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*NEW LIGHT ON OLD STORIES ABOUT
MARSHAL TUKHACHEVSKII:
SOME DOCUMENTS RECONSIDERED**

The innocence of Marshal Tukhachevskii and the other military commanders condemned with him in 1937 has become firmly accepted by both Soviet and Western historians.¹ The current scholarly consensus also includes the view that "the Nazi secret archives contain no sort of evidence of anything" like a plot between the Soviet military and Germany, that "not a jot of evidence has emerged from the German archives."² The present article re-examines some of the material bearing upon the Tukhachevskii case which has come to light so far from the captured German Foreign Office files, and con-

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1. Khrushchev's "secret speech" to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU (February, 1956) attacked Stalin for his "annihilation of many military commanders" after 1937, but did not mention any of the executed officers. Marshal Tukhachevskii was first "rehabilitated" in 1958. See Robert Conquest, "De-Stalinization and the Heritage of Terror," in Alexander Dallin and Alan F. Weston, *et al.*, eds., *Politics in the Soviet Union: 7 Cases* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), pp. 57-58. Virtually all Western scholars today accept Khrushchev's story; e.g., Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1973), pp. 300-02.

2. Conquest, *Great Terror*, p. 285; Leonard Shapiro, "The Great Purge," chapter 6 of Basil Henry Liddel-Hart, ed., *The Red Army* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), p. 70. Professor John Erickson, in his authoritative work *The Soviet High Command* (London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press, 1962), p. 464 and note, states that "not a single item of evidence has emerged to justify the charge of treasonable contact with the Germans," and "no post-war evidence has come to light to disprove this.

cludes that it suggests a plot of some kind involving Tukhachevskii and the German High Command may, in fact, have existed.

In 1974 a newly-discovered document from these files was examined by British historian Frederick L. Carsten.³ It is a report concerning high-level rumors current in Munich in early 1937, which ended up in the Vienna Bureau of the Austrian Chancellor. Among other matters it deals with relations between the German and Soviet military commanders, about which it makes four points: 1) It claims that the top men in the German General Staff, including Generaloberst Freiherr Werner von Fritsch, Chief of Staff of the German Army (*Chef der Heeresleitung*), were at that time involved in trying to form an alliance with the Soviet military. 2) It claims that Marshal Tukhachevskii had been present at the German army's autumn maneuvers in the past year (*den vorjährigen deutschen Herbstmanoevern*). 3) At that time Tukhachevskii is said to have proposed a toast to the German Army "as the champion (*Vorkämpferin*) against world Jewry," and to Goring. 4) It claims that the German military was closely following the "power struggle presently taking place in Russia," in hopes that Stalin would be overthrown in favor of a military dictatorship.⁴

Carsten denies the validity of the first three of these points on several grounds: 1) He claims that the last time any Russian officers attended German maneuvers was the autumn of 1933. 2) Though admitting that Tukhachevskii congratulated General Ernst Köstring, German military attache in Moscow, upon the German army's successful occupation of the Rhineland in March, 1936, Carsten avers that "this is a far cry from being a declared anti-semite and a sympathizer with the Nazi ideology. Even Karl Radek congratulated General

3. Frederick Ludwig Carsten, "New 'Evidence' against Marshal Tukhachevsky," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 52 (1974), 272-73. The document itself is in N(ational) A(rchives) microfilm series T-120, Roll No: 1448, pages D567 772-D 567 778; page D 567 771 is the cover letter.

4. Page D 567 777; see the Appendix for a translation of this part of the document.

Köstring on the same occasion in Moscow."⁵ 3) For Carsten, the existence of this document is explained by the story that Reinhardt Heydrich's *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD, the intelligence division of the SS) was busy fabricating a dossier of forged materials to incriminate Tukhachevskii and decapitate the Soviet military. No doubt, then, the SD would have been "spreading this kind of 'news' about Tukhachevskii, his sympathies with Naziism and his allegedly intimate relations with leading German officers."⁶

The present article uses an analysis of this report from the Austrian *Bundeskanzleramt* (BKA) as a framework within which other documents, including those from the German Foreign Office files which bear on the Tukhachevskii case, are re-examined. It examines each of the assertions (one through four) in the document, and each of Professor Carsten's objections (1 through 3).

General Ernst Köstring, former German military attache in Moscow, stated in memoirs published in 1965 that "Autumn 1933 was the last instance of Russian officers participating (*Teilnahme*) in our maneuvers."⁷ Evidently Carsten has misinterpreted this passage, for Köstring says nothing to rule out Soviet attendance at, as opposed to participation in, German maneuvers in later years. In letters to Paris at the time General Renondeau, French military attache to Berlin, reported that Soviet officers attended German army maneuvers in both 1936 and 1937.⁸ Apparently either Komkor (corps commander) Orlov (according to Renondeau) or Komandarm (army commander) Uborevich (as Walter Görlitz has it)

5. According to Köstring; see Hermann Teske, ed., *Profile bedeutender Soldaten. Band I. General Ernst Köstring. Der militärische Mittler zwischen dem Deutschen Reich und der Sowjetunion. 1921-1941.* (Frankfurt/M.: Mittler, 1965), pp. 125-26.

6. Carsten, "New 'Evidence,'" p. 273.

7. *Ibid.*, citing Teske, *Profile bedeutender Soldaten*, p. 69. These words were written by Köstring for this volume, more than thirty years after the fact.

8. Georges Castellan, "Reichswehr et Armee Rouge, 1920-1939," in J.-B. Duroselle, ed., *Les relations germano-sovietiques de 1933 a 1939* (Paris: Colin, 1954), pp. 218-19 and n. 97, p. 218.

were present at German maneuvers in autumn 1936.⁹ Tukhachevskii, Uborevich, and Orlov were closely associated with the Soviet military cooperation with Germany under the Treaty of Rapallo. This association might account for the rumor, reported in the Austrian BKA document, that it was Tukhachevskii who had attended the 1936 German maneuvers (point one)—particularly since the marshal had visited Berlin at least once in 1936.¹⁰ Thus the rumor is perhaps not very wide of the mark.

Carsten would have it (2) that it is hard to believe Tukhachevskii could have made such a pro-Nazi and anti-semitic toast as the document recounts. In fact, the opposite is true: such a statement would have been entirely consistent with what was widely reputed to be Tukhachevskii's attitude.

In 1928 a former French officer published a short biography of Tukhachevskii. "Pierre Fervacque"—*nom de plume* of the French journalist Remy Roure—had been Tukhachevskii's fellow prisoner-of-war in 1917 in the German officers' camp at Ingolstadt, Bavaria. In his biographical sketch he set down the contents of several conversations he had had with the young Russian lieutenant during their captivity, among them the following:

9. *Ibid.*, nn. 97 and 98, citing Gen. Renondeau's letter to Paris of 5 October and 28 September, 1937. For Uborevich, see Walter Görlitz, *History of the German General Staff, 1657-1945* (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 307 (German edition 1953); the whole affair is omitted, however, from Görlitz' *Kleine Geschichte des Deutschen Generalstabes* (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1967). Since the Austrian BKA report was compiled in December 1936-January 1937, it is impossible to be certain whether it refers to maneuvers in autumn 1935 or in autumn 1936.

10. On the question of this visit (or visits) see Castellan, "Reichswehr et Armee Rouge," pp. 217-18, 224; also Pierre Dominique, "L'affaire Toukhatchevski et l'opinion française," *L'Europe nouvelle*, 19 June, 1937, p. 590; Ian Colvin, *Chief of Intelligence* (London: Gollancz, 1951), pp. 39-40; Erickson, *Soviet High Command*, pp. 411-13, and 729, n. 27. Disagreement exists about what Tukhachevskii did during this visit or visits, but it is sufficient for our purposes to note that all agree he did visit Berlin in 1936.

--You are an anti-semite, then, I said to him. Why?

--The Jews brought us Christianity. That's reason enough to hate them. But then they are a low race. I don't even speak of the dangers they create in my country. You cannot understand that, you French, for you equality is a dogma. The Jew is a dog, son of a dog, which spreads his fleas in every land. It is he who has done the most to inoculate us with the plague of civilization, and who would like to give us his morality also, the morality of money, of capital.

--You are now a socialist, then?

--A socialist? Not at all! What a need you have for classifying! Besides the great socialists are Jews and socialist doctrine is a branch of universal Christianity. . . . No, I detest socialists, Jews and Christians.¹¹

Tukhachevskii never protested the contents of this well-known book. On the contrary, until shortly before his execution Tukhachevskii maintained friendly relations with Roure. He spoke with the French journalist at a banquet in Paris in 1936, and then three days later held another, private, conversation with him. Roure recalled in July 1937 that, in his book, he had portrayed the young Tukhachevskii as expressing horror and disgust for Western civilization and a juvenile love of "barbarism" in hair-raising tones (which, we note, could have come from the most radical Nazis). Twenty years later Tukhachevskii had mellowed, had become an admirer of French culture, but remained a "patriotic" pan-slavic nationalist and imperialist who felt that, by serving Bolshevism, he had served his country.¹²

11. Pierre Fervacque, *Le Chef de l'Armee Rouge: Mikhaïl Toukatchevski* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1928), pp. 24-45. Remy Roure was one of the most prominent journalists and newspapermen in France in his day, a founder of *Le Monde* and its political editor from 1945 to 1952, when he left it for the conservative *Le Figaro*. See the necrology by Louis Martin-Chauffier, "L'Honneur de Notre Profession," *Le Figaro*, 9 Nov., 1966, pp. 1, 32; also "La Carriere de Remy Roure," *ibid.*, p. 32.

12. Pierre Fervacque, "Le Julien Sorel du bolchevisme," *Le Temps* (Paris), 24 July, 1937, p. 3. Julien Sorel, the protagonist of Stendhal's novel *Le rouge et le noir*, assumes holy orders out of cold-blooded careerism; Fervacque implies this was also Tukhachevskii's motive for adhering to Bolshevism.

We have examined and rejected Carsten's first two objections to the Austrian BKA report, and in so doing have determined that the second and third points made in that report accord well with facts attested elsewhere. We turn now to points four and one of the Austrian document. The fourth point is the claim that the German military was watching the "power struggle" (meaning the Moscow trials) in the USSR in hopes that a military dictatorship might replace Stalin. In December 1936 the Soviet government assigned David Kandelaki, head of the Soviet Trade Delegation to Germany, the task of "feeling out" the German government concerning the possibility of opening secret talks. By early 1937 Hitler had turned the USSR down,¹³ as is illustrated in an interesting document, noted by Erickson, from the German Foreign Office files whose significance for the Tukhachevskii Affair has not yet been appreciated. This is a letter to Dr. Hjalmar Schacht (head of the *Reichsbank* and the person whom Kandelaki had approached concerning the Soviet Government's desire for formal secret talks) from the German Foreign Minister, Baron Constantine von Neurath.¹⁴ In this letter Neurath summarizes Hitler's view, with which Neurath also declares his agreement. This is expressed as follows:

As concerning the eventual acceptance of talks with the Russian government, I am, in agreement with the Fuehrer, of the view that they could not lead to any result at this time, would rather be made great use of by the Russians to achieve the goal they seek of a closer military alliance with France and, if possible, to achieve as well a further rapprochement with England. A declaration by the Russian government that it dissociates itself from Comintern agitation, after the experience with these declarations in England and France, would be of no practical use whatever and therefore be unsatisfactory.

13. Erickson, *Soviet High Command*, pp. 432 and 453.

14. National Archives Series T-120, Roll No. 1057, pp. 429 296-7.

Neurath adds an interesting qualification: "It would be another thing if matters in Russia should develop in the direction of an absolute despotism propped up by the military. In this event we should not let the opportunity pass us by to involve ourselves in Russia again." The Neurath-Schacht letter is dated 11 February, 1937, while the cover letter to the Austrian BKA document, on BKA stationery, is dated four days later, and the report itself deals with the previous month. Thus the letter proves that the rumor set down in the report does, in fact, reflect the real views of the Nazi hierarchy at precisely the time it claims: in other words, the Neurath-Schacht letter strikingly verifies point four of the Austrian BKA report.

In early 1937 there were two leading military figures in the Soviet Union: Tukhachevskii and the Commissar for Defense, Marshal Kliment Voroshilov. It was well known that tensions within the top leadership of the Soviet military were profound.¹⁵ Too much should not be made of an argument *e silentio*. But later in the same letter Neurath may be tacitly letting Schacht know which one of the two Soviet military leaders he means: "In this connection I should also note, for your personal information, that, according to reliable information reaching us concerning the events in Russia, there is nothing to any split between Stalin and Voroshilov. So far as can be determined, this rumor, which is being spread by our press as well, originated in interested circles in Warsaw." Perhaps this passage suggests that, with Voroshilov still a staunch Stalinist, Germany would only be interested in talks with Russia in the event of a military dictatorship under Tukhachevskii.

There remains the first point in the Austrian BKA report, the supposed attempt by the German General Staff to form an alliance with the Soviet Army. To begin with, we note that Neurath was very close to Fritsch and to General Blomberg, worked with them behind Hitler's back on several occasions, and was replaced as foreign

15. For tensions within the Soviet military leadership, see John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany. Vol. I* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 3, and *idem*, *Soviet High Command, passim*.

minister by Ribbentrop on 4 February, 1938, the same day that Fritsch and Blomberg resigned and dozens of other generals and officials were dismissed to be replaced by officers more compliant with Hitler's desire for war.¹⁶ If Fritsch were in secret touch with Tukhachevskii, Neurath might well have been informed. But there is other evidence of a Tukhachevskii-Fritsch connection.

In his famous book *I Paid Hitler*, Fritz Thyssen, the former German steel magnate, one of the immensely influential "Schlotbarone," the Ruhr heavy industry magnates, and an early member of the Nazi party explicitly associated Tukhachevskii with Fritsch: "Fritsch always advocated an alliance with Russia, though not with a Communist Russia. Attempts were made to establish relations between Fritsch and the Russian generalissimo, Tukhachevskii. The two had one point in common: each desired to overthrow the dictator in his own country."¹⁷

Thyssen was certainly in a position to know of the kind of secret liaisons he alleges here, and may have been in on it too, since by 1936 or 1937 he himself was deeply disillusioned with Hitler. Professor Erickson, who cites this passage but would clearly like to dismiss it, confidently states in the text of his book that "not a single item of evidence has emerged to justify the charge of treasonable contact with the Germans." However, in a footnote on the same page he refers to the Thyssen passage quoted above, and adds the following remark: "It is

16. There is no evidence that these dismissals (the famous "Fritsch Affair") had anything to do with Tukhachevskii. What linked Neurath with Fritsch and Blomberg was opposition to Hitler's plan to move swiftly against Austria and Czechoslovakia. See Harold C. Deutsch, *Hitler and His Generals: The Hidden Crisis, January-June, 1938* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1974), pp. 64, 70-71, 258-66.

17. Fritz Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler* (New York: Cooperative Pub., 1941), p. 163. According to Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "Fritz Thyssen und das Buch 'I Paid Hitler,'" in Turner, *Faschismus und Kapitalismus in Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), p. 95, n. 20, the Tukhachevskii-Fritsch passage occurs in one of the few chapters in German in the original manuscript of the book and so probably reflects Thyssen's personal work (Emery Reeves, Thyssen's ghost-writer, conducted his interviews with Thyssen in French).

difficult to know where the support for this statement comes from, although there was a contemporary Polish newspaper report that a letter or note from Fritsch had been seized from Tukhachevskii."¹⁸

There is yet more evidence from the German Foreign Office files hinting at a link between Tukhachevskii and the German General Staff. This is the set of documents referred to on page 435 of Erickson's study, *The Soviet High Command*. These documents record the loan, between February and November, 1937, of military court papers concerning Tukhachevskii when he was a prisoner-of-war in Germany during World War I (the court papers themselves are not extant). A study of the four loan request documents reveals that the Tukhachevskii files were requested from the Potsdam branch of the *Heeresarchiv* (army archives) by the *Wehrmachtamt, Aus.* (Ausland) VI, the section which dealt with foreigners. *Wehrmachtamt* requested it on behalf of the "GZ." This is the abbreviation for *Generalstab-Zentralstellung*, the main headquarters of the German General Staff.¹⁹ GZ was of course in Berlin, and was headed by General von Fritsch.

It is noteworthy that someone in Fritsch's Berlin HQ was apparently showing some considerable interest in Tukhachevskii at precisely the same time that: 1) the report to the Austrian BKA told of Fritsch's interest in an alliance with the Soviet military—a report backed up by Thyssen's testimony; and 2) both that report and Neurath speak of an interest in a military coup in the USSR.

Our examination of the Austrian BKA report shows that, as regards German-Soviet military relations, it is highly consistent with other evidence available. Points one, three, and four are fully consistent with this other evidence, while point two may simply be due to a confusion (or may even be correct as well). We have also disposed of the first two of Professor Carsten's objections to

18. Erickson, *Soviet High Command*, p. 464. According to Professor Alvin T. Coox, the Japanese considered Polish intelligence to be "the best anti-Soviet service in the world at the time." See his "L'Affaire Lyushkov: Anatomy of a Soviet Defector," *Soviet Studies*, 20 (Jan. 1968), 406.

19. N. A. Series T-78, Roll No. 10.

it. However, there remains his third point; that the documents might have been related to the well-known German SD plot to forge a dossier incriminating Tukhachevskii as a traitor. The whole matter of this alleged forgery is very complex, and cannot be unraveled in this article. In addition, it is in principle impossible to prove a negative—in this case, that *no* German forgery attempt was made. One can merely examine the evidence cited to support the existence of such a forgery attempt and see how it holds up. This said, several considerations are relevant to the matter at hand.

First, the crucial sources for the "SD-NKVD forgery" story are untrustworthy. In his introduction to the English edition of Walter Schellenberg's memoirs, Alan Bullock concludes: "Nor would it be wise to accept Schellenberg as a trustworthy witness where his evidence cannot be corroborated." Erickson also points out several important passages of Schellenberg's which he recognizes cannot be true.²⁰ The account by Alfried Naujocks, the SS man who claimed to have been personally responsible for organizing the forgery and who is usually taken at his word, is even more patently false.²¹

Second, according to all the accounts of the "forgery plot," Hitler and Himmler were both a party to it. But nothing of the kind could be inferred from their later references to the military purges. For example, Himmler

20. Alan Bullock, "Introduction," in *The Labyrinth: Memoires of Walter Schellenberg* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. xix; Erickson, *Soviet High Command*, pp. 731, n. 84 and 735, nn. 25 and 27.

21. Naujocks' story is in Gunter Peis, *The Man Who Started the War* (London: Oldham Press, n.d. [1960]), pp. 76-103. The names of the printing establishments Naujocks claimed to have visited in trying to find a forger do not occur in the very complete lists in the *Berliner Adressbuch* of 1932, 1936, or 1938. Erickson rejects Schellenberg's account of the forgery because "it certainly took longer than four days to prepare the dossier" (*Soviet High Command*, p. 735, n. 25); what then can be said of the later Naujocks accounts, which states that the forgery took, place in *one night*? Finally, Naujocks' account of the Polish border incident (the "Gleitwitz transmitter" affair) set up by Hitler as a *cause de guerre*, has been proven heavily falsified; see Juergen Runzheimer, "Der Überfall auf den Sender Gleitwitz im Jahre 1939," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 10 (1962), 408-26.

is reported to have discussed the Tukhachevskii Affair in a conversation with the renegade Soviet General A. A. Vlasov on 16 September, 1944, in a manner which makes it clear he believed Tukhachevskii had been guilty of some plotting: "Himmler asked Vlasov about the Tukhachevskii Affair. Why this had gone awry. Vlasov gave a frank answer: 'Tukhachevskii made the same mistake that your people made on 20 July. He did not know the law of masses.'"²²In an important speech in Posen on 4 October, 1943, Himmler stated:

When—I believe it was in 1937 or 1938—the great show trials took place in Moscow, and the former czarist military cadet, later Bolshevik general, Tukhachevskii, and other generals were executed, all of us in Europe, including us in the [Nazi] Party and in the SS, were of the opinion that here the Bolshevik system and Stalin had committed one of their greatest mistakes. In making this judgment of the situation we greatly deceived ourselves. We can truthfully and confidently state that. I believe that Russia would never have lasted through these two years of war—and she is now in the third year of war—if she had retained the former czarist generals.²³

This probably reflected Hitler's assessment as well, for, according to Goebbels (diary entry of 8 May, 1943): "The conference of the Reichsleiters and Gauleiters followed. . . .The Fuehrer recalled the case of Tukhachevskii and expressed the opinion that we were entirely wrong then in believing that Stalin would ruin the Red Army by the way he handled it. The opposite was true: Stalin got rid of

22. Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte (Munich), Signatur ZS 2, Bd. I, page 55. This document contains the notes of conversation between Günter d'Alquen, an SS officer present at the Himmler-Vlasov interview, and a co-worker of Jürgen Thorwald, the German author. The ambiguous (perhaps deliberately so) phrase "das Gesetz der Masse" could refer either to the law of inertia or to the behavior of the masses. In either case, it means about the same thing. Thorwald cited the phrase in *Wen Sie Verderben Wollen* (Stuttgart: Steingrüben-Verlag, 1952), p. 394.

23. *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal* [Nuremberg, 1949], Vol. 29, p. 111 (Document 1919-PS).

all opposition in the Red Army and thereby brought an end to defeatism."²⁴

Finally, the German forgery—if indeed there was one—does not exclude the existence of a real military plot. In fact, all of the German SD sources for the forgery story leave open the possibility that the marshal was in fact plotting with the German General Staff.²⁵

Thus the story of the "SD-NKVD forgery" is very problematic. Based purely on hearsay, it abounds in contradictions and outright lies. If it were nonetheless consistent with the other evidence concerning the Tukhachevskii Affair, it might merit consideration despite it all. But the opposite is true.

The only pre-war account of any plot to frame Tukhachevskii is that of Walter Krivitsky, which concludes that the NKVD possessed its own evidence against Tukhachevskii quite independent of any forged dossier.²⁶ This coincides with the opinion of Heinz Höhne, the most recent student of the forgery plot from the German and SD side.²⁷

24. Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries: 1942-1943*, ed. & tr. Louis P. Lochner (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1948), p. 355.

25. Peis, *Man Who Started the War*, 79; Walter Schellenberg: *Memoiren* (Köln: Politik und Wirtschaft, 1959), pp. 48-49; Walter Hagen [pseudonym of Wilhelm Höttl], *Die Geheime Front: Organization, Personen und Aktionen des Deutschen Geheimdienstes* (Linz und Wien: Nibelungen-Verlag, 1956), p. 63. A close study of these accounts reveals, however, that they are mutually contradictory more often than not and that, in general, they cannot be trusted.

26. Walter G. Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent* (London: Right Book Club, 1940), pp. 257-58. But Krivitsky's book is harshly condemned as untrustworthy by his friend of many years and wife of his assassinated friend Ignace Reiss; see Elizabeth Poretsky, in *Our Own People: A Memoire of 'Ignace Reiss' and His Friends* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1970), pp. 71; 75, n. 2; 124; 146; 204, n. 1; 211, n. 1; 269-70. See also Castellán, "Reichswehr et Armee Rouge," pp. 233, 234 & nn.; 257, n. 194, for criticisms of Krivitsky.

27. Heinz Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's S. S.*, tr. Richard Barry (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970), p. 233; similarly, *idem*, *Canaris*, tr. J. Maxwell Brownjohn (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1979), p. 248. Höhne interviewed other German sources and also studied the SD survivors' accounts; while accepting their story of the forgery plot, he believes it was not the cause of the arrests of Tukhachevskii and the others.

Important testimony asserting the existence of a real conspiracy including Tukhachevskii and other military leaders comes from Nikolai N. Likhachyov, better known as Andrei V. Svetlanin. A lecturer in Russian at Cambridge, then journalist and finally editor (1955-65) of the emigre Russian journal *Posev*, Svetlanin claimed second-hand knowledge of the conspiracy as a member, during the mid-1930s, of the staff of the Far Eastern Army (later the Red Banner Far Eastern Front) commanded by Marshal Bliukher.

In this account, the military and party leaders executed during 1937 as part of the "Tukhachevskii Affair" were in fact part of a wider conspiracy, the central figure in which was Yan Gamarnik.²⁸ Chief of the Political Directorate in the Army, Gamarnik had probably begun the plot, together with Tukhachevskii, as early as 1932. By the time of the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934, it was well developed. The plotters, motivated by the disastrous consequences of collectivization, were said to have considered two distinct plans. Plan "A," originating with Tukhachevskii and the young commanders around him, centered on a coup in the Kremlin, to be supported by party and military leaders in some of the provinces. Plan "B," envisaging independent revolts in different border areas of the USSR, originated with Gamarnik and the state and party officials in the plot, and was the version finally approved by the conspiratorial center. The Far Eastern Region was to have been the site of the initial revolt.

Svetlanin never claims to have been a part of the conspiracy himself which, he insists, was limited to men of the highest rank. Apparently no one of his acquaint-

28. A. Svetlanin, *Dal'nevostochnyi zagovor* (Frankfurt/M.: Possev-Verlag, 1953). Details about Likhachyov/Svetlanin's life are given in the necrology by N. Tarasova, *Grani*, No. 61 (1966), pp. 82-97. A very intelligent discussion, from an emigre viewpoint, of Svetlanin's account of the conspiracy took place in the pages of the journal *Posev* in 1949-50; for a complete list of the articles, see *ibid.*, No. 32 (1950), p. 10, n. I am indebted to the late Professor Nikolai Andreyev, of Cambridge, England, for additional information about his colleague and personal friend, Mr. Likhachyov, *alias* Svetlanin.

tance in the Far Eastern Army believed the Tukhachevskii Affair to have been a frame-up against innocent men. His story can be partially checked from independent sources, the main one of which is the account by Genrikh S. Liushkov given to the Japanese interrogators after his defection to them in June, 1938 (Liushkov, head of the Far Eastern Region NKVD, had been sent there to help the 1938 purge). Liushkov disclosed to the Japanese the existence of a plot in the Far East, and his account of the plot confirms Svetlanin's in several minor respects.²⁹

29. See the article by Coox cited in n. 18 above. The post-war Soviet defector Grigory Tokaev also claimed first-hand knowledge of high-level military opposition to the Stalin government which survived even the military purges; he knows nothing of any Tukhachevskii involvement, however. See his *Betrayal of an Ideal* (London: Harville Press, 1954), and *Comrade X* (London: Harville Press, 1956). A Soviet dissident account of the Khar'kov trial, in November, 1969, of the engineer Genrikh Altunian (*Khronika tekushchikh sobytii*, No. 11, pp. 312-13), states the following: "IRKHA, witness for the prosecution and party organizer of the military academy at which ALTUNIAN taught, stated at the court that it was still not certain whether Komandarm I. Iakir's rehabilitation was correct ('eshche neizvestno, pravil'no li reabilitirovan komandarm I. IAKIR')." Robert Conquest also cites this quotation, though without identifying his source, in the introduction to Pyotr Yakir, *A Childhood in Prison* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973), p. 17. Altunian was involved in dissident activities with Pyotr Iakir, son of the general condemned with Tukhachevskii. According to Victor Krasin, Iakir and he were tried in 1973 for collaborating with "the old Russian emigre organization, the National Labor Union (N.T.S.)." (Victor Krasin, "How I Was Broken by the K.G.B.," *The New York Times Magazine*, 18 March 1984, pp. 71, 75). Founded in the 1930s as a fascist-type organization, the N.T.S. collaborated closely with the Germans during their invasion of the U.S.S.R. George Fischer, ed., *Russian Emigre Politics* (New York: Free Russia Fund, 1951), p. 72. Iakir had thus been working with a fascist group whose "ultimate goal" is "the armed overthrow of the Soviet regime" (Krasin, p. 71). Almost precisely these activities constituted the most dramatic charges against Iakir's own father, condemned with Tukhachevskii—charges which Iakir believed were false. In a further irony, it was the N.T.S. publishing house, "Posev-Verlag," that published Svetlanin/Likhachev's 1952 book in which the author claimed direct knowledge of a plot against the Soviet government by Iakir, Tukhachevskii, and the others (Svetlanin/Likhachyov went on to edit *Posev*, the N.T.S.'s main journal, from 1955 until his death in 1965).

Curiously, none of the post-1956 Soviet accounts have revealed any information other than that which was already available in the West, and draw principally upon the German SD accounts of the forged dossier. Even the Western sources used by Nikulin, the "official" Khrushchev-era biographer of Tukhachevskii, are carefully pruned of evidence they contain that suggests some real conspiracy in fact occurred. There is, strictly speaking, no Soviet post-Stalin historical account of the Tukhachevskii Affair at all, since Nikulin's work, upon which all others rely, is filled out with dramatic dialog and frankly termed fictionalized (*povestvovanie*).³⁰

Taken singly, none of these bits of evidence is very significant in itself. But when considered as a whole, they constitute at least a *prima facie* case that some real military conspiracy involving Tukhachevskii may have actually existed. Nor is it difficult to understand why Khrushchev might have wanted to rehabilitate real conspirators. Khrushchev used the rehabilitations of the Tukhachevskii group as a stick with which to beat Stalin and, more importantly, remaining "Stalinists" in high places—that is, in order to hold power and support certain policy decisions. The Soviet military elite regards Marshal Tukhachevskii and those associated with him as the fathers of the contemporary Soviet armed forces.³¹ To accuse Stalin of having wrongly killed them was at once

30. Lev Nikulin, *Tukhachevskii: Biograficheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), pp. 192-93, uses the account of the forgery plot and President Benes' involvement taken from Colvin and Churchill, but omits all their evidence for the marshal's guilt. The Soviet reader would never suspect that Colvin, Benes, Churchill, and the German SD agents all believed there really had been a Tukhachevskii conspiracy (Nikulin also leaves out Colvin's name, making the source harder to identify). Cf. Colvin, *Chief of Intelligence*, pp. 39-40, and 42; Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), pp. 288-89; *Memoires of Dr. Eduard Benes: From Munich to New War and New Victory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), pp. 19-20, 47.

31. For examples, see Col. M. P. Skirido, *The People, the Army, the Commander* (Washington, D.C., n.d.; orig. ed., Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970), p. 141; V. Savost'ianov and N. Egorov, *Komandarm pervogo ranga (I. N. Uborevich)* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1966), pp. 212-13; *Soviet Life* (June 1981).

to make of the military a firm ally and to blacken any policies associated with Stalin's name.

In conclusion, each of the points concerning Tukhachevskii mentioned in the Austrian BKA document is consistent with other, independent evidence. The "German SD forgery plot" story, and the Khrushchev-era versions of the Tukhachevskii Affair, have been accorded a degree of scholarly acceptance that is not justified by the contradictions and inconsistencies which abound in them. Any new study should examine them far more skeptically than has hitherto been the case. The present scholarly consensus notwithstanding, there is little about the Tukhachevskii Affair, including the very basic matter of Tukhachevskii's guilt or innocence, about which we can be certain.

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APPENDIX

--N. A. Series T-120, Roll NO. 1448, page D 567 777.

Now as always there are efforts under way within the Wehrmacht which aim at the possibility of an alliance with the Russian army. The argument is simple: the Russian army cannot be taken care of by force; therefore it should happen in friendship. Fritsch, Admiral Raeder, and even General von Reichenau are rumored to be proponents of this plan. Blomberg is seen as a mere accessory (*Figurant*). But the proponents of these efforts are found chiefly among the younger school of the General Staff. When he was in Berlin on the occasion of last year's German autumn maneuvers, Marshal Tukhachevskii offered, in return for Colonel-General Fritsch's toast to the Russian army in Würzburg, a toast to the German army as the champion against world Jewry, and to General Göring. The power struggle presently taking place in Russia, which might possibly end with Stalin's fall and the establishment of a military dictatorship, is being followed by the Wehrmacht with closest attention, and with unconcealed sympathy for a solution of that kind.