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KHRUSHCHEV'S SECRET SPEECH AND THE AFTERMATH

Donnalee Rowe

History Honors Thesis
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Three years after the death of Stalin, Khrushchev presented before the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Union, a secret speech, condemning Stalin and the development of the cult of the individual around him. In so doing, he promised to return to the Marxist-Leninist principles and to collective leadership. I shall try, in this paper, to summarize the various changes that have occurred within the years succeeding the speech. I shall try to show that there has been no basic change in the Soviet system of government, but that some controls have been relaxed and the method of control has been changed to reflect Khrushchev's personality.
March 5, 1953, marks a turning point in the history of Russia. On this date Stalin died, ending a quarter-century of rule by a dictator, and beginning the rule of the collective in an easier atmosphere. The official announcement of his death revealed the seriousness of the event.

Our task is to guard... the steel-like and monolithic unity of the party as the apple of our eye... [and to maintain] high political vigilance, irreconcilability and stalwartness in the struggle against inner and outer foes... The most important task of the party and the government is to insure uninterrupted and correct leadership, the greatest unity of leadership and the prevention of any kind of disorder and panic...

In this time of crisis, words of assurance would seem more appropriate but instead the alarm was sounded.

An examination of the system which had been ruled by Stalin will reveal the cause for concern. Through numerous purges, Stalin had set up a permanent dictatorship based on fear. The fear stemmed from the suspicious nature of the dictator. Stalin was a strict disciplinarian and ruled with an iron hand. He tried to regulate all phases of Soviet life. He regarded any deviation, or appearance of deviation, as a threat to his personal authority and had it quickly repressed. The instrument of regulation was the organization of secret police. There were no legal guarantees to the citizen and the police could make arbitrary arrests, accusations, and carry out executions. Torture was permitted so in most cases there was a "confession" to support the execution; mock trials were possible also.
It was a dictatorship which waged war on its own people but it seemed to thrive on hatred and suspicion. Under Stalin's direction, Russia had made tremendous advances in the fields of science and industry. He had carried the Soviet Union from an industrially backward nation to a contender for world power. The important men under Stalin achieved their high position because he placed them there—a result of their ability to praise him and follow along his policies without arouses his suspicion, rather that their capabilities as leaders. The men who had demonstrated the qualities of leadership and independent thought had been purged in the early years after the revolution, and mediocre men, whom Stalin could manipulate replaced them.

With the death of Stalin, a sensitive situation developed because, in an permanent dictatorship, there is no legitimate successor, yet government apparatus calls for another dictator. On March 5, the collective began the task of attempting to rule as a group over a system built for absolute dictatorship. The position of dictator remained open and the collective struggled for individual power.

The period from 1953 to 1956 marks the steady ascendency of Khrushchev to power. On March 6, 1953, Malenkov was the most prominent member of the collective. He had been close to Stalin throughout his rule and seemed to be his logical successor. Also, like Stalin, he was the First Secretary of the Party and the Prime Minister in the government. Beria was the other apparent contender for power within the collective. The head of the Secret Police, he had a great potential to establish his rule by force and continue along the
same line as Stalin. Khrushchev was the least of the collective.
In one of its first acts, the members of the collective combined
to destroy Beria. He was arrested quickly and executed in December,
1953 in a manner reminiscent of Stalin. Malenkov was forced to resign
his position as Party Secretary in the early weeks of the collective
and Khrushchev replaced him in September. Because of Malenkov's
prestige, he retained his influence in policy matters until February,
1955 when he was forced out of the government completely. Bulganin,
Khrushchev's foil, replaced him. The collective had worked to maintain
a balance of power within it, and, in so doing, Khrushchev had been able
inconspicuously to increase his power until by 1956 there seemed to be
no one who could seriously challenge his power.5

The policies of this period are confusing. They vacillated
between a more liberal rule and the traditional Stalinist line—an
indication of the power struggle going on behind the scenes. There
was one consistent feature throughout this entire period. Khrushchev,
as head of the Party apparatus, continued to substitute his proteges
in government and Party positions.6 Stalin's spirit was strong, even
in death.7 His personality had given Russia its characteristics and,
however the people felt about him, whether love or hatred, it was an
intense feeling and always mixed with fear.8 The rule of the collective
called for a drastic change in the government machinery, and, in putting
its policies into effect, they had to cope with this emotional state
of the people. Immediately after Stalin's death, an atmosphere of
greater freedom was introduced probably because of the insecurity of
the collective. Amnesty for military and criminal prisoners was
granted. Malenkov announced increased food and consumers' goods.
The Doctors Plot, created by Stalin to initiate another purge, was
repudiated as false. The censorship was reduced and the resulting
thaw in literature was important particularly in awaking the intelligentsia.
Aram Khachaturian, writing a critical review in 1953, stated:

... The musical authorities must desist from the harmful
practice of interfering in the artistic activities of the
composer. Creative problems cannot be solved by
bureaucratic methods.

At approximately the same time W. Pomerantsev wrote in the Novy Mir:
"Honesty is what in my opinion is lacking in some of our books and
plays. ... Insincerity is not necessarily the same as lying, for
stiltedness is also insincere."

In late 1954, a reversal of this liberal trend was seen and
Khrushchev used the Second Soviet Writers Congress to remind the
writers in no uncertain terms of their obligation to the Party.
Another Stalinist policy which Khrushchev retrieved in January, 1955
stressed the priority of heavy industry in direct contradiction to
Malenkov, foreshadowing his eclipse in February of the same year.
In these early weeks of 1955 Khrushchev seemed to seek authority through
his close association with Stalin, believing that the Stalin image
might confer legitimacy. A biographical article written in this period
called Khrushchev "one of the closest comrade-in-arms of J. V. Stalin."
And, as late as December 21, 1955, Pravda honored Stalin's birthday
which had passed ignored in 1954.
The inconsistency in policy could not last, nor could a trend away from Stalinism continue in silence. The deception of Stalin's infallibility caused consternation among the people over policy changes by the collective. Stalin's image had been built too high and the collective was now dwarfed by it. The relaxation of controls necessary to stop the stagnation of Russia, both culturally and economically, involved many elements: the struggle for power at the top and the Party intrigues, pressure from the masses for better living conditions and the craving among the educated for more freedom. This then was the situation which the collective faced at the opening of the Twentieth Party Congress of February 14, 1956. Its answer was the secret speech delivered by Khrushchev the last night of Congress; it showed that none had the power to fill the dictator's shoes; and, required that the collective be maintained, at least in name, to share equally in the responsibility. The leaders had survived the first crisis of Stalin's death. Now came the crucial test.
The Twentieth Party Congress was opened by Khrushchev at 10:00 a.m. February 14, 1956. Attending were 1,355 delegates with voting status, and 81 delegates with consultative status. Delegates from 55 foreign Communist parties also were represented. Within eleven days, eighty-five speeches were delivered, most of which dealt with the state of the Soviet Union. Of importance is the fact that in these speeches were announced no basic changes from past policies. On the contrary, the policies were reaffirmed. In his Report of the Central Committee, Khrushchev stated:

... The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has always manifested and continues to manifest concern for the preponderant development of heavy industry which is the foundation for the growth of all branches of the socialist economy, for raising our country's defense potential and for improving the people's well-being.

Agricultural policies extended the Stalinist line even further with the reduction of the number of collective farms by increasing their size. In the same speech Khrushchev called for a restoration of Party norms, condemned the "turning on one or another leader into a miracle-working hero, at the same time belittling the role of the Party and the masses and tending to reduce their creative effort." He was followed in later speeches by Mikoyan and Malenkov, both condemning the cult which "at a certain period inflicted great harm on the cause of the leadership of the Party and the country.

A few days later on February 25, 1956, a surprise closed session of Congress was called. Only the 1,355 delegates with vote attended. These were allowed to take no notes, only to listen and to be Khrushchev's sounding board. In this atmosphere Khrushchev delivered the speech
denouncing the cult of Stalin. This speech was not published in the Soviet Union nor anywhere until the United States State Department published it on June 4, 1956.²⁵

Although Khrushchev declared that the purpose of his speech was to show how the cult grew, he devoted more time to a criticism of Stalin.²⁶ He based his criticism on three facts: (1) Stalin's personality defects, (2) Stalin's purges of Communists, and (3) Stalin's faulty war leadership.

To point out the defects, he compared the personalities of Stalin and Lenin. Lenin only "tried to persuade; he patiently explained his opinions to others. Lenin always diligently saw to it that the norms of Party life were realized, that the Party statutes were enforced, that the Party Congresses and Central Committee plenary sessions took place at the proper intervals."²⁷ This is contrasted to Stalin who had displayed none of these qualities. Khrushchev further stated that Lenin had recognized these deficiencies as evidenced by Lenin's "testament" which he read in part:²⁸

Stalin is too rude, and this failing, which is quite tolerable in our midst and in relations among us Communists, becomes intolerable in the office of Secretary-General. Therefore, I propose to the Comrades that they think of a way of removing Stalin from this post and appointing it to another person who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in one advantage alone, namely, that he be more tolerant, more loyal, more courteous and more considerate to comrades, less capricious, etc.²⁹

With reference to his criticism of Stalin's purges of Communists he stated:

It was precisely during this period (1935-37-1938) that the practice of mass repression through the state apparatus was born, first against the enemies of Leninism . . . --and
subsequently also against many honest Communists. Stalin originated the concept "enemy of the people". This term made possible the use of the most cruel repression, violating all norms of revolutionary legality. Stalin made an attempt at theoretical justification of the mass terror policy under the pretext that class war must allegedly sharpen as we march forward toward socialism. Khrushchev proved his point by citing numerous cases in which good, honest Communists were falsely accused yet died still loyal to the Party, "and Stalin doubtless knew of them." Khrushchev claimed that Stalin as a war leader was completely incapable. He was unprepared for the German attack although he had received ample warning. "Even after the war began, the nervousness and hysteria which Stalin demonstrated, interfering with actual military operations, caused our army serious damage." Khrushchev asserted that he knew what was needed to further the war effort but was hindered by Stalin's stupidity. He further claimed that he had gone so far as to stand up for Zhukov when Stalin criticized his military ability. Stalin used the war to build up his own image: In various ways he tried to implant among the people the fiction that all victories gained by the Soviet people during the great patriotic war were due to the courage, daring and genius of Stalin and of no one else. We must state that after the war the situation became even more complicated. Stalin became even more capricious, irritable and brutal; in particular, his suspicion grew. His persecution mania reached unbelievable dimensions. Many workers were becoming enemies before his very eyes. After the war Stalin separated himself from the collective even more. He decided everything alone, without any consideration for anyone or anything.
Finally Khrushchev arrived at the most relevant point: "How could it be according to the tenents of Marxism-Leninism?" He did not answer the rhetorical question but merely stated:

In my opinion, the question can be asked in this manner only by those who are blinded and hopelessly hypnotized by the cult of the individual leader, only by those who do not understand the essence of the revolution and of the Soviet state. . . .

He then asked: "Where were the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee?" According to Khrushchev, in the context of time and place in which they made their decisions, they failed to recognize Stalin's deficiencies because initially he had been a capable Marxist leader. By the time his abuses were seen it was too late. "Attempts to oppose groundless suspicions and charges resulted in the opponent falling victim of the repressions." No plenary sessions were convened so there was no chance of unity to take a stand against Stalin. But "we cannot say that these were the deeds of a giddy despot" for Stalin was convinced that all this was necessary for the defense of the working people. "In this lies the whole tragedy." Khrushchev's guarantee to Congress is this: "In order not to repeat errors of the past, the Central Committee has declared itself resolutely against the cult of the individual leader. . . ." He closed with the explanation for the need of secrecy:

We should know the limits; we should not give ammunition to the enemy, we should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes. I think that the delegates to the Congress will understand and assess all these proposals properly. . . . Long live the victorious banner of our party—Leninism!"
At first glance the speech appears to be a candid revelation, indicating the best of intentions. Yet on closer examination the speech is a most revealing indictment of the entire Soviet system including the present leaders. Khrushchev raised the question "How could it be?" and, by not answering it, revealed the need for an investigation of the entire system. He did not even attempt to answer it but turned on the questioner with the accusation of being "blinded and hopelessly hypnotized." Instead of analyzing political, social and economic roots, Khrushchev used an un-Marxist explanation in stressing the deficiencies in Stalin's character. This ideal of a personality being so important is foreign to Marx who stated that it was the time and place that determined the character of the individual. According to Marx's theory, then, one could question the desirability for such a system calling for a Stalin. Khrushchev's answer is that there was a deviation from the Marxist principles which developed into the cult of the individual. Now all of the evil of the society could be attributed to Stalin's exceptional defects. The question of how the Soviet society could depart from its path to such a point of degeneration was bypassed.

Where were the members of the Politburo? A review of their activities preceding the death of Stalin would reveal that they were busy building up the cult of Stalin. On Stalin's 70th birthday, December 21, 1949, Khrushchev closed a speech with: "Glory to our dear father, wise teacher, the genius leading the Party, the Soviet people and the working people of the whole world, Comrade Stalin!" This statement was made after the war which Khrushchev claimed that
Stalin had so badly managed. The circumstances were such, according to Khrushchev, that the collective could not do anything. But was such apparent whole-hearted praise necessary or was this deceiving the people to save his neck? However, from the speech one wonders why the collective could not do anything.

Khrushchev was right in his indignation at the mass killing and deportation of people. "Not only no Marxist-Leninist, but also no man of common sense can grasp how it is possible to make whole nations responsible for inimical activity..." Yet where were the Politburo members when this occurred? The members knew that they would fall in any attempt to expose these groundless suspicions. Also, because of Stalin's popularity, the people would not have believed them, and rallied to the support of Stalin. But who filled the numerous labor camps and prisons? Surely, these and Khrushchev's men "of common sense" would have come to the support of the collective.

Khrushchev claimed that Stalin, incapacitated during the early stage of the war had let some power slip from his hands. Why did the Politburo members, recognizing by this time his deficiencies, return this power? Khrushchev's claim of ignorance as a plea for innocence is not valid. He contradicts himself by showing his awareness of Stalin's faults during the war. Even if the claim were valid it serves as an accusation in itself, for they could not seriously call themselves leaders when such major events were going on without their knowledge. Thus, Khrushchev opened up a case for the indictment of the collective.
He recognized this and warned the Congress: "We should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes." De-Stalinizing as quietly as possible was their only course, for they, as heirs to Stalin, and owing their positions to him, were deeply compromised too.47

In this speech, Khrushchev was concerned only with the crimes against the party members. This removed the responsibility of larger crimes from the Party and enabled them to implicate Stalin individually.48 The failure to include other crimes in his speech becomes more significant when he attributed them by implication to the positive role of Stalin. Among the greatest of these were the mass repressions of the Kulaks, the true "enemies of Leninism," the partition of Poland, and the purges of "class" enemies. The crimes that are mentioned are of such magnitude that they warrant a stronger indictment than "the tragedy" of Stalin. Stalin had fashioned the Soviet Regime, in the name of the working class, under the theory of developing a Communistic state. The state (the Communist experiment) and the dictator were inseparable.

By calling Stalin to account, Khrushchev is placing the entire experiment in a precarious position. Yet he chooses to label this development a personal tragedy. This is an important contradiction of the speech for it indicates that Khrushchev does not consider the system at fault—only its founder.

The speech is filled with small discrepancies and distortions, a strategy similar to that used by Stalin. Khrushchev was not consistent in his condemnation of Stalin as deviating from Leninism. Lenin's "testament" was an appeal for collectivity as well as a characterization of Stalin. Lenin desired to increase the membership of the Central
Committee in order to avoid a split between Stalin and Trotsky. Trotsky, he felt, had outstanding abilities and was the most able among the members. But Khrushchev approved of the removal of Trotsky and his followers, a move definitely against Lenin's wish. Khrushchev credited Stalin with having invented the term "enemy of the people," but it had been used by Lenin in 1917 when he prepared the law outlawing the Kadet Party, "the party of the enemies of the people."49 He accused Stalin of incorrectly interpreting Lenin in urging class war. Though class war was necessary at the beginning, Stalin used the term as a justification for exterminating Communist political opposition after class war should have ceased. After the war was no longer needed in 1934, however, Khrushchev, himself, had called for "the final annihilation of the class enemies..."50

Khrushchev's guarantee against the rise of another dictator is questionable. He seemed to be trying to prove that the existence of the collective leadership was adequate insurance. With no practical limits placed on the acquisition of power, however, and Khrushchev's apparent ascendency, no reasonably intelligent person could take this guarantee seriously. Instead, the speech proved the need for a representative government based on fundamental political liberties, and a need for a check on the authority of the leaders. Khrushchev, in his presentation of the speech, had substituted the cult of Lenin for the cult of Stalin which he could interpret as needed.
Although the speech opened up many questions, Khrushchev had sufficient control over the situation for the present.

From the point of view of immediate political reality there was, for every sentence that Khrushchev had spoken, an emergency exit; for every floodgate he had opened, there was a nearby dam; in every promise he had made, there was an implied threat. 51

Effective control could not be practiced in a democracy, but Khrushchev still had the same basic weapons as Stalin. Coupled with this he had an acute political sense as to how far he could go in shaking up the Soviet people. 52
With Stalin's death, the collective faced tremendous problems. It had taken over a bureaucracy not suited to control by a collective and was insecure in this position. It was faced with problems which called for immediate action. In some instances the action taken was contradictory to the Stalinist policy, viz., the healing of the breach between Tito's Yugoslavia and Russia. The collective had a dilemma: its authority derived from Stalin necessitated the maintenance of his infallibility, yet there had to be a change. Alongside were the pressures that were building up from the people. The masses had been controlled by brute force and the use of fear for twenty-five years. After Stalin's death there was a sigh of relief and an atmosphere of anticipation. Hope rose to a high pitch. The collective had immediately destroyed the power of the secret police in 1953 in order to secure its position and, in so doing, had broken down the wall holding back the people. It was an irrevocable step.

By discrediting Stalin's policies it could also charge him with the failures and then proceed in the name of progress. This is the major reason for the speech—the use of Stalin as a scapegoat. The collective's, and particularly Khrushchev's, rise to power demanded that these crimes not be repeated. To give this guarantee, the group had to become the chief anti-Stalinists. Whether or not they originated the movement is a moot question and is not particularly relevant in the succeeding events. By his degradation, then, it was rid of the "millstone of Stalin's heritage," and could carry out reforms reversing his policies. The collective now had the added power to define the limits of the anti-Stalin campaign and it gave them a basic ideology that they could fashion to meet any situation.
There were other benefits to be gained from de-Stalinization. The army had renewed status due to the rehabilitation of so many officers. Foreign relations were eased with a new approach of "peaceful coexistence." A new history could be written, without Stalinist distortions, which would have more historical accuracy. With freer contact with the Western world, the people could be roused from their cultural lethargy.

Khrushchev realized that the implications of the speech would reflect on him and the rest of the collective. He must have known that this could cause a serious questioning of the Soviet system. Why did he take the risk? In actuality the risk does not seem as great as it could have been. The infallibility of the Party suffered a severe blow; the influence of ideology and Party leadership to direct the thoughts of the people diminished. But leadership had been impossible before with "Stalin's ghost still hovering so closely overhead and still attracting huge quantities of emotional energy, ranging from love to hate." By ridding themselves of Stalin's ghost, they could hope to give some authority to their power. This gave Khrushchev more status because he was identified as the leader, and was able to associate other names, particularly Malenkov's, with Stalin and his abuses. Although there were risks involved, de-Stalinization seems to be the only choice. No one was strong enough to step into the dictatorship. Khrushchev did not provoke the crisis, but brought it out into the open. Considering the seriousness of the implications of the speech, the skillful manner in which it was worded caused a minimum of disturbance.
The speech was an affirmation of a policy which had been developing since March, 1953. This policy of allowing more freedom had been sporadic—it had been put forth and then quickly withdrawn at the first sign of trouble. The speech was an indication of a more definite policy, but its ambiguity leaves much to be desired as a policy statement. Of greater importance is the fact that the speech was actually stated and now the people could think about it regardless of the official interpretation. As a result of this pseudo-liberal policy, significant changes have occurred in every aspect of Soviet life and the speech itself has caused additional pressure to carry these changes further.

The most dramatic effects of the speech came with the events in Poland and Hungary. In these countries, Stalin had never been the father-figure, wonderful, yet terrible, and there was no numbing shock at the revelation of Khrushchev. After the Twentieth Party Congress, there began to be open criticism of conditions led by the writers. There were among the elder generation of intellectuals (especially of economists in Poland and of imaginative writers in Hungary) men who were Marxists, but had become disillusioned with the régime, and who had the experience and the ability to give lead to the intellectual youth, which was also against the régime, but inexperienced and inarticulate.

There was widespread discontent in both countries. The peasants particularly, resisted collectivization and exploitation. The workers were dangerous because of their concentration in cities. The speech occurred at a sensitive time: it occurred at the most difficult stage before the new institutions, introduced by the Soviets, had taken
root and the external pressure, combined with internal disorder, brought the situation to the breaking point. Khrushchev, in healing the breach with Yugoslavia, had declared that there was more than one road to socialism, an opening grabbed by Hungary and Poland. These two countries had a special condition lacking in other Communist countries: the discontent polarized around two leaders, Gomulka in Poland and Nagy in Hungary. But with Hungary, Khrushchev made it clear that another "Yugoslavia" was not possible and Soviet troops marched in, seizing Hungary by force. The justification sounded like it came directly from Stalin; the revolt was led by fascists who desired to exploit the people under the "guise of false slogans of 'freedom and independence.' The Soviet Union thus entered for the protection of the working people. The leader, Prime Minister Nagy, was executed. In Poland, events never reached the seriousness of Hungary. The security officers remained loyal to Gomulka, and Khrushchev, to avoid war recognized him as the head. Under his influence the collective farms were dissolved, peasant's taxes were lowered and an agreement was made with the Catholic church which allowed them more freedom.

The speech and the succeeding events, particularly in Hungary, raised a cry from foreign Communist Parties. The first reaction after disbelief was a demand for further explanations. In all the editorials of the Communist papers, they pointed out that the "how" and "why" was not answered. These foreign Communists were able to raise the questions not admitted in Russia. The June 6, 1956 U.S. Daily Worker wrote: "We do not consider the speech to be the last word on just how Stalin's terror control came into existence and maintained itself for twenty
years and of the role of the other Communist leaders." Togliatti of the Italian Communist party pointed out the same deficiency: "The true problems are evaded, which are how and why..." He found in the speech the need to go on their own road and to try to find a way of their own in order to avoid this peril.

Finally, on June 30, 1956, a few weeks after the United States State Department's publication of the speech, the Central Committee of the Soviet Union felt obliged to pass a resolution offering additional explanations of the cult. Again the answers were vague. More than half of the resolution was a tirade against the West for unjust exploitation of the situation. The same reasons were given for the development of the cult: the threat of Western encirclement calling for unity of the Party, the need for rapid industrialization, and Stalin's great achievements. Again the "firm guarantees that such phenomena as the personality cult will never again develop... were that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union... told the whole truth no matter how bitter." Then the assurance came that though there were harmful aspects of the cult, the "correct path of development toward Communism" was not hindered. After four months, the collective still was not able to develop a satisfactory answer.

Tito found in the speech a chance for more independence from Moscow. Criticizing the bureaucratic apparatus from which the dictatorship stemmed, he accepted the Soviet leaders position that they were not at fault, that it had been forced upon them. In so doing, he assumed the leadership for the independent line of Communist parties.
Comrades, that fight will be a hard and long one, for what is at stake is nothing less than whether the new line that began in Yugoslavia and which was in part adopted in the decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. shall triumph in Communist parties everywhere. The issue is whether this new line will win or whether the old Stalinist line will again get the upper hand.76

The speech had opened a flood of criticism from the Communist parties. Other countries within the bloc found it difficult to keep the flood within its bounds. Labor laws had to be relaxed in Czechoslovakia and Rumania.77 It gave a strong impetus for independence of Communist parties from Moscow, led by Tito and Togliatti. Particularly after the intervention in Hungary, mass resignations occurred in the French and Italian parties; British, Swiss, Dutch and Danish Communist leaders faced serious problems within the party.78
Politically, the Soviet Union has altered since the death of Stalin. The personality of Khrushchev, who likes people and enjoys talking and mixing with them, has created a freer political atmosphere. Of more importance in this development of a freer atmosphere is the subjugation of the secret police to Party control. No longer are there any mass secret arrests and executions for political reasons. The labor camps have been emptied and thousands of people rehabilitated posthumously. With a reorganization of the concentration camp system, two-thirds of the labor camps in Siberia were abolished, and today, (1957) of the total prison population, only two percent are political prisoners.

The judicial system has been reformed though it is far from independent of the executive-legislative branch of the government. Special tribunals used in the purges were abolished in April, 1956 and investigative procedures were placed under judicial authority. No longer can a person be condemned solely on his personal confession. The elastic terms of "enemies of the people" and "counter revolutionary activity" are not written in the law and the concept of class war intensifying as the march goes on toward socialism is rejected. However, there are still formulas used by the executive-legislative branch to justify arbitrary action such as, accusing a person or group of "conspiracy with the aim of seizing power." There is arbitrary use of punishment in the parasite law in which citizens can vote an "unproductive" member out of their community. In this law, any group of citizens can call a meeting to vote and the sentence of two to five years banishment can be carried through with a simple majority vote. "The laws passed..."
represent a compromise between the desire to achieve a rule of law on the one hand and the interest of the party apparatus in preserving its ascendancy on the other."85

In no law is the Party mentioned or its rights and powers defined, but according to official statements, the Party is the supreme directing force of the Soviet state. Legal guarantees of citizens are missing in the constitution.86 The power still lies in the Party apparatus of which Khrushchev has firm control. The apparatus has a different flavor from that of Stalin. There are debates within the Party and differences of opinion. A more educated group, people with university degrees, have begun to replace the old Party members.87 The Party itself has become more sensitive to public opinion.88 This has been necessary with the lessened use of terror but has, at the same time, raised Khrushchev's degree of popularity and mobilized the energy and loyalty of the people behind him.89

The Party numbers have increased rapidly. Between 1952 and 1956 the Party membership rose one-third of a million; between 1956 and 1959, it increased one million. Khrushchev has extended the Party administrative network into spheres, such as the collective farms, not formerly penetrated. The government is strict but the people are accustomed to harsh laws. They need, however, the security of a rational government, and this has been partially achieved under Khrushchev. Yet as the government becomes more rational, there is a loss of ideological fervor. This loss and the consequent weakening of the Party is a problem with which the leaders have to contend.90
Other problems have developed since the de-Stalinization speech of 1956. It is hard to determine the politics of a group when there is one general spokesman, but it is evident that major problems occurred. Khrushchev was discredited in 1956 after the revolts in Hungary and Poland broke out, and an "anti-Party group" rose up to oppose him. The rise of this opposition showed that Khrushchev still operated within the Party apparatus and the collective, rather than above it. He had not yet assumed the power which Stalin possessed. The shifts and turns in the policy were not a measure of his arbitrary power but a measure of the intensity of the political battle to sustain his authority. The leaders of the opposition group were Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich. A political battle ensued, resulting in their expulsion by a Central Committee resolution in July. Khrushchev was able to defeat this group with the help of Marshall Zhukov who linked the "anti-Party group" with the purges of 1938. In a manner similar to Stalin, Khrushchev then turned on Zhukov, forcing his resignation in October of that same year. He deviated from Stalin's methods by not killing his opponents. They were either exiled or relegated to a lower position of authority.

During this period of political strife, Khrushchev made a partial retreat from his policy of de-Stalinization, claiming that "Stalinism nor Stalin himself could be separated from Communism." He seemed to try to go back to Stalinism to maintain control when threatened. This enabled him to use more freely the methods of Stalin in crushing his opponents. Certainly, in Hungary, Khrushchev made a complete reversion to Stalinism. The structure of his regime seems to be the same.
but the style is different, as reflected in the personalities of the two men. Khrushchev has retained full appointive and removal powers and, with the fall of Zhukov, unquestioned control over the military. Although disagreements occur, Khrushchev will not tolerate any persistent posture of opposition to his policies.97

With the major political opposition crushed, Khrushchev has ultimate authority. A cult has been developing around him. This was particularly evident in the Twenty-first Party Congress when no mention was made of the collective. Khrushchev was given special praise and thanked personally for solving the problems of the Soviet Union.98 The same thing occurred in the Twenty-second Party Congress. At this Congress, Khrushchev devoted a great deal of time to renewing his attack on the anti-Party group and on the cult of Stalin. Khrushchev attempted to improve his public image by contrasting the successful and the ostensibly benevolent aspects of his regime with conditions under Stalin.

Khrushchev's bid for more power in the Twenty-second Congress was only partially successful. There are limits placed on Khrushchev today that Stalin did not have. The awakening of the public to political matters sets up a limit. It is not yet a positive force, but the potential is there and threatening. The Soviet public is much more educated now. This was necessary to achieve industrial success, but it makes manipulation of the people more difficult. Then, there exists in politics a point of no return in which pressure, building up as a result of limited concessions, could force Khrushchev
to yield more than he expected. Khrushchev has not reached this point as is evidenced by his vacillating policy of liberalization, but even now, it would be practically impossible to return to strict Stalinism. This serves to make Khrushchev cautious. Khrushchev, himself, is a product of the machine and cannot violate its fundamental tenents. Through the machine he was able to achieve power and only through it can he maintain this power. Stalin created the machine and controlled it, Khrushchev inherited the machine, and has to contend with it.
Probably the most persistent pressure that Khrushchev has faced is from the intelligentsia and the rising number of educated people. He has avoided the use of terror to such an extent that its reintroduction would bring disaster. Consequently, he has to rely for the most part, on threats and Party pressure, a much weaker weapon. Thus, with the risks lessened, the Soviet intelligentsia have begun to stir.

Immediately after Stalin's death, books were published anticipating a freer expression. This trend was sharply rebuked at the Second Writers Congress in 1954. The revolt of the literary conscience recurred after the Twentieth Party Congress. There was a rash of literature which contained veiled attacks on the Soviet regime. An important book appearing in 1956 was Dudintsev's Not By Bread Alone. This is the story of an inventor who cannot get his invention produced due to the intrigue in the bureaucracy. The inventor is favorably contrasted with the objectionable Party man. The novel sympathetically depicts an individual who breaks away from the Party line and rises above it. It was not a literary work of any great magnitude, but it roused the Soviet people and a great deal of discussion. Khrushchev attacked Dudintsev as a "calumniator who took malicious joy in describing the negative sides of Soviet life" and tagged the book as "unhealthy, tendentious, and obnoxious." He failed to explain why the book was so popular. Dudintsev did not recant and wrote in March, 1957:

Surely it should be possible to let go of us, as one does with beginners in the water, and to let us swim on our own. We wouldn't drown. But, alas, I am conscious all the time of the safety line, ... and it prevents me from swimming.
This safety line was the Party's attitude toward art, as disclosed in 1957. In January of that year, the Party announced:

We are no friends of freedom as a thing in itself. We are opposed to that kind of literary freedom which strikes at the fundamental principles of loyalty to a cause. The only freedom of thought we support is freedom within the framework of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Khrushchev has made clear how far that framework extended. The artist was to have the task of faithfully illustrating the Party line.

After these attacks, several writers became silent as a protest to this control. However, they were soon subdued and the novels have again become colorless with a few important exceptions. The book causing the most stir was Boris Pasternak's Dr. Zhivago which received the Nobel prize in 1958. It was not allowed to be published in Russia. The book showed Dr. Zhivago's complete disillusionment with the revolution and his inclination to consider human life more important than the revolution. The Party branded Pasternak as a traitor and would allow him to accept the prize only on threat of being exiled.

Another such book is the Yugoslavian Djilas', The New Class. He, a Communist, is dissatisfied with the existing "Communist" society and he recognized the development of a Party elite to replace the destroyed old one. He wrote:

The heroic era of Communism is past. The epoch of its great leaders has ended. The epoch of practical men has set in. The new class has been created. It is at the height of its power and wealth, but it is without new ideas. It has nothing more to tell the people. The only thing that remains is for it to justify itself.
He had lived under the Communist regime long enough to recognize the contradictions between fact and theory. In actuality, the leaders of the revolution of 1917 were betrayed. They expected the state to whither away but instead the reverse occurred. The new class was even worse than the previous one because it did not take root in the life of the nation; the class consciousness, its origins in a political party, developed before its political and economic power. Consequently, it made the structure to uphold itself. This necessitated a strict unity of belief and an iron discipline. It drew into its ranks those desiring to gain materially and repressed those with ideals. It established a monopoly in the name of the working class which was a monopoly over it and the socialist ownership was a disguise for the real ownership of the political bureaucracy.

Djilas briefly traces the development of modern Communism from Marx, who did not prevent opposing ideas, to Stalin, who abolished all deviation of any kind. Khrushchev is the logical successor, an "apparently sincere, kind-hearted, non-intellectual 'man of the people.'" The new class is tired of purges and desires to live quietly. They are renouncing only the method and not the authority. He condemns the new class and sees no solution except its destruction.

When the new class leaves the historical scene—and this must happen—there will be less sorrow over its passing than there was for any other class before it. Smothering everything except what suited its ego, it has condemned itself to failure and shameful ruin.

These are men who lived, and were educated, under the Stalin regime, yet whose perception did not dull. It is these and men like them who Khrushchev cannot manipulate—a formidable barrier.
Malcolm Muggeridge, a correspondent to Russia wrote: "How remarkable that Pasternak should have outlived Stalin and still been able to feel! How ominous for the grisly band who have inherited the 'monstrous machine' to which the Revolution gave rise." Though he cannot manipulate them, he can still control them because he has the power over the press.

The educated are slow to come to the support of these men daring to be individuals. The old have spent most of their adult life, and the young, their whole life, under the stifling influence of Stalin. They turned away from politics and devoted their interests to other fields. Only in the last ten years have they begun to look on the ideological framework as the limits, rather than the center, of their world, partly a result of the downgrading of Stalin. There is a desire for free expression which is not an objection to political control, but to the pervasiveness of the controls. This is evidenced in the extreme popularity of recent poets. They attract huge crowds to listen to their poetry which is a form of free expression. One of the poets best known to the Western world, is Yevtushenko. His poem "The Heirs of Stalin" showed a great deal of insight into the regime led by Khrushchev. He wrote:

While the heirs of Stalin walk this earth,
Stalin,
I fancy, still lurks in the mausoleum.

These intelligentsia are easy to subdue and keep in line for the present, yet as more began to think along political lines, this cannot long be the case. The lack of initiative on the part of the
The intelligentsia is partly due to the educational system. The closer a subject gets to politics, the less objective is that subject taught. Therefore, the people do not have the education needed. This is seen particularly in the fields of law, philosophy, economy, and history. The Marxist principles are taught as a ritual in these fields which hinders relevant education, whether it is believed or not. For the present there seems to be a passive toleration of the Communist doctrine but how much actual absorption by thinking people is questionable. The writers discipline themselves to the Party line but at any relaxation, speak out. This happened in 1954. Writers such as Yevtushenko reveal their skepticism of the existing government but still accept it fully. Khrushchev recognized this situation and in 1958 introduced a reform of the educational system. Emphasis was placed on technical training. Everyone attends eight years of school. To get a higher education one must work a certain amount of time in a factory. In the ideologically sensitive fields, the requirements are greater, calling for more work and higher entrance qualifications.

History suffered with the frequent changes in Party line. In the secret speech, Khrushchev condemned Stalin's "Short Course" history in which Stalin was made to appear the creator and protector of the Soviet Union. Though Khrushchev called for a better history, he still looks at history in the same light as Stalin. To a French delegation in 1956, Khrushchev stated: "Historians are dangerous people. They are capable of upsetting everything. They must be directed."
At present, there is a difference in Party history, for two features have been added: "The liquidation of the harmful consequences of the cult of personality... [and] the recording of the substantial beginnings of a new cult [of Khrushchev]."120
Has there been a change in Russia? Has there been a return to Marxist principles as proclaimed in the secret speech of 1956? Ten years have passed since Stalin's death and with these years many changes have been made. Most are the normal changes which must occur if a society is to develop at all. There has to be greater artistic freedom if it does not become completely stagnated. A nation which produced such great literary figures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would have to be sensitive to this lack in the twentieth century. In saving itself, the collective destroyed the Secret Police and therefore had to alter the judicial system to fit the circumstances. There has been a change in type of control. An easier and more rational atmosphere exists today in Russia. This type of control is more efficient and easier to maintain than that of Stalin which demanded constant vigilance. The changes stemmed from expediency and not from a sincere belief in reform on the part of the collective and later, Khrushchev.

In its basic structure, the Soviet Union is no different than it was during Stalin's lifetime. It remains a totalitarian government with Khrushchev at the helm; he retains the same methods of control with the exception of the Secret Police; there is no freedom of speech although the control is exercised with more moderation. Khrushchev has been able to defeat his political opposition and manipulate the Russian people.
The changes which have occurred could lead to a break-up of the totalitarian system but this is not likely. Some writers take an optimistic view. Djilas in ending his condemnation of the Communist system states: "In any case, the world will change and will go on in the direction in which it has been moving and must go on—toward greater unity, progress and freedom." However, changes, such as in the educational system, will keep flare-ups under control. Whether or not the changes will be of any great significance depends on a people who are well known for their ability to put up with harsh governments and who are slow to change. With a history of personal rulers, the majority of Russians "have a deep hankering after a stern, remote father figure, standing high above the hurly-burly of ordinary life." Crankshaw feels that Khrushchev has the qualities which go along with such a figure.

Through Khrushchev's practical leadership, the people have had more of their material needs satisfied. They are no longer afraid and consequently live in an atmosphere of apparent freedom. The shared desire of the Party and the people to raise the standards of living has relaxed tensions.

During the decade of the 1960's we shall, under present prospects, be dealing with a Soviet system that is growing rapidly in economic, scientific and military strength and which will have fewer rather than more difficulties in
preserving political stability and an adequate measure of ideological uniformity. These growing strengths, not offset by equivalent new weaknesses, will enable its leaders to devote greater rather than smaller resources and political determination to achieving the worldwide purposes that have been proclaimed in an evolving pattern of interpretation by Lenin and Stalin and now by Khrushchev.\textsuperscript{124}

Most important is that Khrushchev, himself, admits no basic change in the system and he is the designer for the new structure built on the old foundation of Stalinism. In 1961 he stated: "The cult of personality was a superficial boil on the perfectly healthy organism of our party."\textsuperscript{125} His speech given on March 8, 1963, reaffirmed this basic policy:

Having eradicated the consequences of the personality cult of Stalin, the Communist Party has removed all obstacles to the initiative and activity of the working masses, and has created the best possible conditions for the development of the creative forces of the people. . . . A new period in the life of the Party and the people has arrived. . . . But this does not mean that now, after the condemnation of the personality cult, the time has come for laissez-faire, that the reins of government have supposedly been loosened, that the public ship is sailing according to the will of the waves, and that everyone can act on his own as he pleases. No. The party has been following and will continue to follow, consistently and firmly, the Leninist course that it has fashioned, implacably rejecting any ideological vacillation and attempts to violate the norms of life of our society.\textsuperscript{126}
Footnotes

3. Ibid., 10.
4. Ibid., 17.
9. Ibid., 76.
10. Ibid.
17. Leonhard, The Kremlin, 120.
19. Ibid., 39.
22. Ibid., 80, 92.
23. Ibid., 172.
26. Ibid., 172.
27. Ibid., 172-173.
28. The "testament" is Lenin's Letter to the Congress which he dictated in January, 1922, giving a characterization of certain members of the Party Central Committee. This letter was made public to the delegations of the Thirteenth Party Congress.
29. Ibid., 173.
30. Ibid., 174, 177.
31. Ibid., 177.
32. Ibid., 181.
33. Ibid., 181.
34. Ibid., 182.
35. Ibid., 186.
36. Ibid., 187.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 188.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 187.
41. Ibid., 188.
43. Howard Swearer, "Bolshevism and the Individual Leader," Problems of Communism, XII (March-April, 1963), 84.
44. Wolfe, Stalin's Ghost, 87.
46. Ibid., 182.
48. Ibid., 270.
49. Wolfe, Stalin's Ghost, 185.
50. Ibid., 147.
52. Crankshaw, Khrushchev's Russia, 52.
56. Wolfe, Stalin's Ghost, 63.
57. Leonhard, The Kremlin, 126.
60. Kellen, Khrushchev, 171.
62. Crankshaw, Khrushchev's Russia, 111.
64. Ibid., 341.
65. Ibid.
67. Leonhard, The Kremlin, 123.

69. Seton-Watson, War Nor Peace, 342.

70. Ibid., 344.


74. Ibid., 283.

75. Ibid., 295.


78. Ibid., 228.


80. Leonhard, The Kremlin, 300.

81. Zilliacus, A New Birth, 35.

82. Leonhard, The Kremlin, 305.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., 301.

85. Ibid., 302.

86. Ibid., 305.


88. Ibid., 4.


93. Ibid.

94. Leonhard, The Kremlin, 244.

95. Ibid., 256.


99. Schapiro, "Has Russia Changed?" 398.

100. Ibid.


104. Mehnert, Soviet Man, 165.

105. Ibid., 164.

106. Ibid., 165.


108. Ibid., 37-47.

109. Ibid., 52.

110. Ibid., 47-52.

111. Ibid., 69.


114. Ibid., 245.

115. The Saturday Evening Post, August 10-17, 1963, 60.


117. Ibid., 124.

118. Leonhard, The Kremlin, 291.


120. Ibid., 587.


122. Crankshaw, Khrushchev's Russia, 70.

123. Ibid., 58.


125. Shearer, "Bolshevism and the Individual Leader," 89.

126. Problems of Communism, XII (March-April, 1963), 104.
Primary Sources


   This work gives a good selective documentary coverage of the Twentieth Party Congress and its aftermath.


   Compiled soon after the publication of the secret speech, this book gives a good indication of the immediate reaction of the foreign Communists.

Secondary Sources - Books


10. Kellen, Konrad, Khrushchev: A Political Portrait. New York, 1961. This is an interesting account of Khrushchev's rise to power.


18. Wolfe, Bertram D., Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost. New York, 1957. This is a strong criticism of the policies of the collective and Khrushchev. His charges are well backed by facts.

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