TITLE: ARBITRARY JUSTICE: COURTS AND POLITICS IN POST-STALIN RUSSIA. Report #8; conclude PART V: THE GORBACHEV PERIOD II

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NCSEER NOTE

This is the eighth in a series of Council Reports which, in all, will contain a book, by the same authors and probably with the same title, forthcoming, M. E. Sharpe. This Report concludes Part V: The Gorbachev Period II, and consists of an Introduction by Donald Barry, and Chapter Thirteen: Marked "Top Secret", by Yuri Feofanov. Subsequent Reports in the series, numbered sequentially, will contain the remaining Parts VI-VII. They will carry the same main title and the subtitle of the Part contained.

[Correction: Reports #5 and #6 contained Part IV, not "Part III" as they listed on their face pages and in their NCSEER NOTEs]

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V. THE GORBACHEV PERIOD II. Continued

Donald D. Barry

Introduction

This last chapter in Part V ("Top Secret." Chapter Thirteen) is made up principally of a series of documents. During the time of the October Revolution celebrations in November 1975, the deputy commander of a Soviet naval vessel took over the ship and directed it out to sea. His act was soon discovered by naval authorities, and other ships from the fleet, as well as military aircraft, were sent in pursuit. Although Feofanov mentions Tom Clancy's book *The Hunt for Red October* in connection with this case, the parallels are limited: the ship was rather quickly apprehended, a secret trial was held, and the principal defendant was convicted of treason and shot.

Two matters stand out in the case, as the relevant documents make clear. First was the extreme severity of the sentence against Valerii Sablin, the deputy commander of the ship. This naive individual with utopian ideas hoped to use the ship as a base for broadcasting his views on what Leninism really meant to his fellow citizens. But he never came close to achieving this goal. A posthumous change in Sablin's sentence seems to support the view that the 1976 Soviet court strongly over-reacted in meting out the punishment.

On the other hand, and this is the second point, this kind of over-reaction is pretty much what one would expect from Soviet courts in 1976, given the nature, if not the seriousness, of the offense. Sablin was offering a direct challenge to the official view of Soviet reality and, as a number of points in the documents show, this rather feeble attempt at challenging the system put a mighty scare into the top Soviet authorities. For here was not just a group of dissidents engaged in their *samizdat*. It was a member of the military attempting to influence fellow military men. The reaction of the military leadership seemed to be: if Sablin had gotten cooperation from other crew members on this one ship, what would it take for this small affair to grow into a nasty problem of larger proportions?

Thus, the basic reports on the case did not remain matters internal to the military, but were addressed to the Central Committee of the CPSU (and were sent directly to the Politburo). In addition to an investigative report by top military brass (accompanied by a statement by Minister of Defense Grechko concerning measures for eliminating shortcomings uncovered by the case), a special report by the heads of the KGB, Ministry of Defense, Procuracy, and USSR Supreme Court was prepared, assuring the leadership that appropriate measures were being taken and asking approval for their course of action. This document.
The report of the military leaders twice assured the political leaders that there was no "revolutionary committee" on the ship, which Sablin had mentioned in a telegram to the commander-in-chief of the Navy. It used, several times, the unusual construction "Sablin acted alone, with the support of several others," presumably to play down the idea that a widespread threat had existed.

Besides Sablin, only one other person among those who had sided with him was tried (sailor Aleksandr Shein, who received an eight year sentence). Twelve other accused, who were described as having "committed military crimes," were not tried. It was said that they had been "provoked and confused" by Sablin. He had used "a tendentious collection of citations" from the classics of Marxism-Leninism to try to gain their support. By not charging these other collaborators, the military leaders appeared to seek to minimize the extent of disaffection among the crew.

Further evidence of the leadership's attempt at damage control is the statement in the report by the military leaders that "measures have been taken in the fleet to prevent the release of information" about the incident, which was reinforced by the secret trial of Sablin and Shein. 1

The sentence, dated, repeats much of the information contained in the reports to the Central Committee. It appears to be as much a political document as a legal one, which concludes, of course, with the punishments handed down to the two defendants. Twenty days after the issuing of the sentence Sablin was shot.

The final part of the chapter contains "Valerii Sablin's Appeal to the People," excerpts from two tape recordings he made in is futile effort to make his views known.

In 1992 some of the documents connected with the Sablin case were declassified. Feofanov participated in the preparation and production of a film about the case that was shown on television. As he makes clear in his final remarks, Feofanov believes that Sablin should be rehabilitated. Although this has not happened, a development of significance has taken place since Feofanov completed this chapter. In 1994 the Military Collegium of the Russian Federation Supreme Court reviewed the case and decided that the appropriate sentence for Sablin was ten years in prison (and for Shein five years instead of eight). 2
NOTES

1. A writer who analyzed the case in 1994 stated that "at that time what had happened was protected like the most terrible of state secrets." Maks Khazin, "Prigovor posle rasstrela," Izvestia, July 14, 1994, p. 5.

2. I conclude by quoting from one of the Russian authors who wrote about the 1994 change in sentence: "A greater blasphemy would be difficult to imagine.... If it is difficult enough to conceive of how one can give back the three extra years that Shein served, it is completely impossible to understand whether the widow, son, and brothers of Sablin should consider him dead as before; or should they thank the military judges for the humanity they have manifested?" Maks Khazin. "Prigovor posle rasstrela."
In the 1980s a book named *The Hunt for Red October* became a big best-seller in the United States. A movie followed. As we found out later, the theme of the book was reminiscent of an event that actually took place. Most readers will remember the basic story. The commander of a submarine kills the commissar—his deputy for political affairs—and, with a number of fellow officers, takes the ship toward the shores of America. The whole Soviet fleet is ordered to destroy the rebel ship, a technologically-advanced vessel. The U.S. fleet takes measures to try to counter Soviet actions and, after a number of gripping adventures, the "Red October" reaches the shores of Freedom.

The actual events featured key differences from the version described in the book. On November 8, 1975, during the time of the October Revolution celebrations, a large anti-submarine ship named "Storozhevoi" raised anchor at the Riga naval base and set sail for the open sea. It wasn't the commander who arrested the commissar, but the opposite: the commissar, deputy commander for political affairs Valerii Sablin, arrested the commander and took command of the ship. All demands from the base that the Storozhevoi return went unanswered. Messages were rushed to the commander of the fleet, the USSR Minister of Defense, and General Secretary Brezhnev. And soon the order was given: the ship, with a crew of 200, was to be destroyed. Literally minutes before the attack from the air the commander of the ship was able to free himself and take control of the situation. Valerii Sablin was arrested, tried, sentenced to death and executed.

His testimony, supported by circumstantial evidence, was that they were not taking the ship to Sweden, as was charged, but to Leningrad, where Sablin intended to make an appeal to the Soviet people. But no attention was paid to this assertion. Punishment was swift, harsh, and secret. Only Sablin was executed. One of his accomplices, a sailor, was sentenced to eight years in prison, and the others were simply dismissed from the navy, committed to silence by the KGB. This was not done out of humanitarian concerns, of course, but strictly out of fear that what had happened would become known within the country. Silence was something that the regime could assure, as demonstrated by the Ashkhabad earthquake, the atomic catastrophe in Chelyabinsk, and the violent reprisals against demonstrating workers in Novocherkassk.

It was only in 1992 that the "Sablin case" was declassified. In the autumn of that year, at the initiative of a number of individuals, an open review of these long-ago events was heard by a panel of jurors. Although the proceeding carried no legal force, it was taped and shown on
television in three parts, giving the public the chance to watch and listen to the testimony of witnesses, the arguments of the parties, and the verdict of the jury, which supported the charge against the defendant on all points.

I participated in the preparation and production of these proceedings and can comment on them. As noted, this was not an actual court hearing, and therefore I will limit what I have to say about it. In the course of the proceedings, recently-disclosed documents were made public, and through them the picture of a conspiracy of reprisal against Valerii Sablin emerges.

I think that these documents will be much more interesting for the American reader. They describe the events of November 8, 1975, in detail. The first document is a Report signed by KGB Chairman Y. Andropov, Minister of Defense A. Grechko, Procurator General R. Rudenko, and USSR Supreme Court Chairman L. Smirnov, addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Also of interest, I hope, will be the work of the "Report Commission" created to examine all aspects of the case, and the report to the Communist Party Central Committee from the Minister of Defense. Also included is the sentence of the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court—a sentence that was submitted to the Communist Party Central Committee and merely made to appear to be a legal document. Finally, I draw the reader's attention to the Declaration of Valerii Sablin, a courageous but naive man who believed that the communist regime could be reformed.
On measures for eliminating shortcomings uncovered in the investigation of the emergency situation on the large anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi" of the Baltic Fleet

I am reporting the results of the investigation of the emergency situation on the large anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi" that took place on November 8-9, 1975 (which accompanies this memorandum).

In connection with what took place, the Ministry of Defense and the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy have developed and put into operation further measures for strengthening political-educational work, for raising high vigilance, and fidelity to the military oath and military duty, and also for strengthening one-man command across the whole staff of the armed forces.

The matter was reviewed at the Collegium of the Ministry of Defense. An order was issued by the Minister of Defense which defined measures for eliminating the causes that led to the creation of this emergency.

The General Staff and the Chief Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy established a plan of specific measures to strengthen military discipline and improve political-educational work among the troops.

It is recommended that the Commander-in-Chief of the military branches, the commanders of troops in military districts, of groups of soldiers, of military units of anti-aircraft defense, navy and army carry out the necessary work of raising the responsibility of all categories of officials, the exacting standards and strengthened control over the precise fulfillment of the provisions of regulations, rules, orders and directives.

The former deputy commander for political matters of the large anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi" and others directly responsible for the events on the ship have been turned over to investigative organs so that criminal charges can be brought against them. The remaining guilty parties, who showed lack of decisiveness and mistakes in their actions, have been subjected to disciplinary and party responsibility.

The big anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi" is in service and is carrying out the tasks planned for it.

[signed]

A. GRECHKO

December 3, 1975

No. 312/1/003454.
Appendix: Report of the investigatory commission regarding the emergency situation on the large anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi." top secret entry 12620, on 10 pages—only for the addressee.

To the USSR Minister of Defense
Marshal of the Soviet Union
Comrade Grechko, A.A.

We Report:

The Commission appointed by your order No. 00105 of November 9, 1975 conducted an investigation of a case of insubordination that took place on November 8-9 of this year on the large anti-submarine vessel "Storozhevoi" of the 128th brigade of rocket ships of the Baltic Fleet.

The large anti-submarine vessel "Storozhevoi" was built in 1973 and was put into service in the fleet in March 1973. It carries a full crew and is fully armed. In 1974-5 it was on military duty in the Mediterranean Sea, completed a trip across the Atlantic to Cuba, participated in the "Ocean-75" exercises, and regularly visited foreign ports. During this period the ship handled the tasks assigned to it. The staff represented our Motherland abroad in a worthy manner. Its plan of military and political preparation for 1975 was fulfilled with a general evaluation of good.

The commander of the ship is captain of the second rank POTUL'NYI, A.V., born in 1936, Russian, in the Navy since 1954, member of the CPSU since 1958, completed the Higher Military Naval School named for Frunze in 1958, and has a positive service evaluation. He has served in his post since February 1973.

The former deputy commander of the ship for political matters is captain of the third rank SABLIN, V.M., born in 1939, Russian, member of the CPSU since 1959, in the Navy since 1956, completed Higher Military Naval School named for Frunze in 1960, from 1969 served in combatant service and as the commander's aide on a patrol vessel in the Northern Fleet; he enrolled in the Higher Party Academy named for Lenin, which he completed in 1973. Served in his present capacity since August 1973. Service evaluations basically positive. Married, with a son born in 1962. Father—reserve captain of the first rank.

From November 6 of this year the "Storozhevoi" was in the Riga harbor in connection with the 58th anniversary of the October Revolution. According to plan, the ship was to leave for Liepaya.

There were 194 men on board. Of these 15 were officers, 14 were warrant officers, and 165 were petty officers and sailors: there were 9 members of the CPSU, 7 candidate members.
and 164 Komsomol members. There were representatives of 18 nationalities on the crew, including 111 Russians, 22 Ukrainians, 12 Byelorussians, 5 Latvians, 5 Moldavians, 3 Lithuanians, 2 Poles and others. In terms of social position 114 were workers, 19 collective farmers, 29 white collar workers and 32 students.

Around 1900 hours on November 8 SABLIN V.M. lured the ship's commander, captain of the second rank POTUL'NYI, A.V. to the hydroacoustical chamber, slammed the door and locked it, thereby isolating the commander from the staff. At the other entrance to the chamber where the commander was isolated, sailor SHEIN, A.N., SABLIN's close collaborator, stood guard. The commander's energetic efforts to escape proved unsuccessful.

After isolating the commander SABLIN gathered 13 officers and 13 warrant officers in the warrant officers' lounge and explained his thoughts, which he had been nurturing since 1963, about what he considered to be violations of legality and justice in Soviet society. In the course of his discussion he mentioned well-known shortcomings, which the Soviet press has discussed (individual examples of abuses in trade, the shortage of certain products, violation of the rules for admission to higher educational institutions, cases of fudging and distortion of production figures, bureaucratism, the use of one's position for personal ends, etc.). SABLIN presented all of this as evidence of the departure of the Party and the Government from Leninist prescriptions for the building of socialism. He supported his statements with a tendentious collection of citations from the works of V.I. Lenin, K. Marx, and other revolutionary-democrats.

SABLIN proposed that they set out, without permission, for Kronstadt, declare it independent territory, and, in the name of the crew demand that the leaders of the party and the country provide them the opportunity to speak on central television and present their views. To the question as to how these views squared with his party membership he answered that he had quit the party and did not consider himself connected with it. When he was asked where the commander of the ship was, he stated that the commander was in one of the cabins and was considering SABLIN's proposals.

SABLIN proposed a vote on the views that he had presented, and for that purpose he handed out white and black checkers. Some of the warrant officers and officers voted for his proposal. But 10 officers and 5 warrant officers who did not support him were, at his order, isolated in separate rooms.

At 23:10 hours SABLIN, acting as if it were an evening inspection, gathered the sailors and petty officers and set forth his views and intentions. He announced that the majority of officers and warrant officers supported him, and that the only ones who did not agree were those who intended to leave the navy and pursue studies or hoped to gain promotion in the service and did not want to hurt their chances. They were isolated, which diminishes their
responsibility. At SABLIN’s order the officers and warrant officers, even those supporting
him, were not present at this gathering. In answer to questions from the crew as to the
whereabouts of the commander and his connection with these events, SABLIN answered that
the commander did not support him and therefore had been temporarily isolated.

During the course of his remarks SABLIN stated that the acts he was proposing did not
constitute a violation of the military oath, and that this betrayal would not diminish the military
readiness of the ship. To support this statement he referred to the fact that arms had not been
distributed and the arsenal was under guard. Then SABLIN took a vote. A number of sailors
and petty officers voted for the proposals, but many of them did not understand the anti-Soviet,
traitorous nature of the proposals and others didn’t vote at all. The prepared tape of SABLIN’s
presentation was then transmitted over the ship’s public address system. It was established that
the crew of the ship did not give in to the SABLIN’s entreaties, as is shown by the attempts of
several individual sailors, petty officers and officers to free the commander and take SABLIN
just when these events were starting. But these attempts were frustrated by the supporters of
SABLIN.

At 23:30 hours senior lieutenant FIRSOV, V.V. lowered himself from the ship in a
barrel from the mooring cable to a submarine of the class “B-49” that was moored alongside.
Then he was taken by motorboat to the shore, where he first explained the situation to ship
commander and captain of the second rank IGNATENKO, G.I., and then to the chief of staff
of the 78th brigade of security ships of the maritime region captain of the second rank
VLASOV, V.C., and to the chief of the special section of this brigade, captain of the second
rank YUDIN, V.G.

SABLIN, learning that FIRSOV had left, decided to hasten the departure of the ship to
the open sea. At 02:50 hours on November 9 the ship, under the command of SABLIN, cast
off and headed for the Gulf of Riga. At this time petty officer first class SHEVELEV, Y.M.
jumped ship and was taken to shore in a motorboat.

At 04:00 hours SABLIN sent a telegram to the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy in
which, allegedly in the name of the revolutionary committee of the ship (the presence of which
had not theretofore been made known), he set forth demands to the CC CPSU to declare the
ship free and independent territory, to grant the right to appear on television, to provide the
ship with all manner of allowances and postal service, to allow it anchoring and mooring rights
at any base, to guarantee immunity to the crew and to promise that no untoward measures
would be taken against the relatives and loved ones of crew members.

As the “Storozhevoi” moved toward the Gulf of Riga, constant pursuit by the forces of
the fleet and border ships was organized. The receipt of telegrams with orders from the
Minister of Defense, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, and the commander of the Baltic
Fleet to return to port, and warning of the use of arms if the orders were disobeyed, which
were made known to the crew by the radio operators and the cipher clerk; and the
accompaniment of the ship by airplanes, other ships, and launches: all this led to the fact that a
significant part of the staff thought about what was happening and began to understand
SABLIN’s criminal intentions and to take measures to disarm the weapons and technical
equipment; they began to act more energetically to free the ship’s commander and its officers.

At about 10:20, still prior to any bombing from airplanes, a group of about 25-30 sailors
freed the officers and the commander of the ship. The most active in this group were petty
officer first class KOPYLOV, V.S., petty officer second class STANKYAVICHUS, V.A.,
senior sailor LYKOV, S.I., and senior sailor NABIEV, K.A.

On being freed and thereafter the actions of the commander were swift and decisive. At
his order the arsenal was closed, and a part of the crew and officer contingent was armed. The
commander personally wounded and arrested SABLIN and quickly took command of the
situation on the ship. Those who sided with SABLIN, 11 men in all, including two young
officers who had graduated in 1975, and who had only come on the ship in August of this
year—commander of the ignition battery of the mine and torpedo unit, lieutenant
DUDNIK, V.K. and aide to the ship’s commander VAVILKIN, V.I.—were also arrested.

At 10:32 the commander stopped the ship and announced by radio that he had taken
commanded and awaited orders. Thereafter the ship was returned to the Gulf of Riga.

Taking the ship without orders and disobedience were the result of the criminal acts of
the former deputy commander for political affairs SABLIN, a malicious renegade and anti-
Soviet person masquerading as an officer who, through demagogic statements and deceit,
succeeded in temporarily winning personnel on the ship to his side.

This emergency was also the result of the inadvertent acts of a group of persons who
submitted to the demagogic, deceitful agitation of an enemy who had long nurtured criminal
thoughts against the existing party and state system. Employing the high authority of his post,
knowing the psychological state of many of his subordinates and playing on their feelings, and
playing fast and loose with the facts, SABLIN was able to convince the psychologically
unstable part of the crew that he merely wanted to make a public appearance to criticize
shortcomings in the political, social, and economic situation in our country. He was able to
convince a part of the crew that these actions were not illegal, that they did not violate the
military oath, that they did not constitute betrayal, and that in case of war they would be
principal and reliable defenders of their Motherland. In the beginning a certain part of the staff
believed SABLIN, not just because his eloquence convinced them, but also because they were
accustomed to believing him, the deputy commander for political matters, a communist, and an
officer.
The examination of personal notes of SABLIN, of some of the materials he collected, and of his behavior during questioning allows one to characterize him as a person of morbid ambition, possessed of certain ideas and of the desire to be distinguished from the general population and become an exclusive person. To him, one of the roads to this end would be a public appearance on television.

In the course of its work the commission did not find the presence on the “Storozhevoi” of a hostile anti-Soviet group or of the so-called revolutionary committee, which figured in the telegram sent to the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy. SABLIN acted alone, with the support of several others, whom he recruited on the eve of the acts in question. The basis for the assertion regarding SABLIN’s intention to take the ship to Sweden was not brought out during the course of the investigation.

Conducive to the commission of the acts that led to this emergency situation were the following:

1. Large-scale dereliction in the political training work with the officer’s staff in developing a feeling of high duty to the Motherland, of honor, respect, decisiveness and courage, of attentiveness and principled behavior, which led to passiveness and confusion among the officers and inability to recognize soon enough the anti-Soviet meaning of the demagogic speeches and intentions of the betrayer SABLIN and to put a decisive stop to his criminal activity.

2. SABLIN’s use of his high position as deputy commander for political matters masked his criminal activity. Rejecting many required forms of mass-political work, speeches before the staff, and conduct of political studies and Marxist-Leninist analyses with the officers, SABLIN reserved to himself the possibility of airing his anti-Soviet views. He employed the generally-accepted methods of individual work with sailors and petty officers to his advantage in order to study the psychological qualities and moods of individuals, with the aim of using this later for his own purposes. Such specific matters as betrayal of the Motherland, the people, the Party and the Government, the military oath and one’s military duty, as well as political vigilance were treated abstractly and incidentally in the various forms of political-educational work. Little was done on the ship to strengthen military friendship and comradeship.

3. There was insufficient political maturity among communists and the komsomol aktiv; insufficient vigilance and understanding of party principles was manifested in evaluating the demagogic statements of SABLIN, and insufficient courage was demonstrated to thwart him in a timely manner. Also of significance was the absence from the ship during its time in Riga of the secretary and deputy secretary of the party organization.
4. There was ignorance of the true situation with regard to political-educational work on the ship on the part of the command, the political section, and the political apparatus of the 128th brigade and 12th division of rocket ships. The ship’s commander, captain of the 2nd rank POTUL’NYI, A.V., and the deputy commander of the brigade for political matters, captain of the second rank ROMANOVSKII, Ya.Ya., who had worked insufficiently with SABLIN, did not see the signs of anti-Soviet inclinations in his thinking. Shortcomings and errors in party-political work on the ship also involved the inexperience of SABLIN as a political worker.

5. There were serious shortcomings and errors in the organization of operational and guard service, and slow action by the command of the navy garrison, which, at the first sign of problems did not take decisive measures to restore order to the ship and prevent its exit from the base, although there was both time and opportunity to do this.

Having received the report from senior lieutenant FIRSOV, V.V., the chief of staff of the 78th brigade of ships of the naval security region, captain of the 2nd rank VLASOV, V.C., the chief of the special section of the brigade, captain of the 2nd rank YUDIN, V.G., the guard for the base commander of the submarine “S-263,” captain of the 2nd rank SVETLOVSKII, L.V., instead of taking the necessary measures they consulted for a long period of time and reported to the command late, demonstrating a lack of administrative ability and a lack of decisiveness bordering on cowardice.

The commission notes that the commander of the Baltic Fleet, Vice Admiral KOSOV, A.M., and member of the Military Council and chief of the political administration of the fleet, Vice Admiral SHABLIKOV, N.I., did not thoroughly analyze the situation on ships and in units, did not definitively and purposefully organize political-educational work in the fleet and, most importantly, in raising political vigilance, did not demonstrate the necessary strictness with regard to the fulfilling of oversight by officials and other persons.

Thus, as the investigation showed, the conclusion may be reached that SABLIN acted alone, with the support of several other persons. No organized anti-Soviet group or so-called revolutionary committee on the ship was shown to have existed.

SABLIN is an ardent covert anti-Soviet who has harbored hostile views for a long time. Through demagogic means, employing his high position of authority and playing on the insufficient political maturity, passivity, and indecisiveness of part of the staff, he succeeded in taking charge of the situation on the ship for a short time. However, only a portion of the staff submitted to SABLIN’s agitation. The majority quickly began to understand his true nature and
criminal intentions, which led to the disruption of SABLIN's plans and the restoration of order on the ship.

The ship's commander, captain of the 2nd rank POTUL'NYI, A.V., did not succeed in training the crew to be a unified fighting collective, capable of fulfilling its military duty under any circumstances. The investigation also established the definite passiveness and confusion of the officer staff, which was unable in good time to recognize the anti-Soviet nature of the speeches and the intentions of the betrayer and decisively put an end to this activity.

The ship's unauthorized departure from the port was in large measure the fault of the guard service and the leadership of the Riga naval garrison, for not taking decisive measures to restore order on the ship and prevent its departure.

It would be considered advisable:

1. For the Chief Political Administration of the Soviet Army and the Navy to develop and carry out, on the basis of the emergency situation that took place, further measures for improving political-educational work among all categories of military personnel to engender in them the spirit of unlimited devotion to the Communist Party and the Soviet Government, high political vigilance, ideals, and principles. Particular attention should be paid to the deep familiarity of every person in the military with the requirements of the military oath, and the necessity to actively and insistently uphold the principles of communist morality and Soviet reality. As well as to review the necessity for introducing changes, in the program of preparation of officers in higher educational institutions and in command and Marxist-Leninist studies, aimed at strengthening the ideological and psychological preparation of officers and training them to develop the high moral feelings and honor of an officer, as well as of military duty.

2. For the Chief-of Staff of the Navy to develop and carry out measures to improve the organization of operational and guard service. To raise the exacting expectations and strengthen control over the fulfillment of the provisions of rules, directives, orders, and other documents that regulate the acts of officials as well as members of the operational and guard service.

3. For the Commander, staff and political administration of the Baltic Fleet to develop and carry out measures aimed at training the staff in high political vigilance, concrete and purposeful political-educational work, at raising the executive capability of all categories of officials and the guard-watch service. To study more deeply, analyze and sharply evaluate the situation on ships and in units. To teach officers to act independently and to adopt decisive measures in any circumstances. To carry on a decisive struggle against unneeded tutelage, which results in lack of initiative and the loss of a feeling of responsibility.
4. Those guilty of acts that do not involve criminal liability and also those persons whose
inaction or carelessness with regard to their duties facilitated these acts should be subjected to
strict party and disciplinary responsibility.

At the same time we report:

At the time of the discussions of the commission and supervisory officials of the Navy
with many members of the crew and with all members of the staff of the large anti-submarine
ship "Storozhevoi," people expressed concern at the traitorous acts of SABLIN and asked that
the Ministry of Defense, the CC CPSU and comrade Brezhnev personally be assured that the
sailors, petty officers, warrant officers and officers sincerely admit their temporary confusion
and assert that they are ready to fulfill their military duties.

The investigation regarding bringing those guilty to criminal responsibility for this
emergency is proceeding. A party meeting was held at which the obviously guilty, including
SABLIN, were removed from the CPSU. The ship's crew has been dispersed and a new crew
has been assigned. The large anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi" is in operation, its arms and
technical equipment in good working order. Measures have been taken in the fleet to prevent
the release of information.

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION:
ADMIRAL OF THE SOVIET UNION   [signature] S. GORSHKOV
MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION:
GENERAL OF THE ARMY           [signature] A. YEPISHEV
VICE ADMIRAL                  [signature] P. NAVOITSEV
LIEUTENANT GENERAL            [signature] S. ROMANOV
REAR ADMIRAL                  [signature] V. SABANEDEV
MAJOR GENERAL                 [signature] Lu. LOBANSKI
REAR ADMIRAL                  [signature] M. GULYAEV

17 November, 1975
To the CC CPSU

The Committee on State Security has completed the investigation of the criminal case involving the charge against Captain Rank III SABLIN, V.M. and other military personnel—participants in a criminal act on November 8-9, 1975 on board the large anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi," in all 14 men.

It has been established that the organizer of this crime, SABLIN, having fallen under the influence of revisionist ideology, had nurtured hostile views toward Soviet reality for a number of years. In April 1975 he set them down on paper and transcribed them on to an audio tape. During the events aboard the "Storozhevoi" he made an anti-Soviet speech before his personal staff. SABLIN’S political "platform" included a collection of slanderous statements borrowed from bourgeois propaganda about the passe nature of Marxism-Leninism and the "bureaucratic degeneration" of the state and party apparatus in the USSR, combined with calls for ending the CPSU’s rule and the creation of a new, "more progressive" party.

During the Spring of 1975 he developed a detailed plan for seizing the ship, which he intended to use as a "political tribune" for advancing demands about changing the state structure of the USSR and fighting against Soviet power.

In preparation for carrying out this plan, SABLIN studied the attitudes of the members of the crew and gathered around himself a select few, in whom he encouraged negative feelings toward Soviet reality. However, as the investigation established, he did not succeed in finding people who shared his views and establishing an anti-Soviet group on the ship. Just three days before the events he let the sailor SHEIN, A.N. in on his criminal intentions, secured his support, and passed on to him for distribution the tape with the anti-Soviet speech.

SHEIN, before being inducted into the service, had been convicted of theft, and during his service he had 13 disciplinary reprimands and had made politically-unwise judgments. During the events on the "Storozhevoi" SHEIN, having gotten a pistol from SABLIN, helped arrest the commander of the ship, participated in the isolation and holding of the officers and warrant officers who refused to support SABLIN, prevented attempts by members of the crew to free the commander and arrest SABLIN, and caused bodily injury to petty officer KOPYLOV.

Aiming to get part of the crew to participate in his illegal seizure of the "Storozhevoi," SABLIN used his position as deputy commander for political matters, and in order to mask his hostile intentions, he hastened to issue refined demagogic announcements, accompanying them with citations from the works of classical Marxism-Leninism.
As a result of the criminal acts of Sablin, the "Storozhevoi" sailed out of the Gulf of Riga and beyond Soviet territorial waters in the direction of Sweden (a distance of 21 nautical miles). The constant and categorical demands of the command officers that the ship be returned to port were ignored by SABLIN. Only through the decisive measures of the command staff, with the help of the crew, was the "Storozhevoi" stopped and returned to port. Thus, this large anti-submarine ship was removed from the fleet for a period of 16 hours.

On the basis of the testimony received in the course of the investigation, the criminal acts of SABLIN are designated as traitorous, committed intentionally with the objective of undermining the existing system in the USSR and injuring the military might of our country. The crime of SHEIN is designated as aiding and abetting treason.

The remaining accused: lieutenants VAVILKIN, V.I. and DUDNIK, V.K., warrant officers BORODAI, V.M., VELICHKO, V.G., GOMENCHUK, A.A., KALNICHEV, V.A., KHOMIAKOV, A.T., petty officer SKIDANOV, A.V., sailors AVERIN, V.N., BUROV, M.M., SALIVONCHIK, N.F., AND SAKHNEVICH, G.V.-all are young people aged 20-23, lacking in experience of the world and political training who were provoked and confused by SABLIN. They did not know about SABLIN's traitorous intentions, but in supporting his actions they in essence allowed him to carry out his criminal plan of seizing the ship. Several of them refused to support SABLIN in the first stage of the activities and he took them into custody. From an examination of the materials of the case it is clear that they did not intend to commit treason, but because of the suddenness and fast pace of developments they did not become aware in time of the hostile direction of SABLIN's intentions and could not assess them correctly.

During questioning these accused gave exhaustive testimony about the violations that were committed, deeply repented their participation, and condemned the criminal adventure of SABLIN. None of them has been subject to criminal sanctions in the past.

The acts of this group of accused are subject to classification as military crimes.

Considering the circumstances as established and the causes of the extraordinary events on the anti-submarine ship "Storozhevoi," we consider it appropriate that the criminal case against SABLIN and SHEIN, who are accused of treason, be sent for review to the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court.

Regarding the remaining 12 accused, who have committed military crimes: Pursuant to the Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of March 28, 1958 and the Edict of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of November 28, 1973, which regulate questions regarding the bringing of criminal charges against military personnel, court proceedings should not take place and the cases against them should be dismissed, with severe disciplinary punishment to be applied under the authority of the USSR Minister of Defense.
We ask that our proposal be reviewed.
Draft of decree of the CC CPSU attached.

[signed by]
Y. Andropov       A. Grechko       R. Rudenko       L. Smirnov
February 28, 1976
No. 408-A
SENTENCE
In the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

13 July 1976

Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court

Presiding Judge: Major General of Justice BUSHEV, G.I.
People's Assessors: Lieutenant General-Engineer TSIGANKOV, I.S.
Major General-Military Engineering KOZLOV, B.V.
Secretaries: Colonel of Administrative Service Afanas'ev, M.B.
Employee of the Soviet Army Kuznetsov, V.S.

With the participation of state accuser—senior aide to the Chief Military Procurator, Major General of Justice Shanturov, V.S. and defense lawyers Aksenov, L.V. and Popov, L.M.

In closed judicial proceedings on the premises of the USSR Supreme Court the criminal case was heard against the following members of the military:

1. Captain of the III rank Sablin, Valerii Mikhailovich, born January 1, 1939 in the city of Leningrad, Russian, dismissed from membership in the CPSU in connection with the present case, having higher education, married, with no earlier convictions, having served in the Navy since July 1956.—

for committing a crime provided for in point "a" of article 64 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR.

2. Sailor Shein, Aleksandr Nikolaevich, born March 7, 1955 in the city of Rubtsovsk, Altai Krai, Russian, excluded from the All-Union Lenin Communist Union of Youth in connection with the present case, 10 year education, unmarried, with no earlier convictions, having served in the Navy since being inducted in May 1973.—

for committing a crime provided for in article 17 and point "a" of article 64 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR.

The judicial investigation of the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court has determined:

Sablin, during his service in the Navy, had long nurtured treasonous thoughts about taking over a warship, establishing a secured territory for autonomous existence with sufficient maneuverability, powerful radio stations and arms in order to use such a ship for hostile speeches aimed at changing the state and social order in the USSR and, in particular, as a means to pressure the Soviet government by presenting a series of ultimatums, including that...
of providing him, Sablin, the possibility to speak regularly on central radio and television in order to propagate his criminal intentions.

In the Spring of 1975, serving as deputy commander for political matters of the large anti-submarine ship “Storozhevoi,” Sablin made preparations for the crime that he had conceived of. With this aim in mind he prepared several addresses of a slanderous, anti-Soviet nature for the crew and for television, recorded two radio messages (the first contained demands in the form of an ultimatum to the central party and Soviet organs, and the second, entitled “To all, all, all . . .”, was an appeal to the peoples of the Soviet Union and foreign countries to support his, Sablin’s, criminal acts through strikes and demonstrations); he dictated on two audio tapes his autobiography, a speech that he recommended for television, and the content of the two radio messages just mentioned, and then he prepared another copy of the recording. In addition, Sablin drafted a so-called “Model Statute for the Revolutionary Forces of the Ship” and a plan of specific actions for seizing power on the “Storozhevoi.”

In the preparatory speech for radio and television Sablin stated his hostile views, made sharp anti-Soviet and slanderous attacks on the CC CPSU and the Soviet government, and also set forth his adventuristic program aimed at changing the Soviet state and social structure, including by forceful means.

At the end of October 1975 Sablin, knowing that the ship would participate in the naval celebration parade in Riga and then, on November 9, in the morning, go off for repairs, planned to seize power on the “Storozhevoi” on the evening of November 8, take the ship out to sea as provided for in the plan, and then, in neutral waters, use the ship for his criminal purposes.

Continuing preparations for the commission of the crime, Sablin decided to bring in as an accomplice the sailor Shein, who had been under Sablin’s command for some time. For this purpose Sablin called Shein to his cabin on November 5, 1975. In a long conversation Sablin gradually set forth his traitorous thoughts concerning using the ship for hostile speeches aimed at changing the state and social structure of the USSR, and also his plan for specific acts to seize power and take the ship from the harbor. After expressing some doubt Shein agreed to help Sablin in committing the crime. Sablin suggested that Shein inform him about the feelings of the members of the crew during the seizure of the ship and thereafter, and also that he tell his relatives and friends about Sablin’s intentions and the events taking place on the ship. He then passed on to Shein one of the audio tapes with the recording of his speeches. In addition, Sablin corrected the time sequence for the plan for the seizure of the ship, foresaw the preparation of leaflets to be distributed by members of the crew to various addresses, prepared theses for his speech before the staff and took measures for cutting off communications with those parts of the ship in which the commander, officers, and petty officers would be isolated.
Between November 5 and 7 Shein, on his own initiative, spoke with four sailors about Sablin's intentions, including Averin, and told them about the recorded speeches of Sablin. He convinced sailors Lapenko and Averin to write letters to people close to them about the proposed events on the ship and he attached a note to a letter of Averin's in which he requested support for their acts. Shein made the same requests in letters to Shikhov, V.M., Onikiichuk, O.A., and Khlebnikova, L.V., and he sent Khlebnikova a tape of Sablin's speeches. At about 17 hours on November 8, 1975 Shein, acting on Sablin's orders, cut off radio contact with Radio-Technical Service posts 1-6.

On November 9, 1975 at 18:30 Sablin lured the ship's commander, Potul'nyi, A.V. into number 2 post of the radio-technical service and isolated him there, locking the cabin door. After that he called Shein to his cabin, stated that the commander was isolated, gave him a pistol (without cartridges) to guard Potul'nyi and to give Sablin help in case of resistance from members of the crew.

Armed with a loaded pistol, Sablin called together the officers and warrant officers of the ship in the warrant officers' company room. Employing demagogy and deception, Sablin delivered an anti-Soviet, slanderous speech, briefly stating his criminal intentions and reading the text of his radiogram with its demands in the form of an ultimatum. Without permitting objections, he proposed that everyone support him.

At this time Shein, on orders from Sablin, was in the movie projection booth observing the proceedings and ready to help if the situation demanded it.

A group of officers and warrant officers stated their disagreement with Sablin, as a result of which Sablin and Shein isolated them in the Radio-Technical Service post no. 6. At this time Shein, armed with a pistol, forced three officers to submit to his commands.

In order to assert his power on the ship and involve the petty officers and sailors of the emergency service in illegal acts, Sablin first spoke to the radio operators, then to the petty officers and sailors who were not on duty, and then to the senior servicemen. In these statements, which were anti-Soviet and slanderous, he repeated essentially what he had said in the conference room of the petty officers. On Sablin's orders his recorded speech was transmitted over the internal radio system. He also gave the text of his speech "To all, all all . . ." to the ship's clerk for duplication and distribution to members of the crew, so that on the morning of November 9 these leaflets would be sent to various addressees. However, for a variety of reasons this did not happen. Talking with the senior members of the crew, Sablin told them that they would soon be placed on reserve status, and suggested that they carefully guard the commander, officers, petty officers as well as the arsenal and ammunition storage chambers.
Making use of his position, the suddenness and unexpectedness of the situation that he created, and the demagogic devices he employed, as well as the confusion and inexperience of the crew, Sablin was able to mislead them for a certain period of time.

At the time Sablin was making speeches to the staff, Shein performed the tasks that the two had agreed upon beforehand. Shortly before Sablin's speech to the radio operators, he prevented the sailor Brusnikin from disclosing the arrest of the commander. Armed with his pistol, he prevented sailor Dosmaganbetov, K.E. from reaching the place where the commander was being held. And when petty officer second class Kopylov, V.S. and sailor Mabiev, K.A. tried to free Potul'n'yi, Shein pulled out his pistol, threatened to shoot them, called for help from warrant officers who were supporting Sablin, and put down this effort with their help. During this time Shein hit Kopylov in the head with the pistol, causing slight injury. In addition, Shein ignored the frequent orders of ship's commander Potul'n'yi to free him, and, at Sablin's order, put heavy beams against the door of the commander's cabin.

About one a.m. on November 9, 1975 a group of officers and warrant officers, including officer Stepanov, attempted to drag Sablin into one of the cabins in order to disarm and arrest him. However, by threatening them with a pistol, and with the help of several members of the crew, these efforts were frustrated and those who had acted against him were taken into custody and isolated. Shein participated in isolating these officers and warrant officers.

Since it was known that officer Firsov, V.V. had left the ship to report to the command about the activities on the "Storozhevoi," Sablin, fearing arrest, decided to hasten the move to put out to sea and at 2:08 on November 9, 1975 he sounded the alarm. Under the command and direction of Sablin, the "Storozhevoi" cast off and moved away at 2:51.

At 4:00 Sablin ordered the radio operators to transmit a radiogram to the Commander-in-Chief of the USSR Navy, coded by sailor Yefremov, A.G., in which demands in the form of ultimatums were presented to the central party and soviet organs, including declaring the territory of the ship free and independent from state and party organs and the members of the crew immune, and to provide the daily opportunity to appear on central radio and television. Sablin told representatives of the military units on the ship about this radiogram and suggested that they increase the guard on the isolated officers and warrant officers.

In an attempt to interfere with the movement of the ship, the members of the crew who were isolated in the second group cut off the power supply for the radar station, as a result of which Sablin ordered them moved to another part of the ship. Shein participated in assembling the sailors not on duty and in escorting them under guard. Learning that Stepanov had a pistol he asked the sailors to disarm him. Shein gave the pistol taken from Stepanov to Sablin.

During the period when the ship was out of the harbor Shein passed on and carried out the orders of Sablin, locked officer Dudkin, V.K., who had refused to support Sablin, in a
cabin, prevented warrant officer Savchanko, V.I. from freeing officers and warrant officers from one of the places of confinement, organized and carried out the guarding of the isolated officers and warrant officers, and supported the actions of Sablin in his conversations with the members of the crew.

In taking the ship into the open sea, Sablin prohibited the radio operators and signal crew from answering the calls and signals that were being received, and refused to obey the continuing orders from superior officers to make contact, to report on the situation on the "Storozhevoi," and to stop the ship. Sablin did not inform the members of the crew about the order to stop the ship and the warning of the command concerning the use of arms against the "Storozhevoi" in the event of disobedience, and demanded that sailor Yefremov not talk with anyone about this.

After meeting with the ships of the shore patrol, which accompanied the "Storozhevoi" until it finally stopped, orders to drop anchor were continuously sent from these ships by the fleet command. In answer to one of these Sablin ordered the radio operators to send the text of the radiogram "To all, all, all . . .", but they refused to do this.

At 8:55 sailor Yefremov handed Sablin a radiogram from the Commander-in-Chief of the USSR Navy, which, after affirming the receipt of Sablin's radiogram, ordered him to return to Riga. Sablin did not obey this order but continued proceeding out to sea.

At 9:08 the "Storozhevoi" passed the Irbenskii Light, and then, having reached a point outside of Soviet territorial waters, set a course ordered by Sablin of 290 degrees, i.e., in the direction of the shores of Sweden. Thereafter constant orders were sent to Sablin both by radio and from the border patrol ships warning him that if the ship wasn't stopped the force of arms would be used. But Sablin did not obey these orders and the ship proceeded on its previous course, away from the state borders of the USSR.

Around 10:00 Sablin ordered that a radiogram be sent to the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy concerning a speedy answer to his earlier demands. One of the patrol ships sent a reply ordering the "Storozhevoi" to stop and announcing that air power would be used if the order was disobeyed. With this order in mind, the patrol ships began to move away from the "Storozhevoi." Sablin did not obey this order.

Having come to understand the criminal character of Sablin's acts, a large group of petty officers and sailors freed the ship's commander, officers, and warrant officers, after which Sablin was disarmed and, with Shein, taken into custody.

In this manner, as a result of the measures taken by the command of the fleet and the crew of the ship, the criminal acts of Sablin and Shein were frustrated. The "Storozhevoi," at 10:32 on November 9, 1975, was stopped 21 miles outside the territorial waters of the state.
border of the USSR and 50 miles from the territorial waters of Sweden. The crew of the
"Storozhevoi" began unquestioningly to obey all orders of the commander of the ship.

In the judicial proceedings Sablin and Shein fully admitted their culpability with regard
to the charges brought against them and provided detailed explanations of the criminal acts
they had committed.

The guilt of Sablin and Shein was also confirmed by subsequent evidence investigated by
the court.

The content of the written materials and the speeches taped by Sablin, which confirms
the traitorous intentions of Sablin, directed at changing the state and social structure in the
USSR, including the use of forcible means; his practical preparation for carrying out these
intentions, for seizing control of the warship and using the "Storozhevoi" for criminal ends,
and also the anti-Soviet, slanderous character of his speeches to the crew members of the ship.

Sablin’s seizure of control of the "Storozhevoi" is confirmed by: 1) ship commander and
witness Potul’nyi’s testimony that on November 8, 1975 at about 18 hours 30 minutes, Sablin
distracted him and locked him in the quarters of the second radio transmitting post, where he
remained until he was freed by members of the crew; 2) testimony by witnesses Firsov and
Sadkov about how Sablin, with Shein’s help, isolated those officers and warrant officers who
didn’t agree with him in the quarters of the sixth radio transmitting post; 3) testimony by
witnesses Stepanov, Averin, and Vinogradov about the isolation of a group of officers and
warrant officers who tried to arrest Sablin in the second unit and witnesses Stepanov,
Yefremov and Solov’ev about the transfer of these officers and warrant officers to quarters in
post 37.

Regarding the circumstances surrounding the speeches of Sablin before the officers and
warrant officers of the ship, as set forth in the sentence, witnesses Firsov and Sadkov gave
testimony; the speeches to the radio operators were testified to by witness Vinogradov, those to
the petty officers and sailors not on watch by witnesses Averin, Yefremov and Solov’ev, and
those to the senior military personnel by witnesses Solov’ev and Kopylov.

Witnesses Solov’ev, Yefremov, Averin, Kopylov, and Vinogradov testified that Sablin,
having taken command of the "Storozhevoi," took the ship from its mooring site and
commanded it until he was arrested. Witnesses Chistyakov, who was commanding a group of
border patrol ships, Yefremov, Solov’ev and Vinogradov testified as to the circumstances
described in the sentence relating to Sablin’s receipt of orders from the command to stop the
"Storozhevoi" and warnings about the use of arms if he disobeyed, and that Sablin ignored
these orders. The conclusions of navigational expertise and the testimony of witnesses
Chistyakov and Solov’ev confirmed the course, time of movement, speed and stopping place of
The "Storozhevoi" at 21 miles outside the state border of the USSR and at a distance of 50 miles from the territorial waters of Sweden.

The use by Sablin of a warship for his criminal purposes, and, in particular, as a means to pressure the Soviet government, in addition to taking control of the "Storozhevoi" and taking it beyond the state border of the USSR is also confirmed by the fact that Sablin presented demands in the form of ultimatums to the Soviet government, setting them forth in a radiogram addressed to the Commander-in-Chief of the USSR Navy. Witness Yefremov testified that Sablin composed the text of this radiogram, and at his order it was encoded and sent to the addressee.

Witnesses Vinogradov and Yefremov testified that Sablin ordered them to transmit the radiogram "To all, all all . . ." in uncoded text, but the radio operators refused to do this. The court finds unconvincing the explanation of Sablin, that the radio operators did not fully understand his order.

Sablin's bringing of Shein into the role of an accomplice, and also the fact that Shein knew of the criminal intentions of Sablin and gave him aid in the commission of crimes is testified to, in addition to the statements of the defendants, by witnesses: 1) Averin, about the fact that Shein on 6-7 November told him about Sablin's criminal intentions and gave him a tape of a Sablin speech to listen to; 2) Averin, Yefremov, and Kopylov about the fact that Shein guarded the commander of the ship when he was held in custody; 3) Potul'nyi, that Shein did not obey repeated commands to free him; 4) Kopylov, about the circumstances set forth in the sentence concerning his, Kopylov's, attempts to free the ship's commander and the injuries caused to him by Shein; 5) Sadkov, about the participation of Shein in taking into custody a group of officers and warrant officers and about Shein's threat to use his weapon; 6) Solov'ev, about the participation of Shein in gathering together a group of sailors to transfer officers and warrant officers to another place of confinement, and also Solov'ev and Yefremov, about Shein's participation in actually transferring these people; 7) Averin, Kopylov, Vinogradov, and Solov'ev about the fulfilling by Shein of a variety of orders by Sablin during the period when the ship had been seized and taken out to sea, and also about Shein's active support of Sablin.

The participation of Shein in the letters mentioned in the sentence, sent to the addressee, and in the audio tape with Sablin's speech, which was sent by Shein to Khlebnikova, and the spreading by Shein of the anti-Soviet musings of Sablin and his appeal to support their criminal acts is also confirmed.

Thus, Sablin, in realizing his traitorous views, directed that changing the state and social structure of the USSR, by the use of force if necessary, and intentionally acted to injure the military power, territorial inviolability and state interests of the Soviet Union through the abuse
of his official position and the trust of the crew; he also used demagogic and deceptive methods to seize control of a warship and took it out of the jurisdiction of the USSR Ministry of Defense; he brought Shein in as a conspirator (accomplice) in the crime and repeatedly addressed the members of the crew with hostile statements and appeals, inclining them toward illegal acts; he used the warship, which was treated as separate territory having an autonomous existence and maneuverability, equipped with powerful radio stations and armaments, as a means of putting pressure on the Soviet government in order to achieve his criminal intentions and, in spite of categorical orders from superiors to stop the ship, he independently took the "Storozhevoi" beyond the limits of the Soviet border, i.e., he committed a crime provided for in point "a" of article 64 of the RSFSR Criminal Code (treason).

Shein, knowing about the traitorous intentions of Sablin, aimed at changing the state and social structure of the USSR, aided him in seizing power on the "Storozhevoi," in taking the ship beyond Soviet borders, in the use of the ship by Sablin for criminal traitorous ends, and also in spreading the anti-Soviet, slanderous fabrications of Sablin. that is, he committed a crime provided for in article 17 and point "a" of article 64 of the RSFSR Criminal Code (complicity in the commission of treason as an accomplice)

In sentencing Shein the court, taking into consideration his admission of guilt and repentance for the crime that he committed under the influence of Sablin, who was his superior, and also the degree and character of his participation in the commission of the crime, finds it possible to apply article 43 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR and not to sentence him to exile.

Regarding Sablin, in consideration of the extreme danger of the crime he committed, the court considers it necessary to apply the highest punishment provided for by law, even though in court Sablin fully admitted his guilt, repented for having committed the crime, has a dependent child, and during the time of his military service repeatedly received positive evaluations.

On the basis of what has been set forth above and guided by article 44 of the Principles of Criminal Procedure of the USSR and the Union Republics, and articles 301-303, 312-315, and 317 of the Criminal Procedural Code of the RSFSR, the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court:
ISSUES THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES:

Sablin, Valery Mikhailovich, is found guilty of treason, i.e., of the commission of a crime provided for in point "a" of article 64 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, and on the basis of the criminal law is subject to the death penalty—shooting, without confiscation of property in the absence thereof.

On the basis of article 36 of the RSFSR Criminal Code Sablin, V.M. is stripped of the military rank of "captain of the III rank." A proposal is submitted to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet regarding depriving Sablin, V.M. of the order "For Service to the Motherland in the USSR Armed Forces," III degree and the medals "For Military Valor"; in commemoration of the 100th year since the birth of V.I. Lenin; "50 Years of Soviet Armed Forces"; "20 Years Since the Victory in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945"; and also to the USSR Ministry of Defense regarding depriving Sablin V.M. of the medals "For Irreproachable Service in the USSR Armed Forces" of the II and III degrees.

Shein. Aleksandr Nikolaevich is found guilty of complicity in committing treason (as an accomplice), i.e., of the commission of a crime provided for in article 17 and point "a" of article 64 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, and on the basis of this criminal law, with the application of article 43 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, is sentenced to deprivation of freedom for a period of eight years, of which the first two years will be served in prison and the remaining time in a corrective-labor colony, strict regime, without exile and without confiscation of property in the absence thereof.

The beginning of the term of punishment of Shein. A.N., in consideration of his period of preliminary detention, is counted from November 9, 1975.

The material evidence described in volume 39, p. 211 (in part one, point 6) will remain with the materials of the case, while that described in volume 39, pp. 211-212 (part 2, point 6) will be returned to the military units to which they belong; two pistols and two cartridges transferred for storage to military unit 49358 will be returned to the military unit to which they belong.

The judicial expenses in the sum of 243 rubles 10 kopecks are shared in the following manner: charge to Shein. Aleksandr Nikolaevich 186 (one hundred eighty-six) rubles 50 kopecks to be paid to the state treasury; the remaining sum (56 rub. 60 kop.)—to be charged to the state.

The sentence may not be appealed or protested in cassationary proceedings.

TRUE COPY: Judicial Secretary
of the Military Collegium of the
USSR Supreme Court
Valery Sablin’s Appeal To The People

It was written on magnetic tape. So those to whom it was addressed did not hear the appeal (which I am presenting here in shortened form). It shows that Valery Sablin, communist and commissar on a warship, was a naive man; he truly believed in the nobility of the communist idea, was convinced of the righteousness of Lenin, and in no way raised his hand against socialism. He merely saw the flaws in the regime, which, of course, everyone saw, but about which nearly everyone kept silent. The achievement and sacrifice of Valery Sablin was an uncalculated impulse, a naive belief in the idea that communism could have a “human face.” Perhaps in the last moments before his execution this brave and naive naval officer, and communist by conviction, understood the kind of regime that he had decided to do battle with. But for him this realization came too late. For some, of course, it never came. How many died, sentenced by Stalin with the name Stalin on their lips...? Here, then, is Valery Sablin’s appeal to the people.

“I appeal to those who feel the revolutionary past of our country in their hearts, who assess the present critically but not cynically, and who think honestly about the future of our country. Our statement is not a betrayal of the Motherland, but a purely political, progressive statement, and the betrayers of the Motherland will be those who try to stop us. My comrades have asked me to say for them that in case of military aggression against our country, we will be honored to defend it. But our objective now is different: to raise the voice of truth.

Lenin dreamed of a state of justice and freedom and not of a state of strict subordination and lawlessness. In particular, in one of the letters he wrote shortly before his death, he stated that “workers joining the Central Committee should not be primarily those who have spent long periods of time serving in the soviets, because these workers have developed the kind of traditions and prejudices that are necessary to combat. Among the workers who become members of the Central Committee should be mainly workers on a level lower than that from which we have nominated workers for the soviets for the past five years, i.e., those who are closer to regular workers and peasants.” That is, Lenin wanted to see in the Central Committee a party organ that could control the activity of the state organs from a proletarian point of view. Unfortunately this didn’t happen. And we have a Central Committee and a Government that are like two boots—a pair. More precisely a boot within a boot. We observe the game of formal parliamentarism in elections to soviet organs and in the execution by the soviets of their duties. The practical fate of the whole people is in the hands of a chosen elite, in the person of the Politburo of the CC CPSU. Faith in justice in our society has disappeared. And this is the first symptom of a grave illness in society. The attempt of several Soviet scholars to present the cult of the personality in a socialist society as the result of the personal negative qualities of
the leader is not scientific. It contradicts the teaching of marxism-leninism about the role of personality in history. These pseudo-scholars shamefully hold their tongues on orders from the leading party-state organs. Regarding the quiet disappearance from the political arena of such political actors as Khrushchev, Beria, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, Shelest and others, there are a few sparse lines in the newspapers and that's all. No court proceedings, no investigations. For some reason it is considered that the people should be satisfied with facts and be a politically inert mass.

Tell me, where, in what print media or transmission by radio or television has there been criticism of the higher-ups? This is not permitted. The most advanced structure in terms of social development, in a historically short period of time, 50 years, has been transformed into the kind of social system in which the people are calm and show implicit faith in orders from above, while they are deprived of their political rights and remain silent.

A complex situation is developing at present in our country: on the one hand, from outward appearances there is officially general harmony and social consensus, whether you like it or not, an all-people's state: and on the other hand a general, individual dissatisfaction with the way things are.

We categorically reject the attempt to present us as worshipers of capitalist society and cursers of the socialist. No. We assert that socialism is the advanced system in relationship to all of its precursors. It created advanced social relationships, advanced economic forms, and the prerequisites for a communist revolution. But along the way it threw out the political revolutionary nature of its movement and in the process became a brake on the progressive development of society.

The pivotal question of any revolution is the question of power. We propose, first, that the present state apparatus be cleaned out from top to bottom, and that some parts of it be simply dismantled and thrown into the dustbin of history for being infected with "familyness," widespread bribery, and careerism. In a word, arrogance in their attitude toward the people. Second, the system of elections also needs to be thrown into the dustbin, since it transforms the people into a faceless mass. Third, all of the conditions that make the organs of state all-powerful and beyond the control of the populace need to be liquidated. Will these questions be decided by the dictatorship of the leading class? Definitely! Otherwise the whole revolution will conclude with the seizure of power and nothing more. Only through a high level of popular vigilance will the road to happiness in society be found. Now we are faced with the most burning question—to rally around our group of honest revolutionary thinkers who love their Motherland, people who have united and will be able to provide the energy, persistence and single-mindedness for the political struggle. The result of this effort should be the creation of a revolutionary party. You can be sure that with a party that has a definite program and
honestly pursues a political line understood by the people, the wheel of history will turn in the right direction."

One More Taped Appeal From Valery Sablin To The People

"To all, all, all!
This is the large anti-submarine ship 'Storozhevoi' speaking. We are not betrayers of the Motherland or adventurists seeking fame at any cost. An extreme need has developed to set forth a series of questions about the political, social, and economic development of our country and about the future of our people. These questions require collective and widespread discussion without any pressure from the state and party organs. We decided to make this appeal with a clear understanding of responsibility for the fate of the Motherland, with a feeling of fervent desire to develop true communist relationships in our country. But we also recognize the danger of being physically or morally liquidated by the existing organs of state or persons hired by them. Therefore, we appeal for support with our statement to all honest people of our country and abroad. And if during the time indicated by us, daytime, at 21:30 Moscow time, one of our representatives does not appear on the screens of your television sets, we request that you not go to work the next day but continue this television strike until the government stops this gross violation of freedom of speech and our meeting with you takes place.

Support us comrades! Until we meet again."

All public appeals, to the Russian Supreme Court and the procuracy regarding the legal rehabilitation of Valery Sablin have so far met with no response. The country and the people have still not been taught to value their true heroes. I have no doubt that this case will come up again and that this courageous naval officer will receive his due for his reckless self-sacrifice in order to speak the truth to the people about power, which had brought such unhappiness to the people. It is my view that the name of Valery Sablin should be etched in gold letters on a memorial to the freeing of Russia from communist despotism.

ENDNOTE

1. In 1994 the Criminal Collegium of the Russian Federation Supreme Court reviewed the case and posthumously changed the sentence against Sablin from execution to ten years' imprisonment. See Maks Khazin, "Prigovor posle rasstrela," Izvestia, July 14, 1994, p. 5.