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GUNMAN ATTACKS SPACEMEN'S CAR IN THE KREMLIN

Wounds Driver and Escort
on Motorcycle as Group
Arrives at Celebration

BREZHNEV AT CEREMONY

Moscow Observers Believe
Assailant Was Striving
to Assassinate Leaders

By THEODORE SHABAD

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Jan. 23—The Soviet Union disclosed today that a man fired several shots yesterday at a motorcade that carried four astronauts being honored for a spacecraft docking and crew transfer in earth orbit last week.

The shooting took place inside at the Borovitsky Gate entrance to the Kremlin, to which the astronauts were being escorted to attend a reception.

The presumption of Western observers here was that the assailant, whose identity has not been made public, had fired at the second, closed, car in the motorcade in the belief that it was carrying the top Soviet leaders, who had gone to Vnukovo Airport to welcome the astronauts.

Actually the leaders, headed by Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Communist Party's General Secretary, were riding farther back in the motorcade of more than 20 limousines.

Chauffeur Among Wounded

Tass, the official Soviet press agency, said the chauffeur of one of the cars and a motorcycle escort driver had been wounded and that the assailant had been seized on the spot. An investigation is under way, Tass added.

According to informed sources, a fifth astronaut, Maj. Gen. Georgi N. Beregovoi, who orbited the earth last October, was nicked by flying glass.

A Russian source said he had heard that the assailant, described as about 25 years of age, had been dressed in a policeman's uniform. This could not be confirmed.

Informed Soviet sources said that the incident occurred about 2:15 P.M. near the end of a 20-mile drive from the airport, where the astronauts had been welcomed by top Soviet leaders

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after a flight from the space center of Baikonur in central Kazakhstan.

The shooting is not known to have been witnessed by any foreigners in the vicinity. The incident was also concealed by the Kremlin wall from crowds on outside streets.

The Kremlin, which was closed to the public under Stalin, was opened to the public in the mid-nineteen-fifties after the dictator's death except for restricted areas around Government buildings. The territory inside the Borovitsky Gate is among the areas in which visitors are ordinarily free to stroll.

The first information about the shooting began to be divulged to Western correspondents this morning by a variety of Soviet sources. Requests to the press department of the Foreign Ministry for confirmation and details elicited only a statement that shots had indeed been fired, that two persons had been injured and that the assailant was a "schizophrenic."

This term is used loosely here to describe a mentally deranged person. Opponents of the Soviet regime are often automatically characterized as "unbalanced."

The four astronauts who were being honored in traditional welcoming ceremonies were Col. Vladimir A. Shatalov, Col. Boris V. Volynov, Col. Yevgeny V. Khrunov and Aleksei S. Yeliseyev, a civilian engineer.

They were standing in the lead car, an open convertible, holding bouquets of flowers and waving to crowds.

The brief Tass announcement said that the shots had been fired at a car in which four other astronauts were riding.

They were identified as General Beregovoi, Valentina V. Nikolayeva-Tereshkova, the woman astronaut; her husband, Col. Andrian G. Nikolayev, and Col. Aleksei A. Leonov, the first astronaut to leave an orbiting vehicle and "walk" in space.

According to the Soviet press agency's running news account of the procession, the second and third cars were occupied by former astronauts and the fourth and fifth cars by close relatives of the four astronauts being honored. This meant that the Soviet leaders were in the sixth or following cars.

The astronauts began the journey at the airport yesterday in a limousine but later changed to the convertible to wave to the crowds standing in the freezing weather.

Reflection of Closed Society

It seemed to some observers here a typical reflection of the

closed nature of Soviet society that an incident, witnessed by a substantial number of Russians near the scene, did not become public knowledge until more than 24 hours later.

A Western newsman who followed the motorcade into the Kremlin about 15 minutes after the incident recalled that about 200 persons had waved and smiled from the sidewalk just inside the Borovitsky Gate as if nothing had happened.

Other foreign correspondents who watched the four-hour live telecast of the astronauts' arrival and their reception recalled that at the approximate moment of the shooting the camera had been trained on the lead car from which the four astronauts were waving. The newsmen recalled that at that moment the four spacemen seemed to be waving mechanically and looking backward at something that had distracted them.

It was only at 6:23 P.M. today that Tass first moved on its English-language service an 80-word statement on the incident. The Russian-language version, entitled "A Provocation," was broadcast over the Moscow radio during the 7 o'clock news program.

Because of grammatical inflections, the Russian-language version made it clear that the assailant was a man. The version in English referred to the assailant simply as a "person." Unofficial accounts earlier in the day conflicted on whether

a man or a woman had been involved.

Newsmen recalling the televised rally in the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses, where the astronauts were honored immediately after the shooting, commented today on the outward calm displayed by the astronauts and officials on the dais despite the alarm that must have followed the shooting.

It was recalled, however, that there had been a 10-minute delay in the start of the proceedings, scheduled to open at 2:30 P.M.

None of the five principal speakers, the four astronauts and Mr. Brezhnev, showed any apparent nervousness during the rally.

Two Pistols Reported

MOSCOW, Jan. 23 (UPI)—Russian sources said today that the assailant had emerged from a cheering crowd with two pistols.

The driver of the second car in the motorcade was hit in the

head by three bullets and critically wounded, they added. A security agent seated next to the driver was also said to have been hit by a bullet.

Some persons who watched the reception on television recalled having seen notes passed during the proceedings to Mr. Brezhnev and to Yuri V. Andropov, head of the Committee of State Security.