

What Caused the Fall of Nikolai A. Voznesenskii? The Gosplan Affair, the Leningrad Affair and Political Infighting in Stalin's Inner Circle, 1949–1950

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The term “Gosplan Affair” appears rarely in the specialist literature on the USSR under Stalin. The reason for this is clear: the purge of Nikolai Alekseevich Voznesenskii and his clients at the USSR Council of Ministers State Planning Committee (Gosplan) between 1949 and 1952 is usually thought of as part of the larger, coterminous Leningrad Affair. Well before the opening of Soviet Party and state archives in 1991, Sovietological literature routinely connected Voznesenskii to Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov's so-called Leningrad group.¹ According to this literature, other members of this patronage network included Central Committee Secretary Aleksei Aleksandrovich Kuznetsov, Chair of the RSFSR Council of Ministers Mikhail Ivanovich Rodionov, and an array of leaders from the Leningrad Party organization—both present (like Piotr Sergeevich Popkov, Iakov Fedorovich Kapustin, and Piotr Georgievich Lazutin) and past (such as Iosif Mikhailovich Turko, Nikolai Vasil'evich Solov'ev, Leontii Makarovich Antiufeev, and Grigorii Kharitonovich Bumagin). A powerful clique, it was left vulnerable to attack after Zhdanov's untimely death in late August 1948 and many of its members were deposed, arrested, and executed between 1949 and 1950. The notion that Voznesenskii was involved in the Leningrad Affair has been reinforced by glasnost-era publications and archival research since 1991.²

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1. Robert Conquest, *Power and Policy in the USSR: the Study of Soviet Dynasties* (New York, 1961), 95–111; William McCagg, *Stalin Embattled, 1943–1948* (Detroit, 1978), 134–42; Werner Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1947–1953* (Ithaca, 1982), 129–35.

2. See, for instance, N. Zimarina, “Leningradskoe delo,” *Argumenty i fakty*, 23 April 1988, 6; V. Demidov, “Leningradskoe delo: Popytka rekonstruktsii,” *Zvezda* 1 (1989): 131–62; “O tak nazyvaemom ‘Leningradskom dele,’” *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* 2 (1989): 126–37; V. A. Kutuzov, “Tak nazyvaemoe ‘Leningradskoe delo,’” *Voprosy istorii KPSS* 3 (1989): 53–67; R. G. Pikhoina, *Sovetskii soiuz: Istorii vlasti, 1945–1991* (Moscow, 1998), 65–69; E. Iu. Zubkova, “Kadrovaia politika i chistki v KPSS (1949–1953),” *Svobodnaia mysl'* 4 (1999): 96–110; A. V. Pyzhikov, “Leningradskaia grupa: Put' vo vlast' (1946–1949),” *Svobodnaia*

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This association of Voznesenskii with the Leningraders is more than just circumstantial, of course. The Gosplan chair had much in common with the members of Zhdanov's group: he was a young Bolshevik promotee and a technocrat rather than a member of the older revolutionary generation; he came to professional prominence in interwar Leningrad; and he was known to clash with more senior members of the party leadership, such as Georgii Maksimilianovich Malenkov, Lavrentii Pavlovich Beria and Anastas Ivanovich Mikoian. But if conventional wisdom would seem to tie Voznesenskii's fall to the Leningrad Affair, doubts remain. Key materials associated with the case have never been declassified, including Voznesenskii's casefile and interrogation protocols. One of the few people to have surveyed this material, Lev Aleksandrovich Voznesenskii, argues that his uncle was implicated in the Leningrad Affair solely to justify charges that would qualify him for the death penalty.³ Mikoian and Dmitrii Trofimovich Shepilov second the idea that he was framed.⁴ Oleg Vital'evich Khlevniuk and Yoram Gorlizki have also argued that Voznesenskii was artificially linked to the Leningrad Affair and that the Gosplan Affair should be treated as a separate, discrete event.⁵

This article surveys the circumstances surrounding Voznesenskii's fall in unprecedented detail in order to clarify the relationship between these two postwar purges. It takes advantage of an array of previously unknown sources including the Khrushchev-era testimony of many of those involved.⁶ In so doing, it confirms the Gosplan Affair to have been distinct from the Leningrad Affair. That said, it challenges the prevailing view that Voznesenskii's fall was "initiated and coordinated" by Stalin, arguing instead that the Gosplan chair was a casualty of political infighting within the aging dictator's inner circle.

Ultimately, this article demonstrates Voznesenskii's fate to have been highly unusual within the context of postwar Stalinist politics. Recent scholarship contends that after 1945, the Stalinist leadership sought to exert control over powerful party bosses through specific administrative mechanisms rather than more indiscriminate political purges. Within this new *modus vivendi*, the party leadership even tolerated its subordinates' abuse of power and cultivation of patron-client networks, so long as they did not exceed

mysl' 3 (2001): 92–96; A. K. Sorokin, "Prakticheskii rabotnik" Georgii Malenkov (Moscow, 2021), 398–419.

3. L. A. Voznesenskii, *Istiny radi* . . . (Moscow, 2004), 215–16.

4. A. I. Mikoian, *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o minuvshem* (Moscow, 1999), 560–62; D. T. Shepilov, *Nepriimknuvshii: Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 2001), 144–45.

5. Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (Oxford, 2004), 83–89, which is based on O. V. Khlevniuk, "Sovietskaia ekonomicheskaia politika na rubezhe 1940–1950–kh godov i "Delo Gosplana," *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 3 (2001): 77–89.

6. In the late 1950s, the Party Control Commission (KPK) launched an investigation into the 1957 "Anti-Party Affair" that gathered testimony about Malenkov and his allies' role in the crimes of the Stalin era. Although the KPK's goal was to expel Malenkov from Soviet public life, its investigation was not purely prosecutorial—Voznesenskii's nephew, for instance, denied later that his testimony in 1959 had been coached. L. A. Voznesenskii, interview, Moscow, May 29, 2019.

their mandate or directly challenge central authority.⁷ A persuasive paradigm in many senses, it confirms the iconoclastic nature of Voznesenskii's precipitous fall.

The Quintessential Promotee

Born in 1901 in the village of Teploe near Tula, Nikolai Voznesenskii became active in party affairs in 1919. Over the course of the next decade, he first worked in the provinces before moving to Moscow to study at the Institute of the Red Professors, where he defended his dissertation in economics in 1935.

Even before finishing his degree, however, Voznesenskii began to ascend the ranks of Soviet state administration. Between 1935 and 1937, for instance, he worked as deputy chair of the executive committee of the Leningrad City Council of Workers' Deputies and chaired that body's economic planning committee. Then in November 1937, he was promoted to Moscow to work under Valerii Ivanovich Mezhlauk as deputy chair of the USSR Council of People's Commissars State Planning Committee (Gosplan). Three months later, in March 1938, he took charge of that agency after Mezhlauk's purge. In April 1939, Voznesenskii added an even more important post to his portfolio when he became a deputy to Viacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov in his capacity as chair of the USSR Council of People's Commissars—the Soviet Union's nominal head of state.⁸

In February 1941, Voznesenskii was appointed a candidate member of the VKP(b) Central Committee Politburo.⁹ A month later, he surrendered his position at Gosplan in order to concentrate on work as Molotov's first deputy at the USSR Council of People's Commissars. When Molotov ceded this position to Stalin a month later to allow him to lead the government, Voznesenskii carried on as Stalin's deputy. After the Nazi invasion, Voznesenskii retained his position as deputy chair of the Bureau of the USSR Council of People's Commissars but also followed Stalin onto the all-powerful USSR State Defense Committee. In December 1942, he resumed leadership of Gosplan as well.

After the war, Voznesenskii continued to play a central role in Soviet economic planning, working closely with Stalin, Malenkov, Mikoian and other key economic officials. He joined the Politburo as a full member in 1947; that year he also published *The Military Economy of the USSR in the Period of the Patriotic War*, for which he was immediately awarded a Stalin Prize.¹⁰ Under

7. Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Substate Dictatorship: Networks, Loyalty and Institutional Change in the Soviet Union* (New Haven, 2020); see also Edward Cohn, *The High Title of a Communist: Postwar Party Discipline and the Values of the Soviet Regime* (DeKalb, 2015).

8. Key pages of Voznesenskii's prewar personnel file are at Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), fond (f.) 589, opis' (op.) 3, delo (d.) 15787, list (ll.) 1–2. His full file is missing.

9. VKP(b): Vsesoiuznaia kommunisticheskaia partiia (bol'shevikov), the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

10. N. A. Voznesenskii, *Voennaia ekonomika SSSR v period Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow, 1947). Stalin edited the manuscript before authorizing its publication, see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (RGANI), fond (f.) 3, opis' (op.) 34, delo (d.) 70, list (ll.) 176–177, 436–438, etc.



Figure 1. I. V. Stalin and N. A. Voznesenskii, mid-to-late 1940s. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov (RGAKFD) A-7436.

Voznesenskii, Gosplan became more than just the USSR's central state planning agency, insofar as it served as a key organ for supervising the country's economic ministries and their fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan.¹¹ This led Voznesenskii into frequent conflict not only with powerful ministers and their allies, but with party leaders such as Malenkov and Beria.¹²

Voznesenskii's meteoric rise is often attributed to his intellect and talent for managerial work. On the job, he was known for being demanding, abrasive, and short-tempered.¹³ The Gosplan chair was also known for his willingness to speak candidly with Stalin, apparently considering himself to be the general secretary's economic watchdog.¹⁴ This sense of clientelistic loyalty

11. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 82–83.

12. N. S. Khrushchev, *Vospominaniia: Izbrannye fragmenty* (Moscow, 1997), 223. Although some argue that Voznesenskii and Zhdanov opposed Malenkov's traditional defense-oriented agenda with a more consumer-oriented model of economic development, others note that such a standoff is not substantiated by the historical record. Compare A. V. Pyzhikov, *Konfiguratsiia i funktsionirovanie vlasti v SSSR, 1945–1953* (Moscow, 1999), 26–27, and Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 200 n61.

13. For accounts by two of Voznesenskii's former chiefs of staff, see K. F. Vinogradov, "V apparate N. A. Voznesenskogo," in V. I. Demidov and V. A. Kutuzov, eds., "*Leningradskoe delo*": *Sbornik* (Leningrad, 1990), 298–303 and V. V. Kolotov, *Nikolai Alekseevich Voznesenskii: Biograficheskaia povest'* (Moscow, 1976), 299–301. See also Mikoian, *Tak bylo*, 559.

14. See the testimony of I. V. Kovalev, Stalin's Minister of Transport, published in K. Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego vremeni: Razmyshleniia o I. V. Staline* (Moscow, 1990), 158–61.

also led Voznesenskii to refrain from allying with other members of the party leadership or cultivating a patronage network of his own.¹⁵

Over time, Voznesenskii's ability and commitment appear to have earned him Stalin's trust. Postwar sources attest that the general secretary regarded him as his successor as head of state, much to the chagrin of others such as Malenkov and Beria.¹⁶ As Khrushchev said in 1957 during the beginning of his assault on Malenkov after the "Anti-Party Affair," "when Stalin started to promote Voznesenskii and announced that in the future, he intended to promote Voznesenskii to the post of chair of the Council of Ministers, Malenkov together with Beria did everything they could to destroy Voznesenskii."¹⁷

Even after such tensions emerged, Voznesenskii refrained from seeking common cause with his rivals' opponents. This included Zhdanov and his lieutenant Kuznetsov, who in 1946 was promoted to head up the Central Committee's powerful cadres department after a scandal in the aviation industry led to Malenkov's temporary disgrace. As such, Voznesenskii was unaffected by the crisis that crippled the Leningrad group in 1948, when first Kuznetsov and then Zhdanov experienced major reversals that probably led to the latter's death that August.¹⁸

Erstwhile Patron

Malenkov returned to the center of Soviet political life at the same time that the Leningrad group was stricken by this crisis. Most scholars agree that Malenkov attempted to exploit this opportunity in order to eliminate his long-time rivals.¹⁹ Enconced at Gosplan as Stalin's personal client, Voznesenskii merely looked on in early 1949 as Malenkov repeatedly tried to draw the general secretary's attention to minor scandals in Leningrad stemming from

15. Lev A. Voznesenskii, interview, Moscow, June 3, 2015. The cautious Voznesenskii even delayed his older brother's promotion from rector of Leningrad State University to RSFSR Minister of Education. See Kolotov, *Nikolai Alekseevich Voznesenskii*, 318–20; Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii (APRF), fond (f.) 3, opis' (op.) 58, delo (d.) 221, list (ll.) 81–117, published in V. N. Khaustov et al., eds., *Lubianka, Stalin i MGB SSSR, mart 1946 – mart 1953: Sbornik* (Moscow, 2007), 456, 515–16.

16. See the reminiscences of G. A. Egnatashvili, head of N. M. Shvernin's bodyguard, published in V. Loginov, *Teni Stalina: General Vlasik i ego soratniki* (Moscow, 2000), 49–50; Mikoian, *Tak bylo*, 565.

17. RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 210, ll. 242ob–272ob, published in N. Kovaleva et al., eds., *Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, 1957. Stenogramma iul'skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty* (Moscow, 1998), 490.

18. Stalin rebuked Kuznetsov in the spring of 1948 for attempting to subordinate state security to the party's new honor courts. Kuznetsov was criticized for other administrative errors that June and saw his cadres department dissolved that July. In the same Central Committee reorganization, Zhdanov lost control of the Secretariat. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1069, l. 28 (Politburo resolution of March 15, 1948, "O provedenii suda chesti v Ministerstve gosudarstvennoi besopasnosti SSSR"); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1071, ll. 28–29 (Politburo resolution of July 10, 1948 "O reorganizatsii TsK VKP(b)"). See also RGASPI, f. 77, op. 3, d. 4, ll. 41–43.

19. This supposition was confirmed by Malenkov's secretary, D. N. Sukhanov, in testimony to the KPK in 1956 and 1959. See RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 13, ll. 11–17, esp. 11–13; f. 3, op. 58, d. 324, ll. 1–24, esp. 4–6.

voting irregularities at a December 1948 regional party conference and an overly-ambitious trade fair that January.²⁰

Although each of these transgressions looked relatively benign on a case-by-case basis, when examined together, they suggested a pattern of insubordination and abuse of power. Eventually, Malenkov succeeded in persuading Stalin to take a closer look at the Leningrad Party organization and its leader, Popkov. On February 12, 1949, Stalin summoned Popkov, Leningrad City Council executive committee chair Lazutin, RSFSR Council of Ministers chair Rodionov and RSFSR Minister of Trade Mikhail Ivanovich Makarov to his office to discuss the issues in question. Voznesenskii was also summoned—perhaps as Stalin's economic watchdog—as were Malenkov, Molotov, and Mikoian.²¹ Although no stenographic record was kept, Popkov provided an account of the meeting 10 days later at an unplanned plenum of the Leningrad party organization. According to Popkov, Stalin reproached him for the trade fair and a variety of other infractions. Among them was the revelation that Popkov had been conducting Leningrad business in Moscow outside of normal bureaucratic channels for years, liaising directly with Zhdanov and Kuznetsov. This backchannel networking was apparently so routine that after Zhdanov's death, Popkov approached Voznesenskii about becoming Leningrad's new patron.²²

Popkov's initiative aroused Stalin's ire, as it confirmed his suspicions about the former's insubordination. It also compromised Kuznetsov, who was already under scrutiny for similarly reckless behavior.²³ Finally, Popkov's overture embarrassed Voznesenskii, for although the Gosplan chair had correctly rejected the proposal out of hand, he had failed to report it to the party leadership.

Why Stalin found Voznesenskii's silence on this matter so provocative is a bit unclear. No formal party rule forbade such unofficial contacts or obliged high officials to disclose them. Moreover, Stalin was known to encourage clientelism within the party leadership and tolerate it within his inner circle.²⁴ That said, the general secretary apparently appreciated the Gosplan chair's fanatic loyalty and obedience. How was it that Voznesenskii had not mentioned Popkov's indecent proposal in the two dozen meetings that they had had since Zhdanov's death?²⁵ Furious, Stalin dressed Voznesenskii down in front of his comrades on February 12 and again on February 14.²⁶ He then

20. On the voting infractions, see D. L. Brandenberger, "O nekotorykh aspektakh 'Leningradskogo dela' (po povodu stat'ii A. V. Sushkova 'Nebol'shoe otstuplenie ot pravil ili vyzov stalinskoi sisteme vlasti?')," *Rossii XXI* 2 (2018): 66–77; on the trade fair, see "O tak nazyvaemom 'Leningradskom dele,'" 127.

21. A. A. Chernobaev, ed., *Na prieme u Stalina. Tetradi (zhurnaly) zapisei lits, priniatykh I. V. Staliny (1924–1953gg.)* (Moscow, 2008), 517.

22. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov Sankt Peterburga (TsGAIPD SPb), fond (f.) 24, opis' (op.) 49, delo (d.) 3, list (ll.) 24–38.

23. See note 18.

24. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Substate Dictatorship*, esp. 3, 77, 88, 122–24. Popkov knew about this high level clientelism. See TsGAIPD SPb, f. 24, op. 49, d. 3, ll. 36–37.

25. Chernobaev, ed., *Na prieme u Stalina*, 512–17.

26. Voznesenskii to Stalin (February 14, 1949), published in Voznesenskii, *Istiny radi* . . . , 134.

followed these rebukes with a formal censure that was included in the explosive February 15 Politburo resolution that stripped Popkov, Kuznetsov, and Rodionov of their posts. Although this resolution allowed Voznesenskii to retain his official appointments, his position within Stalin's inner circle had been compromised.²⁷

Creative Bookkeeping

Within days, Voznesenskii's rivals found a way to capitalize on his new vulnerability. In early February 1949, Mikhail Trofimovich Pomaznev, Lazar' Moiseevich Kaganovich's first deputy at the USSR State Supply Committee (Gossnab), found discrepancies in Gosplan's January 1949 economic projections. Official claims of successful economic planning, according to Pomaznev, concealed evidence of unacknowledged reductions in official plan targets. Working with other top aides at Gossnab, Pomaznev prepared a report on the discrepancies for the Bureau of the USSR Council of Ministers. When asked about this report many years later in 1959, Pomaznev recalled that when it was ready, he and his colleagues decided that they better consult with Kaganovich before submitting it. This required Pomaznev to call Kaganovich on a secure government line, as the latter was on vacation in Sukhumi. Kaganovich immediately realized how provocative the report was and had Pomaznev read the entire text to him over the phone. After correcting a few turns of phrase, Kaganovich authorized its submission to Stalin at the Bureau of the USSR Council of Ministers on February 11.²⁸

Shortly thereafter, according to Pomaznev, he received a highly unusual telephone call at home one evening from Malenkov. Apparently, Stalin had tasked Malenkov with looking into the situation at Gosplan after Voznesenskii's fall from grace on February 12. Malenkov began the call by asking Pomaznev about the origins of his report. Did it stem from ordinary Gossnab accounting work or had Kaganovich initiated it himself? Learning that Kaganovich had had nothing to do with its origins, Malenkov then asked Pomaznev to explain to him precisely what he had uncovered. According to Pomaznev, once he had finished narrating the story to Malenkov, he was forced to repeat it again, word for word, to Beria, who was with Malenkov and wanted to hear it for himself.²⁹

In Malenkov's hands, Pomaznev's report quickly triggered a new scandal for Voznesenskii.³⁰ Although there are four retrospective accounts that describe it—that of Pomaznev himself, Voznesenskii's deputy, Konstantin Fedorovich Vinogradov, Voznesenskii's nephew, Lev Voznesenskii, and

27. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 163, d. 1520, ll. 125–127 (Politburo resolution of February 15, 1949, "Ob antipartiinykh deistviiakh chlena TsK VKP(b) A. A. Kuznetsov i kandidatov v chleny TsK VKP(b) t. t. Rodionov M. I. i Popkova P. S.").

28. Pomaznev wrote two long letters about the fall of Voznesenskii to the KPK in 1959—see RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, ll. 15–29, 30–37. For the report itself, see Pomaznev to Stalin (February 11, 1949), RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 98, ll. 124–127.

29. RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 21.

30. Aware that he was in trouble, Voznesenskii apparently tried to contain the scandal by revising the plan on February 18. See RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 99, l. 12.

Mikoian³¹—the archival record supplies the most reliable telling of the events. As is well known, Soviet economic production tended to fluctuate during the year. Productivity in January was usually lackluster but would pick up in the spring before slumping in the late summer, only to peak again toward the end of the year. Some of this stemmed from the politics of plan fulfillment, but much of the rest was a result of seasonal variation in economic sectors affected by the weather.

As normative as this fluctuation was, it bothered Stalin enough to lead him to demand in September 1947 that economic growth be planned in a way that would produce more consistent results.³² Difficulties in realizing this objective forced Voznesenskii to engage in creative bookkeeping in early 1948: calculating the first quarterly production plan for the year, he excluded those sectors of the economy from his accounting that were the most sensitive to seasonal shifts. Only by means of such a methodology was he able to produce economic performance figures that did not fluctuate.³³

Voznesenskii encountered greater difficulties in production planning for 1949, insofar as he had to not only uphold Stalin's demand for stability, but also to insure that the first quarter's production gains would supersede 1948's fourth quarter output by 5 percent. That said, Voznesenskii stubbornly pressed on, basing his January 1949 production targets on what he estimated to be the value of USSR economic production for the fourth quarter of 1948—about 43.5 billion rubles.³⁴

After Voznesenskii's plan was drafted but before it was signed into law, the Gosplan chair received a report from his aides warning that 1948's fourth quarter production levels had been miscalculated and would now total 45.7 billion rubles—output figures that were 5 percent higher than expected. Good news at first glance, this overproduction was actually very bad, insofar as it now jeopardized the successful fulfillment of 1949's first quarter plan, whose targets had been set too low.³⁵

Voznesenskii's aides claimed that the target could still be met, but only at the cost of reducing overall economic growth in 1949 from 19 to 17 percent. Although Voznesenskii initially agreed to this adjustment, he later changed

31. See Vinogradov, "V apparate N. A. Voznesenskogo," 302; Voznesenskii, *Istiny radi...*, 98–99, 138–39; Mikoian, *Tak bylo*, 560–61. Khlevniuk and Gorlizki rely heavily on Mikoian in *Cold Peace*, 83–89.

32. USSR Council of Ministers resolution of September 29, 1947, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), fond (f.) r-5446, opis' (op.) 106, delo (d.) 277, list (ll.) 236–267 (O meropriiatiakh po podgotovke k zime 1947–1948 goda i obespecheniiu rosta promyshlennogo proizvodstva v 1 kvartale 1948 goda).

33. The 1948 plan forbade seasonal fluctuation in industrial production but avoided mention of similar concerns in agriculture. See USSR Council of Ministers resolution of February 12, 1948, RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 95, ll. 77–141, here 91 (O gosudarstvennom plane vosstanovleniia i razvitiia narodnogo khoziaistva na 1948 god); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1074, ll. 59, 107–116 (Politburo resolution of March 5, 1949 "O Gosplane SSSR").

34. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 98, ll. 9–120, here 24, 17 (USSR Council of Ministers resolution of December 28, 1948, "O gosudarstvennom plane vosstanovleniia i razvitiia narodnogo khoziaistva na 1949 god").

35. RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 530, ll. 8–13 (B. Sukharevskii, P. Ivanov and A. Galitskii to Voznesenskii, December 15, 1948).

his mind and orally informed an aide that the plan was to be implemented as originally devised. Perhaps he did not want to bother Stalin with such routine revisions. Perhaps he assumed that no one would notice or challenge his judgement. In any case, Voznesenskii again was forced to engage in creative bookkeeping in order to keep production figures in line with official expectations. First, as in 1948, he excluded seasonal sectors of the economy from official calculations. Second, he altered the way in which 1948's production figures would be compared to output in 1949 by changing the formula to count business days instead of calendar days. This new methodology allowed the 1949 plan to deliver a 4.4 percent rate of growth during the first quarter. Of course, it also threatened to produce unrealistically high production increases in some economic sectors, leading Voznesenskii to instruct several ministries to lower their targets in order to keep their figures in line with the plan.³⁶

It was these changes that Pomaznev noticed when they were published in early 1949. How could the monthly plan for January have been fulfilled if certain production levels were lower than in 1948? Aggregating together the output of the entire Soviet economy according to traditional accounting methods, Pomaznev and his aides calculated that production during January had not only not reached its target of 5 percent growth, but had actually declined in some sectors in comparison to December 1948. According to Pomaznev, such economic performance required investigation, insofar as it imperiled the completion of the entire plan for 1949.³⁷

After Malenkov raised the alarm over Pomaznev's report, Stalin had the Bureau of the USSR Council of Ministers convene an ad hoc commission to investigate the issue. When Pomaznev was summoned to present his findings to the first meeting of this body in mid-to-late February, he found himself in the middle of an inter-institutional firestorm, with much of the commission—Malenkov, Beria, Mikoian, Kaganovich, Nikolai Aleksandrovich Bulganin, Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov, Aleksei Nikolaevich Kosygin, Viacheslav Aleksandrovich Malyshev, and Maksim Zakharovich Saburov—allying with the head of the Central Statistical Directorate, Vladimir Nikonovich Starovskii—against Voznesenskii and his aides.³⁸

In his presentation, Pomaznev argued that according to traditional accounting principles, Gosplan's claim was untrue that production targets for January had been met. Indeed, January production levels amounted to only 99.3 percent of the preceding month's production, with certain sectors boasting significantly less impressive figures. Voznesenskii countered that Pomaznev's concerns were misplaced. According to the Gosplan formula, if production was calculated on the basis of business days rather than calendar days, and if

36. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 99, ll. 1, 2–14 (“Doklad Biuro Soveta Ministrov SSSR I. V. Stalinu o rezul'tatakh rassmotreniia zapiski o plane proizvodstva promyshlennoi produktsii na I kvartal 1949,” March 1, 1949); see also RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 530, ll. 20–32.

37. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 98, ll. 124–127; f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 21 (Pomaznev to Stalin, February 11, 1949).

38. RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 21.

seasonal sectors of the economy were excluded from the accounting, then the January targets had been missed by just .6 percent, rather than 5.7 percent.³⁹

Although Voznesenskii and his aides forcefully argued their case, the commission was unpersuaded. Voznesenskii's exclusion of seasonal economic sectors contradicted the intent of the 1947 resolution on achieving a more stable pattern of economic growth. His insistence that business days be used instead of calendar days contradicted established accounting practice. And his instructions to several ministries to lower production targets appeared highly irregular. Taken together, these bookkeeping practices looked like fraud. Worse, Voznesenskii appeared to have been aware of the problem, insofar as he had made these adjustments after being informed of the impending production shortfalls. The commission concluded that Voznesenskii had made a mistake and then attempted to cover it up.⁴⁰

According to Pomaznev, the commission then met for several more days, during which Malenkov, Beria, and Saburov indicted Voznesenskii not only for his accounting machinations, but for other shortcomings as well. Cadres policy loomed large as allegations were made that Voznesenskii had colluded with his aides to deceive the USSR Council of Ministers even after the investigative commission was formed. Pomaznev recalled in 1959 that Starovskii urged the commission to condemn Voznesenskii's actions in the harshest of terms, quoting Stalin's well-known maxim that any bureaucratic attempt to adjust figures to fit the plan should be considered a criminal act. Although Stalin did not attend the commission's hearings himself, Mikoian and Kaganovich participated in its final deliberations, signaling their importance.⁴¹

When the commission concluded its work, Pomaznev was ordered to compile a summary of its findings. Years later, he recalled that Malenkov and Beria criticized the draft that he prepared, insofar as it focused solely on Voznesenskii's bookkeeping and made no mention of his other failings. That said, Pomaznev's report was forwarded to the Bureau of the USSR Council of Ministers after minor revisions.⁴²

On March 1, 1949, the Bureau of the USSR Council of Ministers presented a report to Stalin that conveyed Pomaznev's major findings. Focusing on Voznesenskii's accounting practices at Gosplan, the report detailed the irregularities and recommended a series of correctives.⁴³ According to Mikoian, the report outraged Stalin: "So this means that Voznesenskii has been deceiving the Politburo and tricking us like fools?" he apparently exclaimed. "How can we tolerate a member of the Politburo deceiving the Politburo? We can't keep such a person in the Politburo or as head of Gosplan."⁴⁴

Four days later, the USSR Council of Ministers passed a resolution over Stalin's signature that assumed a much harsher tone than its bureau had.

39. RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 530, ll. 20–21.

40. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1074, ll. 59, 107–116; RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 22.

41. RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 22. On bookkeeping machinations, see I. V. Stalin, "Politicheskii otchet Tsentral'nogo komiteta VKP(b) XIV s"ezdu VKP(b) 18 dekabria 1925 g.," *Pravda*, December 22, 1925, 2.

42. RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, ll. 22–23; RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 530, ll. 20–32.

43. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 99, ll. 1, 2–14. See also RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 530, ll. 20–32.

44. Mikoian, *Tak bylo*, 560–561.

Criticizing Voznesenskii and his aides Andrei Dmitrievich Panov and Boris Mikhailovich Sukharevskii for conspiring to commit fraud, the resolution demanded their dismissal and an investigation not only of the Gosplan leadership, but of the agency itself. The Politburo ratified this resolution immediately, dismissing Voznesenskii from both his post at Gosplan and the Politburo as well.⁴⁵

As devastating as this resolution was, it did not put an end to Voznesenskii's career. It neither stripped him of his party membership nor did it dismiss him from the Central Committee. It also neither referred his case to the Party Control Commission (KPK) nor the Ministry of State Security (MGB). Instead, Khrushchev later recalled that in the wake of this debacle, the former Gosplan chair continued to be invited to Stalin's dacha from time to time and was regarded as a possible candidate for senior positions, including chair of the USSR State Bank. Perhaps sensing that all was not lost, Voznesenskii retreated home to finish a new book he had been writing on the political economy of communism.⁴⁶

The Gosplan Affair

In the wake of the March 5 Politburo resolution, a major investigation into Gosplan was launched. Saburov, Voznesenskii's successor at the agency, opened a series of internal inquiries. What is more, Evgenii Ermilovich Andreev—an official at the Central Committee linked to Malenkov—was appointed plenipotentiary for cadres policy at Gosplan and also tasked with a thorough investigation. Retrospective accounts indicate that Malenkov and others were concerned about how Voznesenskii's aides had rallied around their leader and impeded the recent investigation of his bookkeeping malfeasance. Andreev, therefore, was to put an end to Voznesenskii's enduring influence at the agency by exposing what was assumed to be a large patron-client network.⁴⁷

In some ways, Malenkov's appointment of Andreev at Gosplan should be seen as similar to his nomination of Vasilii Mikhailovich Andrianov to replace Popkov in Leningrad. True, Andreev did not enjoy official command over the entire agency as Andrianov did over the northern capital's party organization. But like Andrianov, Andreev was to enjoy vast powers and report back directly to Malenkov.

Andreev began work at Gosplan immediately, apparently encountering a fair amount of initial resistance. In the days and weeks following the ouster of Voznesenskii and his closest aides, few proved willing to criticize or denounce their former chair. In hindsight, this makes sense, insofar as Voznesenskii's

45. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1074, l. 59, 107–116; *Ibid.*, op. 163, d. 1521, l. 82 (Politburo resolution of March 5, 1948 “O t. Voznesenskom”).

46. On the rumors of a new post, see Khrushchev, *Vospominaniia*, 223–24; *Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, 1957*, 490; on Voznesenskii's book manuscript, see Shepilov, *Nepriknuzhshii*, 144.

47. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 329, l. 12 (Politburo resolution of March 11, 1949 “Ob upolnomochennom TsK VKP(b) po kadram v Gosudarstvennom planovom komitete Soveta Ministrov SSSR”).

errors seemed marginal and may have inclined some to believe that their former boss might survive the scandal and return to work. Over time, however, Andreev uncovered evidence of what he claimed to be a serious pattern of mismanagement. A demanding leader, Voznesenskii had a record of verbally abusing his staff. This, combined with his hostility to criticism, created what Andreev believed to be an unhealthy working environment. Among other things, the former Gosplan chair's tyrannous style of leadership had left him surrounded by yes-men incapable of independently defending party or state interests. Voznesenskii was hardly alone in this sort of behavior, of course; in retrospect, he almost certainly emulated Stalin's own style of command. That said, Voznesenskii's pattern of abusive behavior now exposed him to charges of violating party leadership norms.⁴⁸

Andreev also identified some ninety staffers at Gosplan who he claimed were compromised by their political, professional, or personal backgrounds. According to Andreev, Voznesenskii had hired personnel who in the distant past had been sanctioned for being members of the Menshevik or Trotskyite opposition or for other violations of party discipline. Others had served on the wrong side during the Civil War or had spent time abroad—a category that included people who had been interned in Polish prisoner-of-war camps in 1920 or lived under Nazi occupation between 1941 and 1942. Still others were compromised by questionable class or ethnic backgrounds or their ties to family members who had been arrested by the NKVD or emigrated abroad. Dozens were dismissed by Andreev on charges of concealing information that in most cases had been openly listed in their personnel files for decades.⁴⁹

As broad as Andreev's investigation of Gosplan was, it failed to satisfy Malenkov when he submitted his preliminary findings for review in mid-1949. Importantly, Andreev had not found Voznesenskii to have constructed an extensive patron-client network or engaged in systematic economic wrecking. Aside from Voznesenskii's mistakes in January 1949, the most serious charge that Andreev could make after four months of investigative work was that the former Gosplan chair may have shown favoritism to several ministries associated with the metallurgical and chemical sectors of the economy.⁵⁰ Saburov, too, failed to uncover evidence of corruption or criminal mismanagement in his internal audits.⁵¹ Such results were insufficient to strip Voznesenskii of his party membership or produce criminal charges that were serious enough to

48. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 467, ll. 91–111, here 108–110 (Andreev to Malenkov, July 1949).

49. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 467, ll. 91–111, here 90–108. In 1959, Andreev claimed that he had not fired anyone without justification. See RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 56 (Andreev to Shvernik, June 13, 1959).

50. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 467, ll. 91–111, here 109. Andreev's report did not supply any evidence to support this charge.

51. On Saburov's investigations, see GARF, f. r-5446, op. 51a, dd. 5467, 8375, 8376; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (RGAE), fond (f.) 4372, opis' (op.) 49, dela (d.) 4–10. Saburov's findings identified minor technical errors in the 1949 plan that allegedly stemmed from the former Gosplan chair's lax leadership. Malenkov and Beria later exaggerated these allegations in order to blame Voznesenskii directly for the errors. See GARF, f. r-5446, op. 51a, d. 5467, ll. 133, also 101–103 (USSR Council of Ministers resolution of July 24, 1949 "Ob oshibkakh i opechatkakh, dopushchennykh Gosplanom

ruin his career. Determined to find more damning material, Malenkov had the Central Committee Secretariat authorize more investigative work at Gosplan later that summer and fall.⁵²

The So-Called “Voznesenskii School”

Andreev’s Gosplan investigation during the spring and summer of 1949 appears to have spurred other institutions to preemptively break ties with Voznesenskii. Piotr Nikolaevich Fedoseev, the editor of *Bol’shevik*, was among the first to distance himself from the former Gosplan chair, insofar as his journal had led the celebration of Voznesenskii’s book between 1948 and 1949.⁵³ Writing to Malenkov that May, Fedoseev denounced several members of his own editorial board for serious errors in judgement. Years later, Dmitrii Shepilov recalled that Fedoseev also warned Malenkov of the existence of a shadowy “Voznesenskii School” of economists that had apparently ensconced itself not only at *Bol’shevik*, but also at the Central Committee Department of Agitation and Propaganda and the USSR Academy of Sciences’ Institute of the Economy. According to Shepilov, this group allegedly included a number of leading economists such as Konstantin Vasil’evich Ostrovitianov, Lev Markovich Gatovskii, Ivan Ivanovich Kuz’minov, and Filipp Petrovich Koshelev.⁵⁴

Malenkov ordered an investigation of this “Voznesenskii School” that focused in part on Fedoseev’s journal. There, it was found that Gatovskii had published a flattering review of Voznesenskii’s book after it won the Stalin Prize. Thereafter, over the course of 1948, Gatovskii, Koshelev, and others at the journal had referred to the book as a part of the party canon and inserted references to it into a number of articles slated for publication. In the wake of Voznesenskii’s dismissal, all of this suddenly appeared unseemly and led the Politburo to order a reorganization of the journal. Fedoseev was replaced

SSSR v gosudarstvennom plane vosstanovleniia i razvitiia narodnogo khoziaistva SSSR za 1949 god”).

52. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 467, l. 90 (Secretariat resolution of July 25, 1949, “Zapiska Upolnomochennogo TsK VKP(b) po kadram v Gosplane SSSR t. Andreeva”). A note in the file reports further personnel reorganizations at Gosplan on September 25, 1949. See l. 111. Andreev recalled years later that he was also asked by Malenkov to search for evidence that Voznesenskii had relied on ghost-writers, committed plagiarism, or falsified statistics in his prize-winning book. See RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 55.

53. See, for instance, L. M. Gatovskii, “Kniga o voennoi ekonomike SSSR,” *Bol’shevik* 1 (1948): 71–88. Other major reviews include K. Ostrovitianov, “Voennaia ekonomika strany sotsializma,” *Planovoe khoziaistvo* 1 (1948): 70–80; “Kniga o zakonmernostiiakh voennoi ekonomiki SSSR,” *Voprosy ekonomiki* 1 (1948): 102–15; A. Leptaev, “Voennaia ekonomika SSSR v period Velikoi otechestvennoi voiny,” *Kul’tura i zhizn’*, December 31, 1947, 2–3; G. Estaf’ev, “Kniga o voennoi ekonomike SSSR,” *Izvestiia*, January 29, 1948, 3.

54. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 105, ll. 48–51 (P. N. Fedoseev to Malenkov, May 26, 1949); Shepilov, *Nepriknuzhshii*, 146–48. In his account, Shepilov claims that L. F. Il’ichev aided Fedoseev in the writing of his denunciation. Ironically, Shepilov and Il’ichev also wrote a denunciation of Voznesenskii’s book. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 135, ll. 71–72 (Shepilov and Il’ichev to Malenkov, July 25, 1949). They included in their report an analysis of the book’s ostensible errors (RGANI, f. 6, op. 20, d. 44, ll. 24–32) and a summary of its reviews in the press (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 135, ll. 75–84).

by Sergei Mikhailovich Abalin while Gatovskii and Koshelev were fired.⁵⁵ At Agitprop, Shepilov was first reprimanded for insufficient vigilance and then stripped of his position as well.⁵⁶

At about the same time that *Bol'shevik* was being reorganized, Malenkov summoned the director of the USSR Academy of Sciences' Institute of the Economy, Ostrovitianov, to the Central Committee for a dressing down. There, Malenkov scolded the economist for allowing Voznesenskii influence over his institution (at that time, the Institute of the Economy was subordinate to both the USSR Academy of Sciences and Gosplan). Malenkov likewise harangued Ostrovitianov for publishing a celebratory review of Voznesenskii's book in *Pravda* in 1948.⁵⁷ Threatening to strip the economist of his high post, Malenkov ordered him to write a report on Voznesenskii's influence over the institute.⁵⁸ Ostrovitianov apparently delayed writing this denunciation for as long as he could before submitting something so anodyne that it added nothing to the campaign against his former boss.⁵⁹

Despite Malenkov's pressure, then, all of these Voznesenskii investigations began to wane during the second half of the summer of 1949. No evidence had been uncovered to confirm suspicions that the former Gosplan chair had set up a school of his own or built patron-client networks within leading state institutions. At Gosplan, Andreev failed to find evidence of Voznesenskii abusing his office, manipulating accounting methodologies or limiting production targets aside from what was already known. Charges of favoritism, either in regard to certain ministries or regions like Leningrad, proved hard to substantiate. Andreev's investigation of Gosplan personnel likewise produced no new evidence against the former chair.⁶⁰ Parallel inquiries by the KPK did little more than echo Andreev's findings.⁶¹ True, reprimands were issued at *Bol'shevik*, Agitprop, the Institute of the Economy, and other institutions on account of their staffers' overly enthusiastic promotion of

55. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1077, ll. 36–37 (Politburo resolution of July 13, 1949 “O zhurnale ‘Bol'shevike’”). See also Suslov's objections to Voznesenskii's understanding of socialist economics—RGANI, f. 3, op. 34, d. 158, ll. 118–121 (Suslov to Stalin, July 4, 1949). Suslov apparently then commissioned a larger report on the subject. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 135, ll. 84–104 (“O knizhke N. A. Voznesenskogo ‘Voennaia ekonomia’ SSSR v period Otechestvennoi voiny,” August 10, 1949). For another critique, see RGANI, f. 6, op. 20, d. 55, ll. 17–23.

56. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1077, l. 44 (Politburo resolution of July 20, 1949 “O zaveduiushchem Otdelom propagandy i agitatsii TsK VKP(b)”).

57. K. V. Ostrovitianov and M. R. Galaktionov, “Kniga o voennoi ekonomike SSSR,” *Pravda*, January 3, 1948, 2–3.

58. RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, ll. 8–9 (G. A. Kozlov to Shvernik, October 28, 1958).

59. RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, ll. 10 (P. A. Khromov to the KPK, October 28, 1958). Ostrovitianov's actual report has not been located.

60. See notes 47–49.

61. Deputy KPK chair I. A. Iagodkin filed a report in mid-August that accused Voznesenskii of six infractions: bookkeeping machinations, favoritism in regard to certain ministries, personnel policy negligence, “unbolshevik” management practices, self-promotion (regarding his book), abuse of power (at the Institute of the Economy), and improper dealings with the Leningrad group. Only the last of the complaints was original. See RGANI, f. 6, op. 20, d. 44, ll. 1–11 (Iagodkin to Malenkov, August 14, 1949). See also RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, ll. 43–45 (A. Nikiforov to Shvernik, June 6, 1959).

Voznesenskii's book. But according to Shepilov, these disciplinary measures were little more than a slap on the wrist.⁶²

Voznesenskii apparently sensed that the investigations were faltering in mid-August and wrote to Stalin to ask for permission to return to work.⁶³ According to Mikoian's son, this sort of initiative must have made Malenkov and Beria nervous. Stalin, after all, had a habit of rehabilitating disgraced but capable members of his entourage—most recently, Malenkov in 1948. Insiders knew that although Voznesenskii had been dismissed from his posts, a single “unexpected caprice” on Stalin's part could return the former Gosplan chair to the center of Soviet political life.⁶⁴ For that reason, both Malenkov and Beria appear to have spent the late summer looking for a way to destroy Voznesenskii for good.

Compromising Connections and State Secrets

At the same time that the Voznesenskii investigations were winding down, a parallel inquiry into Zhdanov and Kuznetsov's former Leningrad patronage group was ramping up. Between July and August 1949, orders for the arrest of leading members of the group were issued, including Kuznetsov and Popkov. Interestingly, although Stalin authorized the arrest of Voznesenskii's sister—the Leningrad region party secretary Mariia Alekseevna Voznesenskaia—on July 21 and his brother—the RSFSR Minister of Education Aleksandr Alekseevich Voznesenskii—on August 27, he did not sanction the detention of Voznesenskii himself. This suggests that Stalin remained unconvinced about his involvement with the Leningraders.

Amid this wave of arrests, Malenkov appears to have asked the chair of the KPK, Matvei Fedorovich Shkiriakov, to assemble a formal case against the Leningraders that would ensnare Voznesenskii as well. Shkiriakov supplied a draft indictment on August 17—just days after Kuznetsov, Popkov, and others were taken into custody—that circumstantially connected the former Gosplan chair to the central figures of this so-called conspiracy. Malenkov looked at the draft but took no further action, neither passing it on to Stalin nor returning it to Shkiriakov. In retrospect, the document's allegations probably appeared premature and unsubstantiated, especially its charge that Voznesenskii had been serving as Leningrad's unofficial patron for years.⁶⁵

Days later, on August 22, Andreev supplied Malenkov and his ally Panteleimon Kondrat'evich Ponomarenko with a report from Gosplan that was far more damning. As the plenipotentiary would recall later in 1959, just as his investigation of Voznesenskii was tapering off that summer, he received

62. According to Shepilov, his disgrace was brief: he was able to get tickets from Malenkov to attend Stalin's birthday celebration at the Bolshoi Theater that December. Shepilov, *Nepriimkuvshii*, 151–52.

63. RGASPI, f. 82, op. 1, d. 5, l. 96 (Voznesenskii to Stalin, August 17, 1949).

64. S. Mikoian, “Samouverenost' i bezapelliatsionnost',” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, October 21, 2000, 8.

65. See RGANI, f. 6, op. 20, d. 44, ll. 33, 34–38 (Shkiriakov to Malenkov (August 17, 1949) and “Ob antipartiinykh deistviakh Kuznetsova A. A., Popkova P. S., Rodionova M. I. i Voznesenskogo N. A”).

information from the MGB that a cache of secret documents had gone missing at Gosplan.⁶⁶ This eventually allowed him to establish that over 200 files had either disappeared or been destroyed without authorization at the agency since 1944. Of particular concern was the loss of several dozen documents classified as top secret. Although a later inventory indicated that most of the other missing files were little more than outdated reports, drafts, and routine correspondence, their loss was a real cause for alarm in the context of the early Cold War.⁶⁷

Andreev blamed this sorry state of affairs on one of Voznesenskii's deputies, Aleksandr Vasil'evich Kuptsov. According to the investigator, Kuptsov was responsible for Gosplan's failure to report the missing documents to the MGB. Equally bad, Kuptsov had failed to report those staffers responsible for losing the documents, insofar as the mishandling of classified material was considered a criminal act.⁶⁸ For Andreev, one of the most alarming aspects of the fiasco concerned an official named Beschastnov, who was caught during an internal audit at Gosplan in 1946 with pages from a file that had ostensibly been destroyed in 1944. To Andreev's amazement, Beschastnov—whose wife was Polish and whose father had emigrated to the United States—had not only gotten off with a minor reprimand, but had since been promoted.⁶⁹ Although Andreev did not explicitly accuse Beschastnov of espionage, his mention of the official's background in the report was certainly not accidental.

Malenkov immediately grasped the potential of this material to revive the case against Voznesenskii and had Andreev forward the report to Stalin. This led the USSR Council of Ministers to form a special commission under Bulganin to look into the report on August 25. Pomaznev, who had just been promoted to chief of staff at the USSR Council of Ministers, arranged for Andreev to present his findings to the Bulganin commission on September 1. Shkiriatov launched a parallel investigation at the KPK at about the same time, summoning Voznesenskii's former deputies at Gosplan—Kuptsov, Panov, Piotr

66. RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 55 (Andreev to Shvernik, June 13, 1959). Malenkov's secretary Sukhanov confirmed later that Minister of State Security V. S. Abakumov was actively involved in the effort to frame Voznesenskii. Evidence suggests that it was S. K. Belous, a staffer at Gosplan, who first denounced Voznesenskii to the MGB. See Sukhanov's 1956 statement (RGANI, f. 3, d. 58, d. 324, ll. 1–25, here 4–6) and Belous's September 13, 1949 letter to Saburov (RGAE, f. 4372, op. 49, d. 8, ll. 166–168).

67. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 135, d. 16, ll. 83–89 (Andreev to P. K. Ponomarenko, August 22, 1949). Sources differ over how many documents were actually lost. On August 22, Andreev reported 236 files missing; an undated ledger sheet later listed 227 missing. Still later, Shkiriatov reported 224 missing to Stalin and 215 to the Secretariat. Voznesenskii cited the 236 figure in his letter to Stalin. Compare RGASPI, f. 17, op. 135, d. 16, l. 83 and f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 157–184, 130, 139, 126, 142.

68. Loss or unauthorized destruction of secret documents had been criminalized by the USSR Supreme Soviet in 1943 and 1947. See Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet decree of November 15, 1943 "Ob otvetstvennosti za razglashenie gosudarstvennoi tainy i za utratu dokumentov, soderzhashchikh gosudarstvennuiu tainu," *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, no. 49 (1943): 1; Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet decree of June 9, 1947 "Ob otvetstvennosti za razglashenie gosudarstvennoi tainy i za utratu dokumentov, soderzhashchikh gosudarstvennuiu tainu," *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, no. 20 (1947): 1.

69. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 135, d. 16, ll. 83–89.

Andreevich Oreshkin, and S. K. Belous—to give testimony. Andreev presented his findings to the KPK on September 1 as well within the context of a meeting with Shkiriakov, Deputy USSR State Prosecutor Konstantin Andreevich Mokichev and Voznesenskii himself. There, in what must have been a tense exchange, Shkiriakov lectured Voznesenskii on the severity of the new charges and recommended that he write a personal letter of explanation to Stalin.⁷⁰

Voznesenskii took Shkiriakov's advice and wrote to Stalin immediately, accepting moral responsibility for the loss of the documents. Referring to one example of his mismanagement, he admitted that when Kuptsov had submitted to him an annual accounting of missing documentation in 1948, he had referred the matter to his deputies for internal investigation rather than to the MGB. That said, Voznesenskii suggested that the whole affair was basically a misunderstanding. According to Voznesenskii, Kuptsov had told him that the loss of the documents had already been reported to the MGB; when state security failed to follow up, he assumed the case to have been closed. This, he believed, entitled him to punish the guilty parties in-house at Gosplan rather than turn them over to the authorities. Voznesenskii repeatedly apologized to Stalin for his inattention to procedure and begged for forgiveness. He had learned his lesson, he said, and was ready to live the rest of his life according to the letter of the law.⁷¹

As Voznesenskii was making his case to Stalin, however, Shkiriakov was making one of his own. On September 6, he sent a report to Stalin in the name of the KPK that was apparently ghost-written by Andreev. This report argued that the crisis at Gosplan was both chronic and symptomatic of the agency's larger, more systematic mismanagement. Although Voznesenskii had not personally lost any of the classified material, he bore moral responsibility for his agency's errors. Moreover, the loss of the state secrets had not been properly reported to the MGB and the former Gosplan chair had broken the law by not turning his staffers over to the authorities. Voznesenskii's decision to deal with the situation administratively, according to the report, smacked of a cover-up.⁷²

Shkiriakov's report to Stalin also mentioned what was already well-known from Andreev's earlier witch-hunt at Gosplan—that many of the agency's

70. On the Bulganin and Shkiriakov investigations, see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 135, d. 16, l. 90; RGANI, f. 6, op. 20, dd. 44-45; RGANI, f. 6, op. 19, d. 34, l. 55 (Andreev to Shvernik, June 13, 1959). See also RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 145-148 (A. V. Kuptsov to Shkiriakov, August 31, 1949); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 149 (A. D. Panov to Shkiriakov, August 31, 1949); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 150-151 (A. D. Panov to Shkiriakov, September 2, 1949); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 152-153 (P. A. Oreshkin to Shkiriakov, September 1, 1949); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 154-156 (S. K. Belous to Shkiriakov, August 29, 1949); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 142-144 (Voznesenskii to Stalin, September 1, 1949).

The fact that security lapses with classified documentation continued after Voznesenskii's removal reveals how opportunistic this accusation was. See a draft resolution of the Gosplan leadership from October 17, 1949 at RGAE, f. 4372, op. 49, d. 8, ll. 284-287.

71. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 142-144 (Voznesenskii to Stalin, September 1, 1949). Kuptsov refuted Voznesenskii's version of events. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 145-148 (Kuptsov to Shkiriakov, August 31, 1949).

72. Shkiriakov's September 6 letter to Stalin is reproduced in a September 9 letter to Malenkov. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 130-138.

staffers had compromising backgrounds. Although not spelled out, the innuendo was clear: either Voznesenskii had turned a blind eye to the threat of espionage or was actually complicit in the trafficking of state secrets.

Concluding, Shkiriakov proposed to punish Voznesenskii harshly for his errors of judgement and lack of vigilance, focusing on his responsibility for the loss of documents and making no mention of his earlier discussions with Popkov or bookkeeping machinations. In an accompanying draft KPK resolution, Shkiriakov called for Voznesenskii to be expelled from the Central Committee, stripped of his party membership and arraigned on criminal charges. Dispatching these materials to Stalin on September 6, Shkiriakov accompanied them with an itemized list of some 227 missing files.⁷³

Stalin approved of most of Shkiriakov's proposed sanctions, making a handful of changes to his draft resolution before referring it to Malenkov for further editing. Importantly, Stalin apparently asked Shkiriakov not to expel Voznesenskii from the party.⁷⁴ On September 7, the KPK passed an amended resolution calling for Voznesenskii's ouster from the Central Committee and criminal prosecution. On September 9, it was ratified by the Central Committee Secretariat. The Politburo then confirmed this resolution two days later on September 11. Finally, the verdict was ratified by the Central Committee itself in absentia on September 13, 1949.⁷⁵

After Voznesenskii learned of his expulsion from the Central Committee and the decision to remand him over for criminal prosecution, he wrote another letter to Stalin. Asking the party leader to personally review his case, he explained that his actions had not been malicious and that he was unaware of any state secrets that had fallen into enemy hands. He then begged Stalin for another chance, saying that a criminal sentence would not allow him to atone for his guilt and demonstrate his loyalty to the Soviet motherland.⁷⁶

Two weeks later, Voznesenskii followed this letter with a much longer one, which he also sent to the USSR State Prosecutor. In it, he began by reasserting his moral responsibility for the loss of documents and lack of discipline at Gosplan. That said, he also identified an array of problems with the state's case against him. Most importantly, Voznesenskii pointed out that he had not personally lost or improperly destroyed even a single document—a technicality that invalidated his prosecution under the state secrets law. What's

73. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 130–138; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 139–141 (KPK draft resolution “O mnogochislennykh faktakh uteri sekretnykh materialov v Gosplane SSSR”).

74. On the editing of this KPK resolution, see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, l. 125 (Shkiriakov to Malenkov, September 9, 1949); and the drafts at ll. 130–138, 139–141; RGANI, f. 6, op. 40, d. 44, ll. 60–66, 166–169.

75. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 163, d. 1530, ll. 152–154 (KPK resolution of September 7, 1949 “O mnogochislennykh faktakh propazhi sekretnykh dokumentov v Gosplane SSSR”); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 118, d. 521, ll. 126–128, 124, 129 (Secretariat resolution of September 9, 1949 “O mnogochislennykh faktakh propazhi sekretnykh dokumentov v Gosplane SSSR”); RGASPI, f. 17, op. 163, d. 1530, ll. 151, 155 (Politburo resolution of September 11, 1949 “O mnogochislennykh faktakh propazhi sekretnykh dokumentov v Gosplane SSSR”); RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 26, ll. 94–95 (Central Committee resolution of September 12–13, 1949 “O mnogochislennykh faktakh propazhi sekretnykh dokumentov v Gosplane SSSR”).

76. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 26, l. 96 (Voznesenskii to Stalin, September 14, 1949).

more, Voznesenskii also disputed the circumstances, scale, and severity of his alleged crime. According to the former Gosplan chair, it was unclear what precisely had happened to many of the missing documents. How many had been lost, how many improperly destroyed, and how many merely misfiled elsewhere in the state bureaucracy? It was equally unclear how many of the missing documents had actually contained state secrets that required special handling. Continuing, Voznesenskii argued that much of the affair should be considered the product of miscommunication rather than intentional mismanagement. His apparent inaction in regard to the losses, for instance, stemmed from Kuptsov's repeated assurances to him that the MGB was aware of the situation, as well as his own assumption that the authorities would contact him directly if concerns arose. Nearing the end of his letter, Voznesenskii conceded again that he had been insufficiently vigilant in regard to agency personnel and too forgiving in regard to irresponsible conduct. Still, he questioned whether any of his infractions were truly illegal under the Soviet criminal code and again asked Stalin for a second chance.⁷⁷ When this letter went unanswered, he repeated many of the same contentions in a third one on October 17.⁷⁸

It is eye-catching, of course, that Voznesenskii was allowed to write these letters in the first place, insofar as he was not arrested immediately after the party leadership ratified the KPK's disciplinary sanctions. That was, after all, standard protocol, and the USSR State Prosecutor, Grigorii Nikolaevich Safonov, had requested Stalin's permission to detain Voznesenskii, Panov, and Kuptsov on September 22. Safonov noted in his report that the state's case was clear cut and would result in a 4–6 year sentence for the defendants.⁷⁹ Stalin, however declined to authorize the former Gosplan chair's arrest, allowing him nearly a month and a half to languish at home, write his letters, and prepare to defend himself in court.

Ultimately, Voznesenskii's relative freedom came to an end on October 26, when he was summoned to the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court for his trial alongside Panov, Kuptsov, and Belous. Little is known about these proceedings and whether or not Voznesenskii was allowed to mount a defense. It is also unclear whether he understood that even the most well-grounded arguments were unlikely to result in his exoneration. Ultimately, however, the whole case against Voznesenskii was rendered moot at the end of the first day of the trial when he was arrested by the MGB on an entirely different set of charges linking him to the Leningrad group and its alleged plot against the party leadership.⁸⁰

77. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 26, ll. 101–102ob (Voznesenskii to Stalin, October 1, 1949).

78. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 26, ll. 103–105 (Voznesenskii to Stalin, October 17, 1949).

79. RGANI, f. 3, op. 54, d. 26, ll. 99–100 (G. N. Safonov to Stalin, September 22, 1949). Some of the materials that the KPK supplied to the state prosecutor are at RGANI, f. 6, op. 20, d. 44, ll. 67–165; d. 45, ll. 2–142.

80. Voznesenskii, *Istinyradi...*, 215; K. A. Boldovskii, D. Brandenberger, "Obvinitel' noe zakliuchenie 'Leningradskogo dela': Kontekst i analiz sodержaniia," *Noveishaia istoriia Rossii* 9, no. 4 (2019): 993–1027.

The Leningrad Affair

Insofar as much of the investigative material associated with the Leningrad Affair remains classified, it is difficult to say precisely how Voznesenskii was connected to this so-called conspiracy after six months of inconclusive investigations. Hints about what had been going on behind the scenes are contained in an October 12 draft of an unsent confidential letter by Malenkov and Beria to the members of the Central Committee. In the letter, they claimed that new information had come to light tying Voznesenskii to the Leningrad group.⁸¹ The timing of such revelations, coming in the wake of the arrests of Kuznetsov, Popkov, and others that fall, suggests that it was the coerced testimony of these alleged co-conspirators that had implicated Voznesenskii.⁸²

Even so, Stalin appears to have hesitated in regard to Voznesenskii, refusing either to authorize his arrest in September or allow Malenkov and Beria to distribute their confidential letter in the weeks that followed. Even Voznesenskii's eventual detention on October 27 was highly unusual, insofar as it interrupted his long-awaited trial and was executed on the basis of a warrant signed post factum on November 1.⁸³ Such circumstances suggest that Stalin retained doubts about Voznesenskii's connection to the Leningrad group.

After his arrest, the former Gosplan chair was subjected to several months of MGB interrogation himself that eventually induced him to confess to conspiracy and treason.⁸⁴ In the first draft of the official Leningrad Affair indictment that Minister of State Security Viktor Semenovich Abakumov presented to Stalin in August 1950, Voznesenskii was listed first among the accused and described as a central leader in the plot. According to this document, Voznesenskii had been connected to Kuznetsov, Popkov, and the other conspirators since the late 1930s. Serving as their unofficial patron in Moscow, he had provided them with scarce economic resources and shielded them from routine audits. In the context of this charge of economic wrecking and sabotage, the long-forgotten allegations that Voznesenskii had engaged in systematic accounting machinations were also revived. Fascinatingly, however, the draft indictment assumed a much more cautious position regarding the charge that the former Gosplan chair had mishandled state secrets. Apparently, Voznesenskii's MGB interrogators agreed with him that he could not be directly blamed for losing documents that had never been in his personal possession.⁸⁵

81. See Malenkov and Beria's October 12, 1949 draft letter to the Central Committee, published in E. Zhiron, "Vo vrazheskoi gruppe podgotavliasia vopros o perenose stolitsy v Leningrad," *Kommersant Vlast'*, September 26, 2000, 55–56. This document is based on earlier drafts at RGANI, f. 6, op. 20, d. 44, ll. 39–58.

82. I. V. Komarov, one of Voznesenskii's MGB interrogators, subsequently confirmed that Popkov had been forced to incriminate him. See APRF, f. 3, op. 58, d. 221, ll. 100–117, published in *Lubianka, Stalin i MGB SSSR*, 457.

83. Voznesenskii, *Istiny radi . . .*, 215; Lev A. Voznesenskii, interview, Moscow, May 29, 2019.

84. *Ibid.*

85. Boldovskii, Brandenberger, "Obvinitel'noe zakliuchenie 'Leningradskogo dela,'" 1015; Lev A. Voznesenskii, interview, May 29, 2019.

When Stalin reviewed the draft indictment later that month, he ordered Abakumov to revise it in order to list Voznesenskii third instead of first and to reframe other elements of the case. When completed in early September, this charging document read very differently, not only demoting Voznesenskii from his position at the head of the conspiracy, but displacing discussion of his criminal activity to the end of the text, where it was expressed in more terse and somewhat less hyperbolic language.⁸⁶

While such editorial changes suggest that Stalin still found elements of the case against Voznesenskii unpersuasive, he did allow his former client and erstwhile successor to be indicted. Voznesenskii was then tried alongside eight other leading defendants in the Leningrad Affair on September 29–30, 1950. Despite recanting his confession during the proceedings and denouncing the charges against him, Voznesenskii was convicted of treason, economic sabotage, and conspiracy and executed just after midnight on October 1.⁸⁷

This article's investigation of the scandals that consumed Nikolai Voznesenskii indicates that many of the Gosplan chair's initial troubles in 1949 stemmed from a crisis of his own making. A cautious and loyal Stalinist executive, Voznesenskii was compromised by an apparently isolated case of abuse of authority that left him exposed to allegations of disloyalty and insubordination. Although Voznesenskii probably believed that he was advancing state priorities, he failed to appreciate how vulnerable such unilateralism left him.

When Stalin asked Malenkov to look into matters at Gosplan, the apparatchik seized the opportunity to frame his longtime rival and banish him forever from Soviet public life. That said, although Malenkov presided over a massive, months-long investigation conducted by surrogates like Andreev, his Gosplan Affair proved inclusive as far as Voznesenskii was concerned.⁸⁸ Although Andreev managed to manufacture a case against the former Gosplan chair that stripped him of his posts in September 1949, he did not succeed in assembling anything more than a weak criminal case.⁸⁹ And even at the end of this investigation, Stalin—the ultimate arbiter in such situations—seems to have questioned the need to pursue further sanctions against Voznesenskii.

For Malenkov and Beria, anything less than Voznesenskii's complete political ruin was unacceptable, insofar as Stalin was known to rehabilitate disgraced lieutenants from time to time. Thus when Andreev failed to destroy Voznesenskii on the basis of his own professional misconduct, Malenkov and

86. Boldovskii, Brandenberger, "Obvinitel'noe zakliuchenie 'Leningradskogo dela,'" 993–1027.

87. Tsentral'nyi arkhiv FSB Rossii (TsAFSBRF), fond (f.) R-241, delo (d.) 3017, tom (t.) 15, list (ll.) 92–93, cited in M. Iu. Pavlov, "Velikoderzhavnyi shovinizm ili stalinskie fobii? K voprosu o prichinakh unichtozheniia 'Leningradskoi gruppy,'" *Klio*, no. 8 (2015): 103.

88. After finishing with Voznesenskii, Andreev continued his investigation of Gosplan itself for several more years. By 1951, he had replaced 75 percent of its leadership and fired some 300 people—about a fifth of the agency's entire staff. See, for example, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 119, d. 383, ll. 86–95 (Andreev to Malenkov, May 18, 1951). Although the Gosplan Affair precipitated few arrests aside from Voznesenskii's closest aides, it disrupted many lives.

89. Loss of state secrets, for instance, carried a maximum sentence of only 6 years in prison—see note 68. Voznesenskii's deputies were sentenced on October 29, 1949 to terms ranging from 2 to 6 years.

Beriia changed course in order to frame the former Gosplan chair within the context of the emerging Leningrad Affair.

This shift marked the beginning of a second, more deadly phase in Voznesenskii's fall. Abandoning the idea of a Gosplan-based case, Malenkov and Beriia—apparently through Abakumov—instructed Kuznetsov's and Popkov's MGB interrogators to link Voznesenskii to the Leningrad Affair by any means necessary. By early October, the desired testimony was secured. And although no material corroboration of Voznesenskii's economic wrecking and political subterfuge appears to have ever been produced—be it evidence of diverted supplies, altered planning documents, or covert liaisons—all of that became irrelevant once Voznesenskii was induced into confessing to treason.

In the end, although Voznesenskii initiated the destruction of his own career, he had little influence over his ultimate fate. That was decided when Malenkov and Beriia took advantage of Stalin's suspicions in order to frame the former Gosplan chair as a co-conspirator within the Leningrad Affair. In so doing, Malenkov and Beriia subverted the Soviet leadership's postwar practice of controlling powerful party bosses by administrative means rather than broader purges of the *nomenclatura*. The fact that Voznesenskii was arrested, tried, and shot alongside the Leningraders—a highly irregular bout of political violence during the postwar period—suggests that he was punished not for his abuse of office, but for the threat that he posed to his rivals within Stalin's inner circle.

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