

November 15, 1945

TASS Report Distributed to Cdes. I.V. Stalin, V.M. Molotov, A.I. Mikoyan, L.P. Beria, G.M. Malenkov, and A. Ya. Vyshinsky, 'Sensational Articles in the French Press'

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Summary:

TASS reports on French news stories it views as slanderous to Stalin, including stories on his declining health and what it will mean for Russian foreign policy should Zhdanov succeed him.

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Top Secret

SENSATIONAL ARTICLES IN THE FRENCH PRESS

PARIS, 13 November (TASS). Rumors about Cde. Stalin continue to be spread by part of the French newspapers (especially the evening ones). A new thrust to these rumors was given by certain "information" about Cde. Zhdanov. Almost all the right-wing newspapers, developing this theme, published articles about Cde. Zhdanov. Some newspapers published his portraits. [Translator's note: the next two sentences are highlighted in red in the left margin] Characteristic of these publications is a large (half-page) article by Marcel Brunel in the weekly Le Monde published on 13 November under the headline "Zhdanov - the Red Dauphin". The author of the article writes, among other things: "But won't a change of Russian domestic policy be accompanied by just as complete a change of foreign policy? Some fear this, drawing a conclusion from Zhdanov's position in 1934, 1938, and 1940. In 1934 he had a hostile attitude toward the signing of a military pact with France; in 1938 he published an article in the newspaper Pravda making a fuss, calling upon Stalin not to go too far in negotiations with an Anglo-French delegation, which was trying to conclude an alliance with Russia against the Nazi danger. He has always acted as an opponent of the Western policy of Litvinov. In 1940 he objected to any too-sharp quarrel with Germany on the question of Polish borders. But he is absolutely not a Germanophile and here, again, his thinking exactly coincides with Stalin's thinking. He is neither a Germanophile nor a Japanophobe, but a Russian, a hundred-percent Russian. He is patient; where he considers himself the weakest he retreats; where he considers himself the strongest he shows [his] teeth. After the armistice with Finland he refused to receive the delegates of the Finnish Communist Party and so that he supposedly said he wouldn't allow [them] to influence himself or even show that he was allowing [them] to influence him. These are the words of a real government figure. Stalin has chosen his successor well and Red Russia has not ceased to surprise us".

The newspaper France Libre (a publication of Mutter) published the following report of its Washington correspondent [Eaton] on 13 November:

"In spite of the importance of the talks [between] Truman and Attlee, the gazes of American are turned toward Moscow, where rumors about an attempt on the life of Stalin stubbornly continue to circulate. [Translator's note: the next three sentences are highlighted in red in the left margin] The secret of his absence during the holidays is evidently not explained by heart disease. In any event, American correspondents in Moscow telegraphed on 3 November that Stalin will be present in these holidays. On the morning of that same day four changes were permitted by the Russian censor and four other changes later in the day. Well-informed diplomatic circles confirmed to me that a tense situation has been created in Moscow in connection with the question of the Marshal's successor. In Washington Truman and Byrnes are alarmed at such a turn of events since they think that Stalin's death would be a great loss for the entire world".

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