

75 Eaton Terrace
London SW1

11 December 1961

Captain Elmo Zumwalt, Jr.
National War College
Washington, D. C.

Dear Captain Zumwalt:

I expect you noticed that my book got more and more tentative as it approached the present, and anything I say on the XXIIInd Congress I'd like to keep very tentative indeed.

I think the key question lies somewhere in your remark that Khrushchev has 'a reasonably permanent majority' in the Praesidium but has not 'made it fully beholden to him'. I take the view, on the whole, that he is forced by the (sic) of his position to conduct a struggle to eliminate all who are not 'fully beholden to him'. And thus, on what is perhaps the major power issue, he does not have a majority. The new Praesidium, on the face of it, only contains three members, apart from himself, who owe their careers entirely to his sponsorship-Brezhnev, Podgorny and Polyansky. (Among the candidates Grishin, Mzhavanadze and Shcherbitski are of course from his Moscow or Ukrainian machines).

I do not entirely agree with you about the Secretariat. As I see it, the increase in the size and power of the Secretariat in 1957 favoured Khrushchev as against the Anti-Party Group, because at that time his interests and those of the apparatchiks

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not fully dependent on him were identical vis 'a vis their rivals in the State and Army. But this consideration no longer applies, so an increase in the Secretariat does not appear to me automatically to be a sign of Khrushchev's power. Moreover, the formal promotion of Kozlov to the second secretaryship and the retention of Suslov and Kuusinen means that apart from Khrushchev himself the three members of both Secretariat and Praesidium are 'independents' Kozlov, in fact, now holds the position Kirichenko had until last year, and his allegiance is not the same. Of the junior

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members of the Secretariat, it is true that Ponomarev, Spiridonov, and Shelepin have been speaking and acting strongly to a Khrushchev brief over recent years, but it is at least difficult to sort out (or I have not yet been able to do so) the extent of their actual commitment, and their original promotions at least are not definitely identified with him. (Demichev's, of course, is).

We get rather among intangibles when we come to estimate the meaning of Khrushchev's political initiatives - in this case about Voroshilov and Co., and about China. But I should be inclined to think that it has been a mark of his political life that he makes the large scale and sensational moves, as often as not, as a means of breaking up a stalemate which is tending rather against him. That is to say, I would not necessarily agree that they are made from strength: the opposite may well be true.

I tentatively interpret the attacks on the past at the XXIIInd Congress as (as far as the power aspect is concerned) an attempt of this sort against a praesidial majority

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centered perhaps on Kozlov and Kosygin. (There was one obscure passage which might be a direct hint against Kozlov - when a Leningrad purge in 1949 and 1952 was alleged against Malenkov - I have not the speeches to hand at the moment but you will readily identify this). Again, I find it impossible to reconcile the extreme nature of the criminal allegations against Voroshilov with the appeal to forgive him. If the latter had been part of a preconceived plan then the former could and would have been toned down very considerably. So I interpret the forgiveness as forced on Khrushchev by a Praesidial (sic) majority whose power is reflected in the CC and the new Praesidium. (It should be noted, incidentally, that the demotion of full members from the old CC was almost precisely as high among the 'Khrushchevite' intake of 1956 as among those who had served earlier. (I make it that 36 out of 75 survivors of the older group went, and 24 out of 50 of the newer group. And this although the older lot included the whole Anti-Party Group.)

I'd like to think a lot more about Mikoyan before committing myself even as tentatively as the above. There was little in his career up to 1953 to suggest that his political subtlety was much

greater than that of his colleagues, and I sometimes wonder whether it is not a myth altogether, or alternatively whether the standard of political rows has not sunk considerably among the leadership over the last years. It must be easy to outshine a clod like Kirichenko! I am not convinced that Khrushchev would not happily execute the entire Anti-Party Group. Mikoyan's role here seems not so much to have been one of choosing the moderate as of restraining the (so far) restrainable.

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Have you read Meissner's book? - only in German at present, I think. It goes over much the same ground as mine and comes to fairly similar conclusions, but has a number of extra points and insights. I am glad you find mine useful, and I wish you luck with your project. It is an excessively complicated subject, indeed, and perhaps the best approach is to state alternatives, and see how the facts fit them. But I am sure that the basic point, that the struggle is inevitable, is a sound one.

Yours sincerely,

/s/ Robert Conquest

National War College
Washington, D. C.

December 1, 1961

Mr. Myron Rush
Social Science Division
Rand Corporation
Santa Monica, California

Dear Mr. Rush:

I have been working on the research project "The Problem of Succession in the USSR". I have found your 1957 and 1961 Rand Projects to be among the very best works in this field. I have come to value your judgment highly and I am emboldened to request your opinion concerning the contribution to our knowledge of the power struggle resulting from the 22nd Congress of the CPSU and the brief plenum immediately following it.

My own student view is that the departures from the Praesidium give Khrushchev a working majority but not yet a membership composed of associates completely in his thrall-i.e., he has gained further in power but is still not totally powerful. I see the increase in the Secretariat, achieved as it was by the addition of men from the Party apparat, as now being fully under Khrushchev's control. I would think that he will tend to use it more and more as the top governing body at the expense of the Praesidium. Khrushchev's willingness to bring out into the open the argument with the Chinese and the grandiose nature of his "Great Projects" program seem to indicate a confidence, greater than at previous Congresses, in the security of his own power base. His complete elimination from the Party of the ringleaders of the Anti-Party Group and the demotion of the full original clique seem to confirm that he has outpointed those within the Praesidium who may have sought to save the remnants of the Group.

I should be most grateful if you find time to concur or dispute the foregoing opinions.

Yours truly,

/s/ Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.
Captain, U. S. Navy

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The RAND Corporation

1700 Main St. - Santa Monica - California

December 18, 1961

L-25196

Captain Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.
National War College
Washington, D. C.

Dear Captain Zumwalt:

I want to thank you for your kind words about my studies of Soviet politics. Recently I have been engaged in research on other problems so I have not been as close to this one as I would have liked. I was in Moscow during the Congress, however, and did follow developments as closely as a mere tourist can, and so willingly set down my thoughts for whatever use they may have.

On the whole my views are not far from your own. I do not see evidence of a power struggle in which one faction aims at weakening Khrushchev's power while another seeks to increase it. In my view, Khrushchev is the dictator and the core of the leadership includes only men whom he wants in it; moreover, those who have been expelled from it, like Kirichenko and Aristov, lost their positions because they had lost his favor. At the same time, there is no doubt that Khrushchev's efforts to get a blood-purge have met resistance (in 1958, 1959, and 1961), and that his vicious attacks on Voroshilov at the Congress won him only a partial success. This is not surprising, since there are limits to the power of a dictator to extend those limits. But to say this is not to say, as many do, that Khrushchev's power is in danger, or that his policies originate with his opponents who impose them on him. I see no evidence for this.

Khrushchev's willingness to take on the Chinese Communists, rake

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up Stalin's crimes once again -- and more publicly, hold fast to his humiliating terms for an agreement with the West on Berlin, and reopen the attack on the anti-Party group for having dared to oppose him in 1957 -- all these things suggest to me that you are right in attributing to Khrushchev confidence in the security of his power base.

I am inclined to believe that the Presidium has not had great significance since Khrushchev consolidated his dictatorship in late 1957. As you know, two-thirds of the members of the Presidium elected in 1957 were also members of the Secretariat. (The meaning of the May 1960 changes is not wholly clear, but I doubt that they significantly increased the Presidium's importance.) I agree that the recent changes seem to enhance still further the role of the Secretariat, as well as of the Bureau of the RSFSR.

I have enclosed a piece dealing with the succession problem that I wrote before the Congress (and amended slightly afterwards) as perhaps being of use to you. I would like to receive the results of your own research on the succession problem, if this can conveniently be arranged.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Myron Rush

Myron Rush

MR:job

Encl: P-2386-1

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