people. We had had rumors, but now Khrushchev named them. He named Voroshilov, and Voroshilov broke out crying; he asked for forgiveness. I had the story within a few minutes.

We were not present during those sessions, but we knew what was going on. The next day, the papers carried practically everything. They did not mention that Chou had walked out, but the basic statements, the resolution against Molotov, the request that Stalin be taken out of Lenin's tomb, were mostly in the papers. Then there was a lot of talk, gossip, rumors. We knew pretty much what was going on.
AS: You mentioned censorship. Would you explain when that was ended?

HS: There was censorship from the time of Ivan the Terrible. In my time, everything we wrote for cabling had to be read by the censors and passed before the telegraph accepted it for translation. The censorship varied in its rigidity of application. When I first got there, mail stories were not censored. Telephones were not censored. Then there were periods when telephoning was not allowed. The censorship became more rigid.

And so it went back and forth until 1945. Until 1945 we were allowed to go back and argue with the censor. Sometimes he didn't understand a particular idiom, or a word. They would telephone and ask for an explanation. They might pass it or ask for a small change. Other times they just said no.

In 1945 the censorship became blind. We took it to someone who passed it on to the censor. We never saw the censor. It was passed or not passed, or something deleted, and there was no recourse. Very often I just took it back and killed it. They never added anything to it; they just cut. You can do a good job by just cutting; make you say the opposite of what you intend. That went on to about 1961 when Khrushchev had been kidded so much abroad at press conferences.

In Paris in 1960, at a news conference, there was the usual question as to why, so many years after the war, the Soviet Union was the only civilized country that still has censorship. That did not faze Khrushchev. He said there is no censorship in the Soviet Union except for liars.

That was all right as a wisecrack, but he knew perfectly well that it was not acceptable. So he threw it out. It was abolished. Now you can write whatever you please, subject to sanctions later. If you write what they consider is outrageously anti-Soviet, they call you in, reprimand, and they could even expel you. You are perfectly free to write what you want.

AS: To return to cultural policies, could you tell us more about the turnaround in 1962?

HS: At the end of 1962, Khrushchev called a group of writers together at a government dacha for a day. He talked to them, and he criticized some of the writers. One of them, Olga Bergholz, a poet, argued with him. She said what they were doing was right. He made a crack about Fadeev: Your boyfriend did not have the guts, he committed suicide. She said she wished other writers had his guts, whereupon he became very angry, used four letter words. And she fainted.

There were several meetings like that. At one meeting, [Mikhail] Romm, a famous film director, stood up and started criticizing what they had done to Soviet art since the Stalin era. Khrushchev tried to stop him: I, as secretary of the Central Committee, forbid you to continue, whereupon Romm said, I, as a rank and file communist, insist on the right of speech. He finished his speech. There were people like that who stood up and got away with it. Some caved in right away. Yevtushenko gave in. Ehrenburg kept quiet, the good ones kept quiet, they did not beat their breasts. They went ahead doing what they did. Ehrenburg finished his memoirs. Khrushchev was very tough on Ehrenburg.
A lot of those liberal, semi-liberal plays were taken off. *Novy Mir* had its staff purged. All sorts of things happened. Not quite a reversal, but certainly the arresting of the process of liberalization.

Encouraged by the Twenty Second Party Congress, painters turned to doing abstract work, which is not recognized by socialist realism. But it is rather popular; it goes from hand to hand. They had this exhibition of modern art at the Manezh. Apparently some of the more reactionary members of the union knew Khrushchev would be there, so they selected some of the worst examples of abstract art.

There was Khrushchev. He had his famous argument with the sculptor Neizvestny. He looked at some of the stuff and said a donkey with his tail could have done better. It was a common thing with Khrushchev, when he did not like something, to ask, Who did that? Then: Oh, he's a homosexual – that would settle it.

Neizvestny argued with him, but still they closed the exhibition and stopped all shows of modern art. The irony is that after Khrushchev was kicked out, he became very friendly with Neizvestny. After his death, the family asked Neizvestny to do the monument for him. The cemetery at Novodevichii is the best museum for modern art in the Soviet Union. Neizvestny did the monument, and after two or three years, it was put on.

In the meantime, Neizvestny discovered that he was partly a Jew. He couldn't leave the country, so he applied for permission to emigrate to Israel. He got it after waiting a year or so. He left about three weeks ago. He was allowed to take several hundred of his works out. He is now in Paris.

Abstract art was never forbidden in the Soviet Union; it was just not accepted. It makes a lot of difference. It was not exhibited; it was not bought. The painters were free to do anything they wanted and to sell it – not to institutions but to individuals. About a year ago you remember that story about how they attempted to mount that illegal exhibition in the park and it was bulldozed. A week or two later they were allowed to exhibit, and now there have been several public exhibitions of abstract painters.

Now there is nothing original, innovative, in the movies or theater. Stagnation.

/end of reel/

**AS:** Khrushchev showed a real penchant for personal diplomacy, didn’t he?

**HS:** Yes, he believed in it very much. He considered himself an expert. He boasted once that he could stand up against any ambassador. He, Nikita Khrushchev, former peasant. That’s the way he was, he started as a goatherd at four or five years old. Then he was a miner.

I heard him at that famous shoe banging incident at the United Nations in 1960. A man from the Philippines said something offensive to Khrushchev. Khrushchev had his shoe off; he must have had a corn or something. Before that he had been banging the table; whenever someone said something that he didn’t like, he would bang the table with his fist. Then the other Soviet delegates would do the same thing. I guess at this point his fist hurt. Since he
had his shoe ready, he took the shoe. The cameras caught him with the shoe in the air, and it looked like he was going to throw it at the Filipino on the platform. He really meant to bang the table.

Then he asked for the right to answer. He stood up and for an hour, without a note, spoke about Soviet foreign policy, very complicated things in answer to this Filipino, the best speech I ever heard from him. Not a single fact was wrong; his manner was very smooth, full of anecdotes. He had that talent. It was amazing for a man with his noneducation background; he knew his diplomatic history. He was certainly very well briefed for every meeting. He made a good impression on everyone who dealt with him.

He believed in his own powers of persuasion. He started traveling. Stalin had been a hermit. He never went abroad. The part of Teheran he visited was a Soviet colony. Then he went to Potsdam, but that was Soviet occupied territory. That was all. Khrushchev liked to travel. When he traveled with Bulganin, he actually led the delegation. He made all the important speeches. And he stayed away rather long.

He started this business of traveling. Because he traveled so much, the others started. He raised the curtain, because a lot of people started coming to the Soviet Union. For a while, while Khrushchev was in power, Moscow was sort of the diplomatic capital of the world. Every one came there: presidents, prime ministers. People got to know something about the Soviet Union, a lot more than they had known before.

Khrushchev was more accessible, and so was everyone else. Whereas no one ever saw a member of the Politburo before now, you could see them one, two, three times a week at receptions. The Kremlin had frequent receptions. Then he would invite foreign dignitaries to his country place.

Our ambassador, Thompson, was invited to his place for a weekend, a government country place. Not only the ambassador and his wife, but the councilor and his wife, with the ambassador's two children. Theirs was the first insight we had into how the top Soviet leaders spend their weekends.

Anyhow that was, certainly from the point of view of a reporter, probably the most interesting period of recent Soviet history. That is all finished. There is a lot less of it.

AS: Your feel, don't you, that Khrushchev thought he had something special going with Eisenhower before the U-2 incident.

HS: Well, he thought that the Soviet Union and the United States could do a lot together as the leaders of the world. The peace of the world was in their hands and was their responsibility. He was very anxious to meet with Eisenhower, and finally Eisenhower invited him. There was the spirit of Camp David. Eisenhower had a great personality, although he was not a very good president. He did not know very much. Certainly he knew military affairs.

Khrushchev had a lot of trouble accepting Eisenhower's invitation. He had to go to China, maybe not to get clearance, but he had to explain to his senior partner Mao Tse-Tung. Mao was very unhappy about it, and still he went.

When he returned after seeing Eisenhower, he went straight to Peking for another explanation. In Peking he said publicly that Eisenhower is a man of
peace. Even Nixon believes in peace. Mao was very angry. Khrushchev said the American imperialists may be paper tigers, but they have nuclear teeth, and we must not test them. By that time, the break was already on.

He thought that with Eisenhower he had something good going for him, for the Soviet Union, and that they could do business together. He invited Eisenhower, and he was due in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1960.

In May 1960 Russia shot down a U-2 plane. They did not announce that they had the pilot. On May 1 Khrushchev was up on the tomb reviewing the parade. Suddenly the chief of the air force came running, mounted the stairs, and he whispered something in Khrushchev's ear. Khrushchev went away for about half an hour. That was to tell him that a U-2 had been shot down.

The next day or so, Khrushchev announced that the U-2 had been shot down. That was all. On our side, this was handled very badly. In the first place, the Pentagon denied that there was such a plane. Maybe one got lost from Iran. Other things were happening. There was a reception at the Kremlin at which [Jakob] Malik, now ambassador to the UN, told a western ambassador that the Russians have the pilot. That ambassador told our ambassador, who immediately cabled to Washington, but apparently it got spiked on somebody's desk. It didn't get to Eisenhower.

Again Eisenhower and the State Department put out some clumsy statement that we don't spy. Then Khrushchev told the Supreme Soviet that we got the s.o.b. and here is his picture. Why didn't I tell you this before? Because I wanted to catch them in a lie. And then Eisenhower took full responsibility for it.

Until the very last minute, Khrushchev kept saying, I am sure that the president of the United States knows nothing about it. He wanted to preserve what he had already built. The normal thing in most countries is to repudiate a spy. The other side knows it is not true, but it saves face on both sides. Eisenhower, not being a diplomat, and realizing that as commander in chief he has responsibility, said he takes responsibility. There were rumors at the time that Allen Dulles, chief of the CIA, said he would take full blame. Eisenhower said no, I am commander in chief. He said, We've got to do it, we will keep on doing it, because the Russians won't tell us themselves. We've got to know what's going on. I am vulgarizing it a bit, but that was the sense of it.

The summit conference of the four powers was to be held in Paris that May. Khrushchev got very angry. He called a news conference in Gorky Park. They had the plane there, what was left of it. It was pretty well intact. I don't know how it happened, but it was fairly intact. Khrushchev started calling Eisenhower names. Then he had an official press conference at which someone asked – maybe it was I – is President Eisenhower still coming? His answer was, What will my people think of me if I let that so-and-so come to the Soviet Union as my guest. What would he do here anyhow? Maybe he could find a job as manager of a children's camp. That's about the only use we would have for Eisenhower.

He could be tactful and full of charm, but he could also be insulting and brutal.

He went to Paris anyhow. It was clear that the summit conference would break up. Eisenhower showed up, Macmillan and DeGaulle. Khrushchev
was the senior prime minister of the four. Protocol called for the others to call upon Khrushchev. The others called on him. Eisenhower didn’t, he refused. It broke up. There was only one session. Khrushchev made a very insulting speech, he used a lot of four letter words. That was the end of the conference, and relations became very bad until Kennedy. Johnson was supposed to come to repay the visit, and he was all ready to come when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia. Finally it had to be left until Nixon came.

AS: Were you in Moscow at the time of the Cuban crisis?

HS: No. I was in Berkeley at the time. I was scheduled to give a public lecture on the Berkeley campus. For months in advance it had been arranged, and my subject was to be Russia Ten Years without Stalin. My lecture was scheduled one day after the quarantine speech. The soviet fleet was sailing for the eyeball to eyeball confrontation. If Nixon had been president, it would have been war, but Kennedy handled it very skillfully. It was avoided.

The day of the lecture, there was all this pressure. I resisted, but I finally gave in. There were about 2000 people there. For the first ten or fifteen minutes I talked about Cuba. Remember Bertrand Russell played a role sending telegrams to Kennedy and Khrushchev. I started by saying that I disagreed with Lord Russell, who was saying that in a few days we would all be dead. Khrushchev is not a suicidal maniac, and having played at brinksmanship, he would pull out. The next day one local paper came out with a big banner headline: “Shapiro says no war!”

Then I started getting calls from people in Berkeley calling me crazy. I said we would see. Well you know what happened: Khrushchev pulled out. I only talked for about ten minutes and then I talked about Russia without Stalin.

Why did I say that? I felt that Khrushchev had almost gotten away with it. He did what anyone would have done under the circumstances. Had Kennedy waited a few weeks, they would have gotten away with it. But they knew that the Russians could not stand a nuclear war anymore than we could.

A few months later, I was in Washington, and I went to call on Ambassador Thompson. He played a key role in the October Crisis, and that was exactly the advice he gave to Kennedy. He told him the Russians would not fight. There was great pressure on Kennedy to invade Cuba, or to bomb Cuba, and it was mostly Thompson’s advice. Thompson was a very sober, quiet knowledgeable man. He knew his Russians. Kennedy took his advice.

The UPI called me to say that the AP had a story that we were going to break relations with the Soviet Union. I said, Don’t believe it. From now on, we can expect an improvement in relations with the Soviet Union. That is exactly what happened. Kennedy started a long dialogue with Khrushchev by mail.

AS: Were you in Vienna when Khrushchev and Kennedy met?

HS: Yes, I was there twice. Once when Khrushchev came as a guest of the Austrian government and made a tour of the country. Then I was there for this meeting with Kennedy.

That was just an exploratory meeting on both sides. Kennedy wanted to see who our main adversary was. Khrushchev thought that Kennedy was a young
man, a playboy type. I think that both sides were surprised. Khrushchev was very much impressed by Kennedy, by his strength, his knowledge. And Kennedy was very much impressed by Khrushchev. As I said, it was just an exploratory meeting. It was just the beginning of a dialogue, which, if Kennedy had lived, would have led to very much improved relations. Kennedy certainly would have gone to Moscow to return Khrushchev's visit.

After their meeting, Khrushchev became very tough on Berlin again. He was always testing out Kennedy. Kennedy was also very tough. Nothing happened in Berlin.

The mistake Khrushchev made in Cuba was not to fully appreciate the American feeling about Latin America, beginning with the Monroe Doctrine. His reason was very simple and logical in a sense. If the Americans can have bases at our back door, in Turkey, what's wrong with the Soviet Union having missiles in an allied country, Cuba, at the request of a sovereign, allied government?

That is true, that is a legal, even a moral position. But politically, it was very stupid, because there is a special feeling in this country about Latin America.

When Kennedy started the blockade, he was prepared for war, even though Thompson told him that the Russians would not fight.

Q: Could you see signs of a growing Sino-Soviet split?

HS: Well, the fact I mentioned of Khrushchev's trip to Peking. Actually, meeting Eisenhower was to have taken place a few months earlier under United Nations' auspices. That was cancelled, mostly, I think, because of Chinese opposition. Then Khrushchev finally said he would take no more nonsense from the Chinese, and he accepted Eisenhower's invitation. Still, relations with the Chinese were good enough that he felt he had to go to Peking to talk it over with Mao Tse-tung.

After the Cuban crisis, it got to be much worse. The Chinese criticized the Soviet Union, called them cowards. Mao supposedly told a group of parliamentary representatives from Japan, so there is a nuclear war, so what? We will lose 300,000,000 Chinese, but we will still come out on top. We build on the ruins of this destroyed, capitalist civilization.

That was when Khrushchev made his famous retort. He ad libbed. He was speaking on television. He would just shove his manuscript aside and ad lib. The Chinese comrades say the Americans are just paper tigers, but those paper tigers have nuclear teeth. He said, They don't begin to understand what nuclear war means. What it means is that the survivors will envy the dead – that is what nuclear war means. He was very tough on that sort of thing.

By that time the Russians had already pulled out their specialists from China. The Chinese students were disappearing, and the Chinese were sending Russian students back.

The Chinese were never popular. In the worst period of the Cold War, the Americans were more popular than the Chinese, who were allies. Strange to believe, but it is a fact.

Q: How well were students from African nations accepted?

HS: Officially they were well received. That had a special university built for them,
the Lumumba University. They were all subsidized by the Soviet Union, all expenses paid. They had fairly good stipends. In the winter, the Russians took them all to GUM and supplied them with overcoats, felt boots, fur caps. Officially they were very well received.

The Russian fellow students did not like them. For one thing, they were pretty jealous and envious. The Americans, and all foreigners, were getting much higher stipends. They were getting stipends equivalent to beginning faculty members.

Another thing is, the Africans had read so much about brotherhood, their Russian comrades, and so on – this is on a human basis, it could happen anywhere – they would see a Russian girl student and go proposition her. If she didn't agree, she was being a racist. There were all sorts of incidents like that.

I witnessed one incident myself. A Russian couple was sitting at the table of the Hotel Metropole. At one point, the Russian man went out. An African student went over and asked her for a dance. She would not. He picked up a plate from the table and threw it at her. He started calling her a racist, fascist. Then the man came out. There was a big fight; they had to call the militia. There were incidents of that kind.

You can't blame the Africans. They were very sensitive. They see racism everywhere. This comes from the people, not from the top.

Then there were demonstrations. There was one of Ghana students. The demonstration was not really against the Soviet Union; it was against the Ghana embassy. Nkrumah was still in power. Nkrumah had been through there before, and he had promised to give them more money, let them come home on vacation every now and then. But he didn't come through. So they went to demonstrate against the Ghana embassy.

The Ghana ambassador was scared; he called the Soviet militia and barricaded himself inside the toilet. The militia came to rescue him, but the students got in first. They broke into the embassy, and the ambassador had to jump out the window. The Ghanaian students started marching toward Red Square. It was a peaceful march at the beginning, but it grew a bit violent now and then. Then they started producing placards. Moscow another Mississippi, that sort of stuff. They had to be dispersed by the Soviet police on Red Square.

That too led to all sorts of reports. Africans demonstrating against the Kremlin! It led to exaggerated reports by some of the correspondents.

Then there was the case of an African student who had a Russian girlfriend who lived in a dacha in a Moscow suburb. He went to visit her one night. On his way back to the railroad station – apparently it was very cold and he had been drinking a lot – he fell somewhere not far from the station, and he froze to death. That started a lot of agitation among the African students that he had been murdered by a Russian man. That led to a lot of stories too.

There were incidents. I think it was wrong to say that the Soviet authorities were against them. I think that they were foolish for having invited them, a situation which they could not handle.

Q: When Russian writers were experiencing the thaw, the writers in Central Asia were experiencing the reverse of the phenomenon. However, when the con-
controls tightened for the Russian writers, it somehow relaxed for those in Central Asia. Do you think the relationship between the Soviet Union and China had any role?

**HS:** I am not sure. It could have, but I can think of a dozen other reasons. A lot depends on the local authorities. Some are more cautious than others. Even when Moscow wants it a particular way. This thing is a sort of process. It started with a speech and then grew. Often it is a matter of interpretation, how far are the local authorities ready to stretch out their necks? A lot of them would not. It works the other way too. The local authorities may see the directive from Moscow more liberally.

In the case of nationalist poetry, there was a period in the Stalinist era when they labeled all these things bourgeois nationalism. If a policy with regard to such matters is initiated in Moscow, it takes a long time for Moscow to initiate the policy and then for the local authorities implement it. So in Moscow they might be just tightening, whereas in Uzbekistan they are just beginning to react to a pernicious policy. Eventually things are coordinated.

There was a lot of effort made on the Soviet side, after the Sino-Soviet break, to show how much happier the non-Russian minorities are, especially those bordering on China. At one time, you may remember, about 50 or 60,000 Uyghurs just crossed the border into the Soviet Union and asked for refuge. They came with horror stories that the Chinese were perpetrating genocide. The Chinese immediately demanded them back. Maybe in that connection the Russians were trying to show how much more liberal they were.

**Q:** Did you know Frol Kozlov?

**HS:** I used to meet him at receptions. He was Khrushchev's first deputy. He had the place that Brezhnev eventually took. At one point Khrushchev told Averill Harriman that Kozlov would be his most likely successor. Kozlov got into trouble even before he had a stroke. He was a mediocre guy, not in Khrushchev's class. Kozlov was a typical apparatchik.

But I understand that the main trouble he got into was his wife. His wife, I understand, was very greedy for things. She was collecting all sorts of jewels, a lot of it illegally. She was criticized for it. You can't do that sort of thing if you are the wife of a Soviet official. He was slipping when, fortunately for the Politburo, he had a stroke. That knocked him out of the running, and Brezhnev became the heir apparent.

Brezhnev had been President of the Soviet Union for a while, and he was removed from that post to become party secretary. I was having a conflict with my colleagues in London and New York. I was saying that this was a promotion. They said not. I said the president is largely an honorific job. Brezhnev was in charge of personnel; that is the key job in the Central Committee.
In this discussion we ranged from the reasons for Khrushchev's fall from power to personalities and characteristics of the Brezhnev regime. From today's perspective, it is of interest to note how little warning one can find in this discussion of the remarkable changes that the Soviet system would experience just ten years later, in the 1980s; this was perhaps typical of the views of “sovietologists” in the United States at that time. This despite the fact that the Politburo members as a group were old. Yuri Andropov and Mikhail Gorbachev did not appear very high on the horizon. On the other hand, could one draw comparisons in the way the Politburo removed Khrushchev to the manner of the August Putsch of 1991?

Shapiro's characterizations of the four leaders of the Soviet Union whom he had studied – Stalin, Malenkov, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev – also offer considerable food for thought. Writers often say that Khrushchev was the only Soviet leader ousted peacefully, but Malenkov had been in power for a brief time – and Shapiro showed considerable sympathy for him. For Lithuanians, the characterization of Mikhail Suslov could also be of special interest. Shapiro's discussion of Aleksandr Shelepin's chances to move from the position of heading the security system to the leadership of the party is interesting in the light of the fact that Andropov later did just that.

We mentioned US President Richard Nixon's visit to Moscow in 1972 several times in this discussion. I was living in Moscow at the time, and therefore this was a very significant memory for me. When I traveled to Moscow in the late winter, Nixon was just returning to the United States from China, and American actions in Viet Nam had intensified Soviet hostility toward him. The question had been open whether Nixon would come to Moscow in May as scheduled. But it was an American presidential election year, and the Soviet leadership wanted to judge what changes might be coming to the United States' China policy. In the end, the visit took place, and American-Soviet relations entered a phase of détente.

In regard to Shapiro's comment about the chances of women entering the Politburo or the American Supreme Court, I would note that the first woman to take
a seat on the Supreme Court of the United States was Sandra Day O’Connor, in August 1981. (She retired in 2005.)

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A5: What were the reasons in your mind for Khrushchev’s fall?

HS: There were a number of reasons. Of course the tendency in the West is always to oversimplify: to say it was because of Cuba, it was because of China, it was because of the agricultural failure. There were many reasons, not one of which would have been enough alone to have toppled him. Their accumulative effect did it. As his power increased, he became increasingly boastful and arrogant. He made decisions on his own without consulting his colleagues in the Politburo. About a year before he was ousted, he went to Egypt and gave Nasser and the Defense Minister orders; he made them heroes of the Soviet Union. Then he promised Nasser a loan of about 300,000,000 rubles. Then he telephoned the Politburo and informed them about it. That is just an example of the sort of thing he did arbitrarily.

The agricultural policy was certainly important, and the fact that in 1963 there was such a disastrous harvest, the first since the end of the war, after he had boasted that within 20 years the Soviet Union would have the highest living standard in the world. And he had done a lot of harm to agriculture, planting corn where corn wouldn’t grow and monkeying with all sorts of details in farm management.

There is of course the Cuban affair, and nepotism. When they decided to get rid of him and throw the book at him, there were plenty of sins which they could find – the fact that he was pushing his son-in-law. One fine day, he decided to send Adzhubei, who had no experience in foreign affairs, to Germany without consulting the Foreign Ministry – an official visit to sound out the Germans on the possibility of a trip to Germany by Khrushchev.

And his boastfulness, and all those various schemes of his. They decided to get rid of him, and it turned out to be very easy. He was so arrogant and so sure of himself that he did not know – on the day he was fired he did not know.

A5: Can you compare the procedures in firing him this time with the failure to fire him in 1957?

HS: The 1957 thing was a public affair, within the inner circle of the party. It was not a conspiracy. The Politburo discussed it thoroughly in his presence for several weeks and decided to dismiss him. This so-called anti-party – led principally by Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich – decided to remove him as first secretary and to make him minister of agriculture. He said, I do not accept it. You did not elect me to this job, it was the Central Committee, and I insist on a meeting of the Central Committee. The Central Committee was assembled hastily. These were his people, and he was popular with them. He had appointed then, and his name was associated with a number of popular measures. It was the height of his popularity at the time. The Central Committee supported him, and he turned the tables. It was the first time in Soviet history that the majority decision of the Politburo was overturned.
When they decided to fire him – it was basically the same Politburo as now – it was unanimous to begin with. Then it was done without his knowledge. It was very carefully arranged. He went off to the Black Sea coast. They told him, We are going to have a meeting of the Politburo to take up the following measures. He said he was tired from traveling and said they could handle those matters without him. He went off. They met and unanimously decided to remove him. They telephoned him in Sochi and asked him to come home. He said he was busy and wouldn’t go. Finally they sent a plane for him. That morning he received the French minister of culture, and as the French minister left, he said that men like him and DeGaulle never give up. He had already been fired and he did not know it. He took the next plane to Moscow, walked into the meeting of the Politburo, and Suslov read the resolution. Again he defended himself. Again he said, You didn't elect me. I want a meeting of the Central Committee. Well the Central Committee was there, they had already called it. The Central Committee, one after another, got up and criticized him. They let him defend himself. He had some people who defended him, but the majority was against him. So at one point he said, enough discussion, I see you are all against me, I resign. So technically he did resign. He went home and he wrote out his resignation, which was gleefully accepted. So there is an important difference.

AS: Now he was replaced by two people, Brezhnev and Kosygin. It was generally assumed at the time, wasn’t it, that this was a caretaker government?

HS: Yes. You could say that he was really replaced by three: Podgorny, who had also been a candidate for the succession but not a good one since he is a Ukrainian, Kosygin, and Brezhnev. Brezhnev is a Russian. He was born in the Ukraine, he lived in the Ukraine for a long time, and he is ethnically a Russian. Just like Khrushchev was a Russian.

From everything I heard at the time from Russians who were in a position to know, this was supposed to be a sort of caretaker transitional government, leadership. They first offered the leadership to Suslov, who was the senior member of the Politburo, but he turned it down on the grounds of age and bad health. So the idea was to have Brezhnev, who was deputy chief of the party under Khrushchev, until one of the younger men could take over. The most prominent candidate was Shelepin.

Shelepin in the West is always associated with the secret police, and it is true that he was chief of the KGB for about two years. But people don’t take into consideration the fact that he was the first nonprofessional policeman in many, many years. The whole idea of taking a man from the party cadre – he was head of the Komsomol – was to depopentialize the police. Not only that, his tenure of power tended to coincide with the most liberal period of post-Stalin Russia. That tends to be forgotten.

In Russia his position seemed to keep on improving. At one point he had more important jobs than Brezhnev himself. He was of course a secretary of the Central Committee, a member of the Politburo, he was minister of state and party control, which means that he had his fingers in all the cadres, and from his position in the Politburo he was in charge of defense and of security. He was really in a sense more powerful than Brezhnev. His trouble was that
he was running too early, and as rumors spread increasingly that Shelepin was going to take over, and as time passed Brezhnev was taking hold, they slowly began to downgrade Shelepin. Last year he was finally thrown out of the Politburo altogether.

Brezhnev stayed on. This was the second party congress under his leadership, and he apparently satisfied the Politburo. He is here to stay. Yes, this was the third party congress.

AS: Now you have contrasted the style of Brezhnev and Kosygin to Khrushchev's, haven't you?

HS: Brezhnev acts more like a chairman of the board. He discusses – as Khrushchev did at the beginning, but as time went by he became more arbitrary. Just before I left, Brezhnev called a news conference for eleven American news correspondents in the hall where the Politburo meets. He explained how it works. It is a T-shaped table, and of course he sits at the head of the table as the chairman. On his right is Suslov, and on his left Kirilenko. Then all the others in accordance with rank and order of appointment. These include the full members of the Politburo and the alternates. The alternates participate in the discussion, but they do not vote. After a question comes to a vote, only the sixteen members vote.

Having learned from both Stalin and from Khrushchev, Brezhnev, I think, will not commit himself unless he has a majority, a good strong majority. During the Czechoslovak crisis, when they thought they could still arrange matters, he took the whole Politburo to the Czechoslovak border, and he insisted that Dubcek bring along the entire Czechoslovak Politburo. He was not making any decisions unless he had the whole Politburo behind him. Well, he did not take them all; someone had to remain in Moscow. That is how he does things. So he cannot be blamed or get credit for what happens in the Soviet Union. Failures or successes. That is that in his favor, and that is one reason that the others have agreed to keep him on.

The other thing, speaking of style, is that he travels a lot less than Khrushchev. There was an anecdote about Khrushchev: In his last year of power, he was supposed to have written a new book – the title was My Travels, including Two Weeks in the Soviet Union. He spent a great deal of time abroad. When he came here in 1959, he traveled by slow boat; it took three weeks. He kept on staying and staying at the United Nations. At the drop of a hat, he would pick up and go. Khrushchev would boast, I did this, I did that. Brezhnev does not talk that way; actually he talks very little. He doesn't boast about surpassing the American living standard. If you study the Soviet five year plan, you will notice that their targets are much more realistic. He doesn't talk about burying the capitalists.

Aside from that he has continued Khrushchev's basic foreign policy of détente, normalization of relations with foreign countries. The Chinese policy is the same. He talks a lot less. He gives very few interviews, and he delegates a lot more power. Also, his relatives are not visible. He has a daughter who married a circus rider. You never see his wife. Khrushchev's wife was quite a person on her own; she used to make speeches and travel around. A charming person. Brezhnev's wife nobody ever sees.

AS: She came out at the time of the Nixon visit.
HS: Yes, for a few limited engagements. But if she walked down Gorky Street, nobody would recognize her. Her picture is not in the papers. Brezhnev did not bring her here. Khrushchev did bring his wife; he brought his daughter, his son-in-law, his whole family. One of the charges against him when he was ousted was nepotism, and he certainly practiced it.

Brezhnev has a son, too. He is a police officer, not political. I think he is a major or a colonel of the militia.

AS: Would you comment on the frequent efforts that are made to discover a cult of personality around Brezhnev?

HS: Of course, history of the Soviet Union does not begin with the arrival of each new correspondent. At the congress, there was a certain amount of hail the leader, hail the chief. But they have forgotten what the cult of personality was under Stalin. You could not open a paper without seeing his names in capital letters in practically every paragraph. His name was on tens of thousands of factories, schools, institutes, and what not. Cities were named after Stalin - streets and monument. You could not spit anywhere in the Soviet Union without hitting a statue of Stalin.

There is none of that about Brezhnev. In the case of Khrushchev there was very little in the beginning; toward the end there was a certain amount of adulation. One of the worst things he did was to make himself the hero of the battle of Stalingrad. It is true that he played an important role as the chief political officer of the Stalingrad front. But suddenly books and articles began appearing about how Khrushchev organized strategy. It never reached, of course, the fantastic heights of the adulation of Stalin, but it was a sort of personality cult.

With Brezhnev it is also true that after he became party secretary, they started to dig up some of the more affirmative things that he did. He was also political commissar with the fleet. In the battle of the Kerch peninsula, he is supposed to have done any number of things. But by Soviet standards, there is very little.

Every once in a while at the congress somebody made a speech where he said that under the leadership, the initiative, of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, of Comrade Brezhnev personally, but there was relatively little of that. Who know, if he lives another ten, fifteen years, it might snowball. But at the moment, by Soviet standards you can hardly call it much of a personality cult.

AS: You have been following closely, haven't you, the reports on Brezhnev's health over the past few years.

HS: Yes. I think I told you what Brezhnev himself told me when I left. He had had a heart attack twenty years earlier, but it had left no trace. He suffers chronically from sciatica, or arthritis, which is not a very romantic illness. At that age it is rather common. In the last few years, he has developed something else. He had an inflammation. You will remember that last year there was talk that he was dying. Leukemia.

But he has an inflammation of the trigeminal nerve, which can be very painful. In extreme cases, it leads to a collapse of the face or the jaw. His case is apparently not so bad, because his photographs show, and people who have seen him agree, that his face looks all right. He probably had some jaw work done. It's a painful problem, but one can function. It is not disabling.
The Swedish prime minister is now in Moscow. There is going to be a whole new spate of rumors. Yesterday he was told that Brezhnev would not see him, he is out of town. Maybe he is out of town, sometimes it is true, you know. Maybe he has an attack of this thing. Maybe it is diplomatic. The Swedish prime minister is a socialist, and he has been very critical of some of the things the Soviet Union is doing. He is very aggressive about civil rights. It is possible that Brezhnev does not want to see him.

AS: How much do we know about Brezhnev's personal habits? We get this image of a man who likes big strong cars and who likes to go hunting.

HS: He is a car buff. If you read certain sensational magazines, he has a big fleet of cars, and he changes one every day. He picked up two cars here as presents; the French gave him one. The British. Every country he goes to. He has a Rolls Royce, and of course all the latest Soviet cars.

The truth is that he can only drive one car at a time. So far as I know, all these cars go into a pool. He has one car attached to him by the Central Committee. He likes to get into a car, shove the chauffeur aside, and do the driving himself. He is a very enthusiastic driver.

He is a chain smoker. He had at one time a cigarette box with a device that locked itself. If opened automatically seventeen minutes later. After a while he got impatient and broke the lock.

He is supposed to be fond of good food and liquor, as most Russians are. And they say that he is a bit of a ladies' man too. Khrushchev was not, and Stalin was not. I cannot either prove or disprove it. He is married to the same girl, Jewish, since before the war when he was a student. They were fellow students.

He is, I think, an engineer, textile. Most of the members of the Politburo are engineers, which makes the Politburo the closest thing to a technocracy in the world. He worked as an engineer in factories, and then he went to the party higher school. After a brief career in engineering work, he went into the party, and he has come up through the party machine – Dnepropetrovsk, somewhere in the East, during the war as a political officer. He was a secretary for the Virgin Lands area.

AS: Actually, don't we find him following Khrushchev's footsteps in a number of areas?

HS: Yes, except that he was pretty far up on his own even before Khrushchev came to power. It is true that after Khrushchev became secretary, Brezhnev advanced even faster. He was elected to the Politburo; he was president, secretary of the Central Committee, and deputy to Khrushchev. In the last few years before Khrushchev's ouster, he was Khrushchev's man.

AS: Let's turn to Kosygin. How would you compare Kosygin with Brezhnev?

HS: Kosygin is a very sour looking fellow. Hardly ever smiles. Brezhnev has a lot of charm a warm person, a backslapper, hail fellow well met. Kosygin is dour. He is rated to be a very able economist, also an engineer. He started as an engineer. Then he was mayor of Leningrad. His name in the late Stalin era was associated with consumer goods. He was already a member of the Politburo. He was in charge of light industry from the Politburo and also Minister of Light Industry. Then at one point, he was demoted. People who
came from Leningrad had trouble. He was taken off the Politburo, but he was not arrested. He was given a downgraded job.

He and Suslov are the only ones in the Politburo who have been in the Politburo since Stalin. He is about 72 or 73, about the same age as Podgorny.

He had a very good reputation as an administrator, as an economist, very sharp. In the beginning, after Khrushchev’s ouster, Kosygin handled foreign affairs as Prime Minister. He did that for a few years. Since the 24th Party Congress, Brezhnev has taken over personal supervision of foreign affairs.

I had a chance to watch Kosygin at the Tashkent Conference of 1965 on Kashmir. There was a war between India and Pakistan. It was a very interesting thing to have a socialist state mediating between two warring capitalist states. That in itself was an exciting thing. The prime minister or India and Pakistan came to Tashkent – Shastri and Ayub Khan.

Shastri died in Tashkent about an hour after he had signed the peace agreement.

I was there among other correspondents. I knew the two ambassadors very well. I learned that Kosygin had the whole problem worked out in diagrammatic form on one sheet of paper which he always had in front of him. Everyone was amazed at his detailed knowledge. Gromyko was the expert, but Kosygin was not consulting him. He would go – sometimes the Indian and the Pakistani prime ministers would meet together, but most of the time they would not talk to each other. Kosygin would go to one and then the other, a kind of shuttle diplomacy. Both sides were terrifically impressed by his energy, his sharpness, conciliatory efforts.

The moment we arrived, all the correspondents predicted failure right away. They could not possibly agree. The two sides had a press briefing every day. They were terribly pessimistic. The correspondents reported that this was a fiasco. Kosygin was trying very hard, but nothing would come of it. I was the only one who kept reporting day after day that there would be an agreement. It is being worked out. The public position that both sides took at their briefings was that it was impossible: The Pakistanis wanted too much; the Indians wanted too much. But I had daily briefings with the Pakistani and the Indian ambassadors, and they were telling me all sorts of things which I could not write, but they gave me enough of a feeling of confidence that I predicted from the beginning that the war would be over.

About a day before the conference was concluded, it looked particularly dark. It looked like a complete collapse, and every correspondent in Tashkent was reporting that it was the end. I talked to the two ambassadors and to the Soviet press chief, and they told me enough to see that at the last minute it was going to be saved. I had to telephone Moscow and talk to my assistant. He would relay my copy to London.

When he relayed my copy, the editor in London said that this was impossible. It was impossible for 100 correspondents to be wrong and for Henry alone to be right. So he insisted that my assistant rewrite the story, which he did, under my name, predicting failure. I did not know about it until four hours later. I immediately dictated an angry message to London. He surely didn’t want to write what I knew to be wrong. If this was done again, I would be through.
I think without Kosygin the conference would have failed. I think he deserved the Nobel peace prize as much as several other people we know.

AS: Somewhat irrelevantly, it comes to mind that in 1947 or 1948, Stalin made a trip to the Black Sea and reviewed the fleet. Kosygin was in a painting of this.

HS: I think Kosygin was secretary of some oblast in that area.

AS: Then it was because he was a local official and not because he was close to Stalin?

HS: He was never too close to Stalin. He was a member of the Politburo, he was one of the rulers, but there was never a relationship like there was between Stalin and Zhdanov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, or Molotov. He was a respected technician and that is all. He was not a political leader.

I remember the picture. My guess is that he had an oblast secretaryship there or else he happened to spend his vacation. That is a big resort area where the Soviet government has dachas for top leaders. Nobody ever thought of him in terms of a party secretary, as a possible successor. He was a technician in industry, economics, inside the Politburo. How he escaped that Leningrad pogrom is a mystery.

AS: Would you talk a little about Podgorny?

HS: Very little is known about Podgorny except that he is a Ukrainian. He was leader of the Ukrainian party after the war. He worked with Khrushchev for many years. He came to Moscow as a secretary of the party and later as president. He had various party jobs in the Ukraine. He had at one time also a high post in the secretariat. His name was being used as a possible successor to Khrushchev. But that was unrealistic. By that time the leadership was so nationalistic that a Ukrainian would have been ruled out, and I think that that is the situation today. So Podgorny as a Ukrainian could not have succeeded Khrushchev.

Once you get to the top, having gone through all sorts of channels, you have to be pretty able. He is. People who have dealt with him think that he is a very sharp, knowledgeable man. At the beginning of the Brezhnev administration, he was one of the troika. Actually the presidency was upgraded. Under Stalin the president did not amount to anything. It was just a ceremonial office. It was like that in the beginning of the Khrushchev era too. Voroshilov was president, a man of a history name. Mikoyan was more or less a ceremonial figure. With Podgorny, the presidency became rather more important, and it looked like this troika was sharing power.

Brezhnev went on important trips abroad, and Podgorny would receive visitors. For a while, every important foreign visitor would see the three of them. Little by little it changed, until Brezhnev saw only the most important ones. The lesser ones would be received either by Kosygin or Podgorny. I still think he plays a very important role as one of the three. Actually all the decisions are made by those three and then put through the majority. Once they have made a decision, the question is discussed by the Politburo. Nothing is done without a majority vote. His constitutional function as president is that he signs laws and receives foreign ambassadors.

/end of reel/
AS: Would you tell us a bit about Suslov?

HS: He has been considered a gray eminence. I think he is neither gray nor an eminence. People forget that Suslov has been in the Politburo since Stalin. He was Stalin's ideologist, to the extent that Stalin permitted anyone to be an ideologist. He was propaganda chief under Stalin.

He was the chief ideologist in the transitional period. He was the chief ideologist under Khrushchev. He is the chief ideologist now. He was the one designated, perhaps because of his rank, to read the indictment against Khrushchev. That was October 1964. In February of that year, at a meeting of the Central Committee, Suslov made what was up to that point the most severe denunciation of the Chinese. In the course of the denunciation he made mention of the fact that the Chinese had been critical of our beloved leader Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, and he said words to the effect that they would not let those so-and-sos in China touch one of the hairs on our beloved leader's head.

For years I have been personally annoyed by the fact that whenever the situation indicated that there could be a personal conflict within the Politburo - to invade Czechoslovakia or not, to crack down on the writers or not - it was immediately decided by leading sovietologists in the West that there is a hard line in the Politburo and there is a soft line in the Politburo. The hard line was always led by Suslov. Why Suslov? This has never been answered to my satisfaction.

I objected to people in the Khrushchev era, Why is he a hard liner? I said I would like to know one quote from Suslov; I would like to have one speech cited, where he took a different line from Khrushchev, from Stalin, or Brezhnev. In other words, he is a first class bureaucrat who does exactly what the boss asks for, and he adjusts himself to any situation. That is how he has survived, just like Mikoyan, but his reputation is, and has been, as the hardliner in the Kremlin, the one who always opposed any liberalization in the Kremlin. He is always the hawk. I have written this repeatedly: There is no such zoological distinction in the Politburo. The same people may be dovish in one situation, hawkish in another. Anyone taking a contrary line must yield to the vote of the majority.

Apart from his hawkish image, he is of working class origin, of impeccable proletarian origin. His father was a worker. He came through the trade unions, the factory, the party schools. He had some engineering experience. He was at one time editor of Pravda. He has been mostly working in ideology. He doesn't look particularly bright; he doesn't sound particularly bright. No one has ever accused him of having an original idea. He is a terrible speaker.

I remember after the Twentieth Party Congress, he was giving the annual party address on the anniversary of the revolution. It was on the radio. He referred to Stalin as always the "enemy – I mean friend – of the working class." If Stalin had been alive, he would have been shot on the spot. That is part of his awkwardness, his clumsiness. He is a bad speaker.

He is supposed to have chronic tuberculosis, which disables him for several months a year. And that is about it. He has been secretary and member of the Politburo for twenty-five years, and he will go on doing that as long as his health allows. I don't think he will ever be in trouble.
AS: Are there any others among the present leadership of the Politburo you might want to call to our attention?

HS: I thought Shelepin was for many years the most interesting member of the Politburo, but now he is out. I think Kosygin is just a good leader, he is not a particular ideologist – neither is Brezhnev for that matter. But this is all this group. The average age of members of the Politburo is 68. The oldest Politburo ever, since the revolution. Brezhnev is going to be 70 this year. Podgorny and Kosygin are 72 or 73.

Very little is known about the others. Two or three of them are pure technicians. One is Marshall Grechko. Certainly not a political figure. He is just there because Brezhnev wants him when the Politburo takes up military matters. The other one is Gromyko, another technician, who is, as you know, an expert on foreign affairs. And the latest technician, elected at the 25th Party Congress, was Ustinov, who is an expert on the armaments industry. He has been minister of armaments for a long time.

Poliansky has just been ousted. He was at one time considered a possible successor to Brezhnev, but that too was unrealistic because Poliansky is also a Ukrainian, not only Ukrainian but he is half-Jewish, so he never had a chance. Anyway, the matter is settled now that he has been fired, and he has recently been appointed ambassador to one of the communist countries.

There is Kulakov, an agricultural specialist. Andropov, who is somewhat of an ideologist, but he is in charge of the KGB, and in this connection a certain amount of poetry has been written abroad saying that the KGB has more power since the chief of the KGB has been made a member of the Politburo. I think you could make a brief for the converse. The fact that the chief of the KGB is not a professional policeman but a party ideologist, who is a member of the Politburo, means that the Politburo has more control.

This has been the case since Khrushchev. The KGB has not been allowed to be a state within a state, an independent organ of power, as it was allowed one time to be under Stalin, subject only to Stalin himself, when Beria ran his own empire. That is not, I think, possible now for a lot of other reasons. But the fact that Andropov is in the Politburo does not mean that there is more power in the police. I would argue just as plausibly that it means just the opposite, more political power over the police.

There aren't any young men, and I don't see anyone who is particularly outstanding. They are all certainly very able, first class bureaucrats, a lot of experience, but there aren't any outstanding personalities. That is difficult to know. Who would have known in the Stalin era that a man like Khrushchev would have come out of the Politburo? Malenkov turned out to be very interesting. I personally regret that he did not last very long. I had a few conversations with him. A very attractive person. Very highly educated, self-educated. Probably the best orator in the Soviet Union since Trotsky. Fine pronunciation, good command of the language. When he went to London, he quoted Burns, he used Latin phrases. There was no particular genius involved; every Russian intellectual knows some Latin phrases. An edition of Burns had just come out in Russian in a translation by [Samuil] Marshak. That was the explanation, but anyhow it made a great impression in England. I don't see any persons like that in the Politburo, but there may be.
AS: At this time, then, you see no obvious successor for the Soviet leadership.

HS: I asked Brezhnev this question at our meeting. Very tactfully – I couldn’t ask him what will happen when you die. So I said, Who presides at meetings of the Politburo when you are out of town? He said, Suslov and Kirilenko. I had been of the impression that the members of the Politburo alternate. Kirilenko is a Russian, just like Gromyko. He is of Cossack origin, Russian Cossack. There are Russians with name endings like that. All the official biographies list him as a Russian, whereas Poliansky and Podgorny are listed as Ukrainians.

Anyhow they are the two senior Politburo members. If Brezhnev were to die or to retire right now, I think Kirilenko would be the new acting secretary, but the Politburo would meet right away and vote on the new person. And I think it would be one of the younger men, like Kulakov. He is a relatively young man.

Maybe Romanov. Romanov happens to be a very popular peasant name. You find plenty of peasants and some Jews too who are called Romanov. Yes, it sounds funny. When Gagarin went up into space, Gagarin was a very famous princely family. A lot of papers abroad thought he was a prince. He turned out to be the son of a peasant carpenter.

Anyway, the successor would come from the Politburo, and he would have to be a secretary. It is usually a secretary of the Central Committee, plus a member of the Politburo. The Politburo would have to meet. If this had happened six or seven years ago, I think Shelepin would have been it.

Q: Does the Politburo meet regularly?

HS: They meet every Thursday as a matter of routine. Then they have special meetings. After Nixon mined Haiphong, they argued for several days to decide whether the invitation for him to come to the Soviet Union should be cancelled. I am sure that just before the invasion of Czechoslovakia or the invasion of Hungary they met non-stop for a couple of days. Normally it is once a week, on Thursdays.

Q: What do you think the prospects are that a woman is going to get into the Politburo some day?

HS: I don’t see any immediate prospect, for the simple reason that there aren’t any women well known as in Lenin’s time, such as Kollantaj. Then there was Furtseva. She came from the Moscow area and started as a secretary of the Komsomol in Ivanovo. Then she came to Moscow and worked in the Moscow committee of the party with Khrushchev, so that he pushed her up and up. She became a member of the Central Committee and then of the Politburo. She wasn’t that good. You have to be pretty good to reach that level, and so at the next party congress she was removed. She remained in the Central Committee and Minister of Culture, but apparently she was considered the weakest member of the Politburo.

Now there just aren’t women of national prominence. There may be two or three women in the Central Committee. There are no women in the cabinet. There is a woman Minister of Social Security for the RSFSR. There is a woman Vice President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, but that is not a very important job. I would say there is more chance of a woman becoming
a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States than there is for a woman to become a member of the Politburo.

Q: Some writers have said that the main reason that Khrushchev fell was his plan to reorganize the party.

HS: Not his plan. It wasn't a plan. He did reorganize it. He broke up the party into two sections – a party for agriculture and a party for industry. It was a very unpopular thing. There were all sorts of jokes. One popular joke: Have you heard, the British have decided to have two queens – one for politics and one for economics.

That was one of his hare-brained schemes. Soon after he was ousted, they reintegrated the party. He started moving industries out of Moscow. They moved the Ministry of Agriculture to the country.

But as I said, I don't think just one of these faults of his was enough for them to kick him out. It had to be a combination.

Q: Do you think there might be something in Podgorny's background they don't want known?

HS: No. As much is known about his education as about anybody else's education. I just don't happen to remember it. If you take – there are no full length biographies about the Soviet leaders except for the top leaders. For the others, you take the encyclopedia. If they have reached the right letter, there is a brief biography. That's one source. After each Supreme Soviet they publish a book with pictures and a brief biographical sketch of each of the deputies. Podgorny was born in the Ukraine. Probably went to some agricultural school in Kiev or Kharkov. At one time they were concealing some things, which can't happen any more.

Zhdanov, from what I knew, came from a family of priests, and that was never mentioned in his biography. In the case of all the others, they say working class, intelligentsia, peasant. In Zhdanov's case, the official sources never gave his social origin.

Q: When Khrushchev was finally voted out, were his supporters fearful of speaking out and did anything happen to them?

HS: Apparently not. Look at the Politburo itself. The Politburo remained practically unchanged. They did not touch any of the important people. Khrushchev had been in power eleven years. Most of his appointments remained in power. The only exception was in his entourage.

Of course his son-in-law, Adzhubei, was kicked out of Izvestia. He remained in Moscow and got a minor job on a monthly magazine. Khrushchev's daughter has exactly the same job as she had before, deputy editor of Nauka i zhizni. His son was a nauchny sotrudnik in an electronics laboratory.

His two immediate aides: Troyanovsky, an expert on American affairs, went directly into Kosygin's office where he remained for several years before becoming ambassador to Japan. That incidentally is where Poliansky is going. Troyanovsky has been recalled to Moscow.

I think that most of the people who were in his immediate entourage remained. Now that [Jakob] Malik has had an automobile accident, the Soviet
representations at the United Nations are made by Mikhail Kharlamov. He was chief of the press department at that time.

Of Khrushchev's immediate entourage, those fired were the editor of Pravda – he wasn't very good anyhow – the director general of TASS, and a few other people like that. There was no purge. That is one of the things that Khrushchev initiated. When he became secretary, if he had started purging people right and left, they might have done the same thing.

**Q:** Does that indicate a trend that will continue?

**HS:** I think that shooting is finished. They have officially, formally banned the use of the phrase “enemy of the people.” Under Stalin it was easy: I don't like you, I don't like your nose, you are an enemy of the people. Now the phrase has been banned by law. The most that can happen is that you lose a big job.

Shelepin was kicked out. His main job was President of the Trade Unions. He lost that before, that was part of his downgrading. By this time he has reached the age of retirement, which is 60 for men, 55 for women. Malenkov was given a job and retired at the age of 60. That is what they do with them now.

**AS:** You mentioned Troyanovsky. Would you comment more on him?

**HS:** I first met Troyanovsky when he was 14 or 15 years old at a party at the American embassy given for his father who was just leaving to become the first Soviet ambassador to the United States. A cute little boy, smart. He spoke English, which he and his father had learned in Tokyo. Bot he and his father spoke English with a Japanese accent.

In the course of the years I would run into Troyanovsky when he came back to Moscow. He went to a Quaker school in Washington. He learned English very well. He became the official interpreter. He went to college near Washington. When his father was recalled to Moscow, he was in trouble. I think Troyanovsky had been involved in the Constituent Assembly. Anyway there were some sins.

He had been a very good ambassador. He used to play poker with the vice-president and senators. One of the most popular ambassadors in Washington. He came back to Moscow and was given a desk in the Foreign Ministry without any duty. He looked like a sad sack. I don't think he was allowed to do any work until the war started. When the war started, both the old man and his son had jobs in the Sovinformburo. He was made chief of the American department. His son was his assistant. Respectable, but a step down for an ambassador.

Oleg was in the Foreign Ministry. He rose very rapidly. He is a very charming fellow, a first class interpreter. He is one of the few interpreters whom Khrushchev had who would refine what he said. Others would not dare do that. Apparently he was very popular. Now he will probably get a job as Deputy Foreign Minister.

When Litvinov was fired and Molotov took over as Foreign Minister, they had already purged the best people. They had to go to factories to find bright young persons to be diplomats. When Molotov took over, he fired everyone. Certainly all the Jews and the intellectuals. The Troyanovskys were considered good enough communists still to get jobs of high trust.
People like Malik and Gromyko are of very humble origin, working class and peasant. Some of them developed all right. Take Molotov himself. John Foster Dulles once called Molotov the ablest foreign minister of our generation.

Q: Do you foresee a comeback of ideology in the Soviet Union?

HS: This is a very serious problem. They tried very hard after Khrushchev cracked down on the intellectuals. They called a special meeting of the Central Committee on ideology, and everybody thought, Aha, there is going to be a revolution. It was pretty much of a flop. They made routine speeches which didn't amount to anything. Every now and then, Brezhnev or someone says something about the need to tighten ideology – peaceful coexistence does not mean ideological coexistence, détente doesn't mean that the class struggle is all over – but I think that that is very much of an upstream job.

Q: They would probably try to revitalize ideology as a response to an outside force, such as African nationalism.

HS: They will have to take a formal position on what I consider the most important development in communist history since Tito was thrown out of the Cominform, namely the renunciation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the acceptance of the abolition of the class struggle by the western communist parties. This certainly is basic Marxist doctrine.

At the party congress, it was a little embarrassing. It was fresh, and so Brezhnev said something about opportunism, delicately warning foreign comrades about taking up opportunistic positions. But they will certainly have to take up this challenge.

With Tito, it was not a challenge to doctrine. Tito just wanted to go it alone! Here you have real revisionism. Pluralistic society within bourgeois democracy. In the case of the Italians, you have acceptance of Catholicism. Marxists are supposed to be atheists. As for immediate policy, they are in favor of staying in NATO, the common market. So I think the ideologists in the Kremlin must be worried. They must be working on some sort of position statement. They tried to get together a meeting of the communist parties of Europe and they failed.

There are no great ideologists in the Politburo. It is not very prudent to speculate too far ahead. I don't see any special developments in the next few years, at least until the next party congress. Of course Brezhnev will be 70 years old this year. If he is wise, he may ask for permission to retire. Or he may die. Stalin was 75 when he died; Khrushchev was 70 when he was fired. You can't tell, but it is not in the air.

/end of reel/
The last session focused on the Brezhnev years, with particular emphasis on dissidents and on Soviet foreign policy. The discussion of dissidents considered personalities, smuggling, and publications. The discussion of foreign policy emphasized the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the independence of the Romanian communist regime, and Soviet policies in the Arab-Israeli dispute.

In brief, “dissidents” and samizdat were forms of protest against the Soviet regime. Dissidents offered opinions, reports, even creative works that disagreed with the official party line or with generally practiced governmental standards. Their underground publications – samizdat (self publications) and tamizdat (material written in the Soviet Union but published abroad – bore no governmental stamp of acceptance, i.e., they did not pass through censorship. In their simplest forms, they might be one-page manifestos; Shapiro spoke of having seen such materials even in Stalin’s time.

In Khrushchev’s times, Andrei Siniavsky and Yuri Daniel wrote satires and critical commentary on Soviet life, and they published their work abroad, under the names of Abram Tertz and Arzhak. These were examples of tamizdat. As Shapiro relates, their trial was a sensation, but there had already been striking examples of new challenges to the principles of Socialist Realism that had gone legally unpunished: Boris Pasternak’s Dr. Zhivago and Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.

The work of the Medvedev brothers, Roy and Zhores, offered yet another model of non-conformism. They shunned the use of the word “dissident,” because it was of foreign origin, and spoke of themselves as inakomysliashchie, “otherwise thinkers.” As Zhores Medvedev once told me, he and his twin brother Roy had formed a partnership of sorts to cope with this situation. Roy would be free to write; Zhores undertook the problem of smuggling texts out of the country. It was illegal to have a printing press or a copying machine, but it was legal to have a private photography studio. As Zhores explained it, he became an expert in “microphotography,” reducing photographs of texts to fit under the back of a postage stamp. Roy wrote challenging
texts and historical studies. Government agents refrained from arresting Roy for his writings, but as Zhores declared to me, “Roy crosses all streets at the corner.”

Dealing with the dissidents posed constant tests for the correspondents. As a veteran of the Stalin years, Shapiro was known to be cautious about approaches and offers from unknown sources — as noted, Jerrold Shecter criticized him on this count — but, as noted above in Chapter VI, Shapiro himself freely admitted that this caution had cost him a sensational story about Andrei Sakharov's manuscript.

This session ended with a discussion of Victor Louis, a controversial Soviet entrepreneur who circulated freely in the foreign community and who was the subject of endless rumors and speculation in Moscow at this time. Where had he come from? Prof. Shapiro commented that Louis first worked for Edmond Stevens. I once asked Stevens how he came to employ Louis. Stevens explained that he had not known Louis before the Russian began to work for him. Stevens was preparing to take a vacation, and he asked the Soviet agency that provided workers for the correspondents for a person to handle affairs at his office for a short time. Stevens came back from vacation and discovered that the agency had sent him Louis. That was Louis's entry into the foreign community in Moscow.

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AS: Turning to the last ten years, we can start with the dissident movement. Professor Shapiro, when do you recall samizdat first appearing?

HS: There is a form of samizdat that always existed, even under Stalin. Of course it was not the phenomenon, the institution it became later.

AS: What was the form you saw existing under Stalin?

HS: For example, a group of Soviet fascists, bandits, burned a synagogue outside Moscow. The man in charge of the synagogue was killed. And they posted leaflets praising Hitler. That was after the war. About 1952 or 1953. There were little things like that; they were mostly anti-Semitic. That was a form of samizdat.

Of the more liberal kind, the kind we are used to now, I would say after the 20th Party Congress. It started slowly — letters to the government. They were not as abrasive as they are now. They were not as anti-government as they are now. Stories about camps, very much encouraged by Khrushchev's secret speech. But the big volume really came after the Siniavsky trial.

The first thing we had were the proceedings of the Siniavsky trial. The trial was supposed to be public, but the correspondents were not admitted. The wives of Siniavsky and Daniel were admitted. They would come out every day and give the correspondents on the street reports about what was happening. A couple of weeks later, samizdat put out an alleged record of the trial. After that came Ginzburg's white paper on the trial. The volume kept on increasing.

Solzhenitsyn's letter to the writer's union, for example, protesting the censorship. Solzhenitsyn's short stories circulated, Brodsky's poems. They kept on growing, and they are still growing. My feeling is that the police know about it, and they probably made the decision at one time or another to tolerate it up to a point, as a sort of safety valve, to channel it. It is small scale.
Most Russians don't really know about *samizdat* unless they listen to Voice of America or the BBC. And I think if they wanted to be as repressive as Stalin was, or Beria, they could stop the whole business. But they probably have come to the conclusion that it is all under control and that a certain degree of it has to be tolerated.

**AS:** How reliable would you call *samizdat*? What are the degrees of reliability?

**HS:** There is no easy answer. The fact that nothing that *samizdat* puts out in the form of news – I am not talking about fiction – but in reporting news, as an old newspaperman, I take the view that I must look with suspicion upon everything unless: 1/ I know that it can be confirmed independently of the original source, or 2/ I know the source. Of course by this time, some of the sources are very well known. Certainly when Sakharov says that last week so and so was tried and got five years, I think that has a very high degree of reliability. Assuming of course that Sakharov's own sources are good. He can make a slip too.

All things considered, I would give a man like Sakharov the very highest degree of reliability. There are maybe a half a dozen other spokesmen of the dissidents. Not one of them can be considered objective. They certainly have a definite point of view. They are angry people. They will never give the authorities the benefit of the doubt.

**AS:** Moving from the question of reliability, I would like to take up the question of usefulness. How useful is *samizdat*?

**HS:** It is very useful to the western correspondents, because no matter how unreliable they may seem, they are Russian sources, Soviet sources; they live in Soviet society; and they know a lot of things about what is happening in Soviet society, things which are otherwise largely unavailable to foreign correspondents. Details about institute work: It would take someone who is working at the institute to know. How the economy works: A lot of the material on which the Smith and Kaiser books are based are dissident source, and the reason that the books are interesting is that it is material which no foreign correspondent would have had an independent way of knowing.

Take for example, everybody knows there are special shops for the elite. They have sable coats, caviar for special prices. The general institution is known. But how it works, what the prices are like, who can buy there – you can only get this from someone with access to those shops. So to answer in one short word, I would say it is very useful. But it can also be very misleading.

**AS:** In terms of its being misleading, would you mention some of the types of materials which you have been offered?

**HS:** There too you have to be very skeptical. Now it is a little easier. The dissident movement has sort of crystallized, and there are half a dozen people whom the correspondents have known for some time, and they have been pretty good. In the earlier periods, you would never know. There were all sorts of crackpots and even provocateurs coming around with material.

I can give you a few examples: someone offering a set of minutes of the Politburo, for dollars; somebody knocking at my door and saying that I have an in-
vention here in my briefcase which is better than the nuclear bomb and I want to give it to the free world. Take me to the American ambassador.

Then there are genuine ones: scared people who telephone and say, Meet me on the street; I have a very important story to tell you.

Having been subjected to these various provocations, my policy from the beginning was not to meet anybody on the street, unless I knew who it was. I would get material dropped in my mailbox. There are very serious risks in there. One time someone telephoned me at seven in the morning: There's going to be a trial in such and such a court, ten o'clock this morning. Be there. I thought this was possible. I went down there. And there was such a trial.

Other correspondents are not as prudent as all that. They have not had the experience that I have had. Anything they get like that from any source, they send, and very often they get into trouble.

I will tell you one story where I was wrong. One morning I came into my office and I found a big manuscript. An alleged statement, very critical of the Soviet government, and it was signed A. Sakharov, member of the Academy of Sciences. I had never heard of Sakharov before. Of course I had a list of the members of the academy. I looked him up. Sure enough, there was an A. Sakharov.

It was quite early in this movement. Well, I did not believe it. Members of the academy were not in the habit of issuing statements like that criticizing the Soviet government. So I put it aside to check it, and I never sent it.

It took me about a week. People like that, engaged in secret work, nobody knew. Exactly what he did, how important he was, nobody knew. It took me about a week to check the story.

By that time samizdat had already smuggled it out. So I never sent the story. Now you can see Sakharov. At that time no one could see him. Solzhenitsyn systematically refused to see all correspondents, both Soviet and Foreign, until he got the Nobel Prize. Only after that did he start. He realized the value of the foreign press. Well, there are problems.

AS: You spoke of samizdat really gaining headway after the Siniavsky trial. But Siniavsky himself was on trial for having sent publications abroad. Did Siniavsky’s writing not circulate in the Soviet Union?

HS: Siniavsky smuggled his stuff out for years. I am sure the authorities did not know. His stuff was taken out by a Frenchwoman and a Frenchman. One of them was the daughter of a former French naval attaché in Moscow, who grew up in Moscow and knew Russia very well. She is still teaching Soviet literature. She used to come every now and then, perfectly openly. She would go to the Institute for Foreign Literature, where Siniavsky was a senior research man; she used to go to his home. She smuggled out the Tertz work. Other things were smuggled out by Couturier. He took some of the stuff out for both Siniavsky and Daniel. Those names, by the way, were mentioned at the trial. They can't get into the Soviet Union now. Copies were later brought in. Some of the Russians I knew got hold of copies published abroad by Posev. As far as I know, samizdat never printed Tertz.

AS: Siniavsky was a fairly well known writer, wasn't he?

HS: He was known only to the sophisticated literati. He was a writer on art criti-
cism. There would be a lot of his stuff in Novyi mir. He wrote perhaps the best Soviet book on Picasso. He wrote a book on Pasternak. People who followed developments in Soviet literature knew him as a literary critic. But you cannot say that he was known to the masses.

Actually, when Pasternak died, he was one of the pallbearers at the funeral. When I talked to him, I did not know who he was. I just talked to him. If we had been introduced, I would have known. I just did not recognize him; I had never seen him before. My wife took a picture of the pallbearers carrying the coffin across the field, and there was Siniavsky up front. During the trial when the UPI was pestering me to get a picture, I couldn't get one. It was only later that we looked through an old album, and there he was.

AS: There was a lot of comment when Siniavsky turned out to be Tertz. Many had thought that Tertz must be some Jewish Russian intellectual.

HS: Tertz was a crook in Odessa, not an intellectual, one of those Odessa zhuliks. I think he chose that name probably deliberately as a camouflage to mislead the authorities. I remember we had a session in Berkeley in 1962, people working in Soviet affairs, trying to guess who was Tertz. The consensus seemed to be that he was a Polish Jew, who had been in the Soviet Union in the Stalin era and was back in Poland. The name, he has Jewish characters in his early books. But the feeling was he made it sound as if it was contemporary; in Sud idet, the situation was true only in the Stalin period.

AS: What was Daniel doing?

HS: Daniel was mostly a translator of both prose and poetry. He is a very sophisticated and very cultured man, but he doesn't have the talent that Siniavsky had. He was a very highly paid translator. And that is what he is doing now. He refuses to leave the country. He behaves, more or less from an official point of view.

AS: What about [Piotr] Grigorenko?

HS: There is nothing double about Grigorenko. Grigorenko was the first prominent dissident that I heard of. He came out prominently in the Khrushchev era. A former major general in the army, highly decorated. I first heard about him when he wrote a letter to Khrushchev; he was locked up in a mental home.

Little by little the story came out. He was released. I saw him at the Ginzburg trial. He was on the street talking to correspondents. Later he started inviting western correspondents to his apartment, and he certainly did not sound like a schizophrenic. He sounded very sensible, but who knows how that illness works. He was wide open from the beginning, and a sort of loyal opposition. He was not an anti-Communist. All he wanted was justice under the law. In each case in which he was active, he tried to prove that it was being conducted in violation of Soviet law. I have not seen any of his stuff lately. This is the same position that Medvedev takes.

The whole dissident movement has everything: monarchists, fascists, communists, liberals, Russian nationalists. The spiritual leader of the anti-Communist movement is Solzhenitsyn. And now Siniavsky, in one of his books written in France to be published shortly, will take a very anti-Communist position.

AS: Did Medvedev make much appeal to the foreign press in Moscow?

HS: Yes. It was very slow in developing. In the beginning someone puts a manu-
script under your door. It is supposed to be Medvedev. Who is Medvedev? Little by little, they came out and started seeing the western press.

Take the Jews, for example. Who would have thought that there would be intellectual Jews who first admitted that they are Zionist, they would demonstrate outside, and demand the right to emigrate to Israel? When I had the first paper signed by Jews saying that they don't consider themselves Soviet citizens, they consider themselves citizens of Israel, and they demand the right to go to Israel, I did not use their names. I thought that it would hurt them. Then one of them telephoned me; they were offended.

The theory, which turned out to some extent to be correct, was that the more publicity their names get, the safer they are.

A5: Did you have any connections with Lithuanian dissidents?

HS: That was also very hush-hush for a long time. Because the movement grew, it crystallized, then they started getting in touch. At first the movement was centralized. Somebody like [Piotr] Yakir used to give out the information. I don't know who does it now. He was arrested before I left and turned state's evidence at his trial.

As the people in Moscow got bolder, the people in other countries, such as the Lithuanians, got bolder and bolder. Now they not only telephone correspondents in Moscow, but they telephone people in New York. And they accept telephone calls from New York. More indication of the fact that the authorities do close their eyes. People who say that it is the same as under Stalin are talking sheer rubbish. These things were absolutely inconceivable under Stalin.

A5: Which of the trials of dissident do you consider the most important?

HS: Siniavsky, of course. The speeches of Siniavsky…

/end of reel/

HS: … he left on a regular Soviet passport. Soviet passports are good for one year. Theoretically subject to renewal. Rostropovich came on that kind of passport. He says he will remain a Soviet citizen, but he will return to the Soviet Union only when there is freedom. So I think he is in for a long stay in this country.

Siniavsky left on this kind of passport. About a year later, his wife decided to go back to Moscow to consult Sakharov about some manuscript. She arrived at the Soviet border. They asked, Where is your visa? A Soviet citizen abroad has to have a visa to return to the Soviet Union. She did not know that. They held her at the airport for many hours. Finally they let her in. She saw Sakharov and a few other people; she stayed as long as she wanted; and then she returned to Paris. She could have been kept out under Soviet law.

A5: How about returning to the question of the major dissident trials?

HS: Well, you asked about important trials. Certainly the first of major interest and importance was the Siniavsky trial. The names involved, Siniavsky and Daniel. And then the way they acted. They defended themselves; they argued. Again, in the Soviet era it would not have happened that way; they would have been shot long ago. The judge would have stopped them.
I remember I was present at the Bukharin trial. Vyshinsky kept jumping up and protesting whenever he did not like something. He would stop the defendant, or the judge would stop them. At the Siniavsky trial, they said pretty much whatever they wanted.

The prosecution called some witnesses who had worked with him and they refused to testify. Then a few weeks after the trial, the chief justice of the RSFSR went to the Writers' Union to explain why the trial had taken place. He was howled down. He was asked very embarrassing questions. He was practically driven off the platform. It was a very important thing for the writers, although they felt that Siniavsky had not acted correctly. An important principle was involved.

The other important trial was the Leningrad trial of a group of Jews who had been accused of trying to take a plane to Stockholm. Another important trial was of Joseph Brodsky. Brodsky was tried in Leningrad on charges of no visible means of support. He had no job. The record of the trial is available. It must have been an obscurantist, a very ignorant court. The judge could not understand what he was doing for a living. He says, I write poetry. This is especially strange in Russia, where there is such a tradition. Even the peasants can spout poetry.

I remember at the time there was an article in Ogonek, written by a very conservative Russian writer, and he was giving the court hell: Could a Soviet court not understand that writing poetry is an honorable way of making a living? From that point of view, that trial is worth study.

There may have been more, interesting trials, but there is not enough material.

AS: Turning to foreign policy, could you tell of the view from Moscow on events in Europe in the last ten years?

HS: Czechoslovakia and Romania are two different situations altogether. In Czechoslovakia, the Communist Party was very strong even before the war. Particularly after the Second World War. In the last Benes parliament, the Communists plus the left wing socialists actually had a majority. Gottwald was a minister under Benes.

There was no Soviet army in Czechoslovakia when the Communists took over. So Czechoslovakia was the nearest that you could argue that the Communists took over without direct Soviet interference. The Soviet army, of course, was next door, and the Soviet ambassador played an important role.

There was this tradition in Czechoslovakia, and Czechoslovakia also had a tradition of democracy. It was the most democratic country in Eastern Europe after Versailles. Nevertheless Czechoslovakia immediately became Stalinist. Czechoslovakia was one of the last countries to deStalinize.

Finally they rebelled, the Communists – that is an important thing to note, this was not an anti-Communist thing; it was the communists who rebelled in Czechoslovakia against Stalinism. You have all these intellectuals, highly educated, who demanded communism with a human face. Not only that, it was probably the first time that a postwar communist government really had the support of the people.

I think that if there had been a referendum while Dubcek was still in power, I am sure the vast majority of the people would have voted for him. The reason
the Russians, I think, took such a strong view was that 1/ if Czechoslovakia had broken away, it would have seriously imbalanced the Soviet security system, and 2/ it would have been, would have had, a chain effect. It might have led to an epidemic.

Actually it took the Russians some time to decide to intervene in Czechoslovakia. I was hoping that Dubcek... Had he been a stronger man, he could have succeeded in staying in power. Had he been slower. But he lost control of the situation, the more impatient people in the party got hold, and he was too weak. He wanted too much and too fast.

In Romania, you have an entirely different situation. The Communist Party was never very strong there. The few communist leaders were put in power by the Red Army. It never had the popular support. In the beginning the Romanian government and the party were very subservient to the Soviet Union. Then they began rebelling, which was possible after Stalin’s death, on strictly nationalist grounds.

There was no question of doctrine. They never rebelled against Stalinism. It was a form of National Communism. From the Soviet point of view, it is pretty safe, because the Romanian state is still communist, still Stalinist. It is surrounded by communist countries, no common border with Germany. They think they can handle the situation. What you have there is pure national communism. If the Soviet Union takes one position at the United Nations, you can rely on Romania to take the opposite so as to assert their independence. Apparently the Russians are not worried about it.

AS: Would you comment on the development of Soviet attitudes in the Arab-Israeli dispute?

HS: In 1948, when the state of Israel was formed, the Soviet Union supported the new state. Not only that, when the Arabs attacked to destroy the new state, Israelis were able to resist and to defeat the Arabs only because of Soviet help. The Soviet help came in the form of arms from Czechoslovakia, with Soviet approval. I think the only possible explanation there is the Russians were anxious to see the British out of there. They did not bargain for the British position being taken by the United States, which they later realized was much worse.

Once they got the British out, and the Americans were expanding their influence, the Soviet Union suddenly realized that there were a lot more Arabs than Jews. They started in 1955 by selling arms to Nasser, and then by helping with the Aswan Dam. Since that time, their policy has been very consistent: The Arabs can do no wrong, and the Israelis can do no right. They say that they are not against the existence of the Israeli state, but if they get away with it, it is bound to lead to the destruction of Israel.

Nasser, an irresponsible kind of national fascist, was very anti-Communist. But he said, as one of his aides, Haikal, told me once, he learned a very good lesson from Tito: How to get baksheesh from both sides. He was using the Russians for all he could get. That has been the position all along.

There was trouble with Nasser, there were times when he spoke out against the Soviet Union. He was certainly unkind to his own communists; he fed them to the crocodiles. But the Russians were playing power politics and so they gradually extended their influence.
You know what happened. It actually started three or four years ago. The Arabs were insatiable. They wanted a lot more than they were getting. When the Russians said enough is enough, they had already invested about 8 million dollars. Sadat, who is much shrewder than Nasser, realized that the only country that can help him destroy Israel was the United States. Only the United States could exert the economic pressure to force Israel to do almost anything. The United States is the only country supplying arms to Israel. If the United States presses too much, Israel is left dangling.

So Sadat threw the Soviet advisors out, about 15,000 of them, and little by little increased his ante. Finally the Russians are out completely. Now Sadat is ready to get all the baksheesh he can from the United States. If you want any predictions, he will do the same to us as he did to the Russians. The Soviets are now completely out of Egypt. They are fairly well entrenched in Syria. The Iraqis are talking out of both sides of the mouth. Certainly the Soviet position in the Middle East is now better than it ever was, but it is shaky.

It is Kissinger's policy to get the Russians out of the Middle East. On the one hand, he has said that there can be no peace in the Middle East without Russia; on the other, with his step by step diplomacy, pushing Israel back, it is designed to keep the Soviet Union out. So you have a very strong adversary position there, the United States and the Soviet Union.

When Egyptian relations with the Soviet Union and Libya got worse, there was a sort of meeting of the minds between the Russians and Khaddafy. The Russians started selling arms to Libya.

A couple of years ago a strong Communist Party in the Sudan tried to seize power, and Sadat and Khadaffy did their best to throw them out. At that time Sadat still had good relations with the Soviet Union, and he said, I will never tolerate a communist regime in an Arab country. He did his best to liquidate the communists.

AS: You mentioned Yugoslavia. While you are in a predicting mood, what do you think are Soviet intentions toward Yugoslavia?

HS: I would guess that the Soviet Union would like to see Yugoslavia back in the communist camp. The communist fold, there is no communist camp. Yugoslavia is ostensibly a nonaligned country. Like Romania, it very often takes anti-Soviet positions in foreign policy. When Tito goes, there is a good chance that Yugoslavia will break apart. It is an artificial state kept together largely by the charisma which Tito enjoys. After he goes, the Croats are very likely to break away. There will probably be two or three states. There may be a group in Serbia which will try to get help from the Soviet Union.

AS: Would you discount the stories that the Russians have been supporting the Croats in recent years?

HS: I don't know. There is no reason why they should support the Croats. The Croats are Catholic, they are western oriented. The power isn't there. The Serbs are the strongest. As Serbia goes, so will Montenegro and Macedonia. So you have Croatia and Slovenia. From the point of view of power politics, the Russians can gain more by getting a Serbian group to work with. This does not mean, of course, that they might not, for Machiavellian purposes, work with a Croatian group to weaken Tito; they would probably do it. I have no way of knowing that they are doing that in fact.
Djilas has allegedly said to a member of the faculty: If Tito dies, and there is no Yugoslavia, that is not the end of the world. So what? If Luxemburg can exist, there is no reason why they can’t have a viable Croatia or Serbia.

AS: Do you think that opposition to the Soviet Union might keep the country together?

HS: If the Soviet Union goes in… I don’t think the Russians are that quixotic. Stalin did not do it in 1948. It is not like Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia is considered part and parcel of the Soviet system. It is within the defense perimeter. The Russians more or less accept that Latin America is untouchable.

All this excitement recently about the Sonnenfeldt speech about the organic relationship between the East European countries and the Soviet Union is part of it. I think that the phrase he used, about the "organic relationship," is a very silly one; it only led to misunderstanding. But it is part of a recognition of the situation that Eastern Europe is part of the Soviet security system.

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AS: What were the reactions of the people in the Soviet Union to the invasion of Czechoslovakia?

HS: It was mixed. Many of the intellectuals opposed it in principle. I would say that most of the Russians approved. There are about 50,000 Russian graves in Prague. The Soviet Union liberated Czechoslovakia from the Nazis. They accepted the official Soviet line. The average Soviet citizen is aware of belonging to a great superpower, and has a certain patronizing attitude toward smaller states. Yevtushenko and the dissidents took the position that this was old fashioned imperialism.

AS: Do you call Yevtushenko a dissident?

HS: He is an official dissident. I think he will not do anything that is anti-Soviet, unless there is more or less a tacit understanding that he can get away with it. He is very clever. He is usually a step or two ahead of other writers in knowing what is allowed. When he wrote his famous poem, Babi Yar, it was all right. He was one of the first to go into print saying that there was anti-Semitism. When the government cracked down, and the next edition of Babi Yar came out, one stanza was removed, and in 1962 Khrushchev told a meeting of writers there is no anti-Semitism in this country. Yevtushenko said, oh, but Nikita Sergeevich, we know there is. A few years ago, when the line had changed, he was denying that there is anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

He is allowed to travel abroad. He is published in the most popular magazines. I think there is an understanding there. I would call him an official dissident.

AS: What sort of relations would there be between the different types of dissidents?

HS: They disagree. They agree to centralize their propaganda. All the materials get abroad through the same source. Yakir, before he was arrested, was the main distributor. About the time, there was a samizdat publication, veche, fascist. It had this terrible article about the Jews – The Jews are always causing trouble – practically saying that Hitler was wrong in not killing enough Jews. Yakir,
who was a liberal, was distributing this. I asked him “how come?” Freedom of speech, of expression, he said. Certainly Medvedev is a Marxist; Solzhenitsyn is anything but. Now they have nothing in common. In the Soviet Union they sort of worked together for public relations purposes.

Q: What sort of dissident actions do you think would lead to a government crackdown?

HS: Trials go on all the time. I think it would take mass demonstrations to bring on a big crackdown: terrorism, a bomb. Dissidents are well behaved people. They are hardly known inside the Soviet Union. The Soviet government does not think the dissidents represent any danger. They think it would be worse to suppress them.

Q: How did you perceive the [Oleg] Penkovsky case?

HS: I was present at his trial. They admitted about half a dozen correspondents. Penkovsky was a Russian. I don't know what his original motivation was, but he did volunteer to work for British intelligence. They of course shared everything with the CIA. He was the highest Soviet officer to defect.

His cover job was head of a bureau and a state commission. His real job was in the counterespionage section of the army – not the KGB. He was working in rocketry. Apparently he was able to give the West a lot of information about the state of Soviet rocketry. And judging from the book which came out under his name, *The Penkovsky Papers*, published here, he was preparing to defect literally. He was promised to be made a colonel.

Apparently the Soviet authorities got on to him sometime before he was arrested. Wynn, the British agent, said in his memoirs that when he first made contact with Penkovsky, Penkovsky came to his room in the Hotel Ukraine. During the investigation, they read to him a tape recording of the conversation in this room. Soviet intelligence therefore knew of this for some time.

Q: Would you comment on this figure you tend to discount, Victor Louis?

HS: I don't discount him; he exists. But what I discount is the importance attributed to him. He collects countries. He travels. Whenever he shows up somewhere and there is a western correspondent around, immediately the story goes out that he is a representative there on a high diplomatic mission. It took him a long time to get a visa to get to this country. He went to Washington and visited Vice president Humphrey. Immediately there were stories.

He is a small time agent. He gets all kinds of news now and then that no one else gets. He must have very good contacts. But if you want to have secret negotiations with another country, there are better ways.

Q: But how could a man like this visit all sorts of places?

HS: He is certainly serving a purpose. He disseminates certain rumors, puts out certain news. He likes to travel, and they trust him. He is married to an English girl. They have two or three children. He is probably the richest man in the Soviet Union. He lives in some ways better than Brezhnev. He has three cars, a place in the country, a swimming pool. He entertains like a grand duke.

He entertains diplomats, puts them into contact with Russians. A certain number of girls are in the background. But they trust him.

He discovered one day that he had not been to Taiwan yet. He got a visa through the British ambassador for Hong Kong, from where he went on to
Taiwan. Immediately the correspondents thought the Russians would recognize Chiang. Louis got to speak with Chiang’s son.

Q: But the Soviet government is not known for tolerating the whims of its citizens.

HS: The government enjoys it. Let Mao worry about it. They have a very able diplomatic service. They don’t need a cheap, obvious police agent like Victor Louis.

Victor Louis is not his original name. His first name is Vitalii. He is Jewish. One day he telephoned. I wouldn’t talk to him; I disliked him. But there is no correspondent in Moscow who would dare not accept an invitation from him. You could always learn something from him.

He invited us to an Easter party at his apartment. My wife accepted; she persuaded me. The British ambassador was there, the Canadian ambassador. A big lavish table with paskha, kulich, eggs, and all that business. We got there a few minutes early. He took my wife into a corner and said, “Ludmilla, what do you do with these things?” It made a terrific impression on all the ambassadors. He had arranged special seats at the cathedral with the patriarch.

About a week later was the Jewish Passover. The Israeli ambassador was an atheist. But he observed. They looked for Jews in the foreign colony. There were about 100 people. Very nicely done. Suddenly Louis walks in with his wife. They read the story of the exodus. Then each one reads a part. At one point, Victor Louis read his part in perfect Hebrew. My wife later said to him, What are you? What was this pretense about the Russian church? He said, You know, I had a Russian nanny.

He married the secretary of some correspondent, an English girl working as a nanny for the British military attaché. At one point he decided it would help him to marry an English girl. He arranged to have the wedding at the cathedral. They will not marry anyone who is not baptized. But Louis was not baptized. They forgot it in his case. Then he sent invitations. He was not well known, just a clerk working for Ed Stevens. He sent engraved invitations to all the ambassadors. The Swedish ambassador called me and asked who he was.

Q: Where did he get his money?

HS: He writes articles. His official job is correspondent for the London Evening News. He sends carbon copies to maybe a dozen other papers around the world. There are maybe two or three other Russians working in this way. He has a touch of Midas, both he and his wife. She inherited money. He represents a lot of British and American firms there. They pay a lot of money. Then he put out a diplomatic directory. He has written guidebooks. He has written a book on how to camp. Louis arranged a show on NBC on Khrushchev.

When Svetlana defected and her book was about to come out, Louis shows up in France. He had a manuscript. He sold it and ruined her business. I am sure he made a fortune on that.

He is unique. He is a character. Before I left Moscow, a British publisher offered him a hundred thousand dollars for his autobiography. He is like Ostap Bender.

THE END
As an American journalist in Moscow for forty years, Henry Shapiro was something of a legend in the city's community of foreign correspondents. In 1975-1976, just two years after Shapiro had retired, Alfred Erich Senn, then a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, recorded Shapiro's stories about his work in the Soviet Union. Published here for the first time, these reminiscences offer a unique eyewitness account of Soviet life from the time of Josef Stalin to the time of Leonid Brezhnev.