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## THE KHRUSHCHEV ATTACK ON STALIN

The vehemence of Khrushchev's attack on Stalin before the 20th Congress of the CPSU suggests that Khrushchev and his colleagues bear profound psychological scars from their experience with the naked power of a dictator. Having lived under a common terror, they wish to prevent its recurrence by establishing a greater degree of collective rule. But the history of totalitarianism shows that this tenuous balance of power at the top of the pyramid cannot be maintained and there is no warrant in Soviet experience for the new leaders' success.

Lenin, whose "principles" they invoke, left no model for collective leadership. At the Ninth Party Congress he said "the Soviet Socialist Democracy is in no way inconsistent with the rule and dictatorship of one person." (Collected Works, Vol. XVII, p. 89, 1923 edition). Lenin did share his power and consult his associates more than Stalin did. But as time went on, he progressively tightened the machinery of control and repression--the Party apparatus, the secret police, and a legal system which gave the state broad powers for the practice of "Party democracy," especially after the Kronstadt revolt of 1921. And the complaints from within the Party during Lenin's lifetime were similar, though milder, to those now directed against Stalin's regime: Party democracy was eroding, the right to criticize was being denied, the party was becoming estranged from the people.

Thus, when Khrushchev called for a return to collective leadership, "democratic centralism," constructive criticism, and attentiveness by Party leaders to the needs of lower echelons, he was referring to a theoretical apparatus that has never functioned successfully for any length of time. The present members of the Presidium are certainly aware of this. They are consciously trying to keep the inevitable power struggle within bounds, to substitute consultation and self-criticism for terror. Thus, despite confessions of error, Molotov and Malenkov are still on the Presidium.

But the Soviet leaders are experimenting with collective rule in the full knowledge of past Soviet failure to achieve it. And Khrushchev's speech is a reminder that the experiment is taking place against a background of suspicion and a climate of guilt engendered by the Stalin years and the Stalin crimes in which the present leaders, without exception, were implicated. Although they share a common compulsion to make "Leninist principles" operative, it is probable that they will be unable to prevent a new polarization of power to a single man. Djilas, the brilliant theoretician so largely responsible for Tito's correct estimate of developments in the Communist world, has now predicted in a widely-syndicated article that Khrushchev will make himself a dictator within three years.

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The possibility should not be excluded that the present leaders were involved in Stalin's death. Khrushchev acknowledged in his speech that Stalin evidently planned to finish off the older members of the Politburo, and he pointedly remarked that had Stalin lived another few months, "Comrades Molotov and Mikoyan probably would not have delivered any speeches in this congress." Several learned and highly qualified students of Soviet affairs interpret this as an indication that Molotov and Mikoyan may have disagreed with steps taken by their colleagues to end Stalin's rule, and that Khrushchev was taking pains to associate them with his portrayal of Stalin as a monster, probably as insurance against a subsequent revelation of the facts surrounding the dictator's demise. Some of our reports suggest that this interpretation is correct. If verified, the plot against Stalin will in itself explain the decision to denigrate him so brutally, and will also enhance the probability of a new outbreak of violence in the struggle for power.

Apart from the virulence of the attack on Stalin, the present leaders had good reasons for departing from his policies, which they evidently regarded as inadequate, harmful, and even dangerous. His police and his purges had impaired Party morale; his personal rule had frozen the bureaucracy into attitudes of rigid caution. A change was needed to impart efficiency and a modicum of initiative in the management of political and economic affairs. The same rigidity and lack of imagination afflicted the Party leadership outside the Soviet Union. While ostensibly promulgating "Leninist principles," Khrushchev and his colleagues were evidently more interested in infusing new revolutionary zeal into the hardened Party arteries.

Abroad, Stalin's policies were uniting the enemies of Communism and alienating the neutral nations. Stalin's strategy took no account of the new situation posed by nuclear weapons and jet propulsion. Aware of the growing resistance to the thinly-masked aggressiveness of the Stalin era, the new leaders realized that military force no longer could be employed openly in local conflicts without risking general conflict. And they were not ready to risk general war for purely offensive purposes until they had achieved a relative nuclear potential greater than they now possess. For the time being, Khrushchev and his colleagues wished to play down the military weapons at their disposal and to reassure the West of their peaceful purposes. In breaking with Stalin, however, they have no intention of relaxing their efforts to improve their capabilities for eventual armed conflict. Stalin's death gave them a convenient opportunity to put on a "new look" and to identify the new regime with "peaceful coexistence." The break with Stalin therefore signals a more subtle economic and political offensive to achieve the continuing Communist goal of world domination.

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In weighing the consequences throughout the Communist and the free world of the decision to renounce Stalin, one should not overlook the elementary significance of Khrushchev's speech. The present leader of world Communism acknowledged that twenty years of terror and disaster had taken place under Communist rule. To be sure, Khrushchev said nothing of the forced labor camps, the horrors of agricultural collectivization, the sacrifices wrung from peasants and workers to pay for the development of heavy industry, the total repression of freedom for the masses. The grievances he enumerated against Stalin were Party grievances. Even so, it was a damaging admission which not only will repel non-Communists but will impair the morale of Communists everywhere. After all, the violation of theoretical Party norms for a generation cannot be dismissed as a temporary aberration.

Apparently the Kremlin rulers calculated that this damage could be repaired and Party discipline maintained. They surely estimated that the risks were outweighed by the gains to be anticipated from their dramatic break with the past. The risks and the anticipated gains will be briefly considered here as they relate to the CPSU, the satellite Parties, and the international Communist movement.

First, it may be noted that the Soviet leaders had no intention of relaxing their dictatorship of the Party, nor the Party's complete supremacy in all aspects of Soviet life. Khrushchev's invitation to criticism did not extend to remarks directed against decisions of the Party leadership. Already the leadership and its official organs have excoriated the "rotten elements" who, under the guise of attacks on the cult of personality, have questioned Party authority. Shepilov, delivering the main address at the Lenin anniversary celebration of 22 April, reminded his audience that collective leadership does not mean "administration by production meetings, schools, army, and so forth." The selection of the 20th Congress for delivery of the climactic attack on Stalin was itself a demonstration of the fact that changes in the Party line will be handed down from the top as before.

In the portion of Khrushchev's speech available to us there is no reference to the satellites. The post-Stalin strategy, however, appears to call for some show of independence on the part of the satellite parties and governments, calculated to improve their prospects for expanding commercial and cultural relations with the West, and also to strengthen their appeal to elements of the population who have been demanding priority for national as opposed to Soviet interests.

Khrushchev's speech, however, has caused profound embarrassment to the Party leaders in the satellites. For these leaders served Stalin and are identified with his policies; and they cannot, like Khrushchev, absolve themselves by pleading helplessness before Stalin's

tyranny, since this would constitute an acknowledgement that they have never in fact been independent of the Kremlin's dictates. To add to their difficulties, Khrushchev's violent indictment of the Communist regime which the satellite Parties had faithfully served has touched off a wave of cynicism among important intellectual and idealistic elements of those Parties. The result has been embarrassment, confusion and factionalism, the rehabilitation of leaders purged during the Stalin regime, demands upon the present leaders for self-criticism, and in some cases their replacement by new leaders.

Moscow must have anticipated some such reaction. But the demands for revision certainly have exceeded anything that either the Kremlin or the Party hierarchies had expected. Our reports show that ferment in the satellites has been greatly increased by the unexpected publication of Khrushchev's secret speech. The Kremlin had counted on a process of "education" to feed the new line gradually to the "people's democracies." The sudden revelation of specific details of the Stalin era has provided a shock which the satellite Parties have been unable to absorb without loss of discipline.

Party leaders in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were unprepared for the open displays of discontent exhibited in recent weeks by writers, students and Party functionaries. The entire apparatus of Communist control stood by in temporary paralysis while students in Czechoslovakia publicly demanded that their regime haul down the Soviet flag and hired airplanes to spread their words throughout the state. Local Czech Party leaders have openly criticized the Czech Communist hierarchy.

Reaction to the denigration of Stalin has been even more violent in Poland, where it brought into the open rising discontent among Party members and intellectuals. A number of influential functionaries, including a majority of the central Party Active, have pressed for democratization of the Party, an increase in individual political security, a real rise in the standard of living and a more independent socialist course for Poland.

The Polish regime has gone to great lengths to persuade the people that it is divorcing itself from the excesses of Stalinism and launching a new era of legality and reasonableness. A number of high officials associated with Stalinism have been dismissed. Along with Radkiewicz, minister of state farms, the regime announced on April 20 that the prosecutor general, the minister of justice and the military prosecutor were dismissed. The ministers of culture and foreign affairs and finally Deputy Premier Berman, a politburo member and formerly one of the ruling triumvirate in Poland, were removed. Party leaders imprisoned during the Stalin era have been released, and many of them rehabilitated.

Hungarian Party members have been inspired to similar dissidence by the Soviet de-glorification of Stalin. A central committee meeting

shortly after the 20th Congress reportedly took place in an atmosphere of recrimination against first secretary Rakosi. High-level factionalism has continued. Rakosi's posthumous rehabilitation of Laszlo Rajk, former foreign minister purged and executed as a Titoist in 1949, has stimulated rather than quelled opposition elements. Nor has Rakosi's self-critical speech of 18 May appeased his opponents.

Following the first wave of reaction within the satellites to the Kremlin's attack on Stalin, the Communist leaders have moved to reassert Party discipline. It is evident that Moscow must play a decisive role, both in establishing the line between "democratic centralism" and "rightist deviation," and in settling factional struggles. Suslov has already been dispatched to Hungary to resolve the dispute over Rakosi's leadership. Ultimately Moscow must also settle the question of leadership in Poland, where opposing groups have appeared, the two principal factions forming around Party First Secretary Ochab, who wishes to stop the process of liberalization by any means, and Premier Cyrankiewicz, who evidently is encouraging open discussion and criticism. And it is by no means certain that Moscow's decision will be accepted without a struggle, since criticism of Khrushchev and the Soviet Union is prevalent in the Polish Communist Party.

Beyond the immediate confusion and dissidence created in the satellites by the downgrading of Stalin lies the continuing problem of restoring monolithic leadership from the Kremlin. All his words about "Leninist principles" will not conceal Khrushchev's heavy hand when it reappears upon the Party apparatus. The subsequent disillusionment may cause serious repercussions within the Communist world. And any tremors emanating from the continued power struggle in the Kremlin would still further shake the foundations of the satellite Parties.

In the nations outside the Soviet orbit, the new line is an immediate source of embarrassment to Communist leaders, most of whom are well-known devotees of Stalin. The leadership in Western Europe and the United States have evidenced genuine shock and confusion. This appears to be a price the Soviets are willing to pay for the privilege of claiming the respectability which the image of Stalin had denied to the Party. The Communists may be expected to assign all their past betrayals of popular and democratic causes to Stalin's personal errors.

Communists in the West may also be expected to engage in a variety of superficial moves to dispel the impression that they are tools of Moscow. Togliatti has already published his manifesto urging the Italian Communist Party to work out its own way of life and asserting that the Soviet Union is not the only model for the construction of socialist society. He has further advertised his independence by criticizing the Soviet leaders for not sufficiently

emphasizing Stalin's good works. The French Communist leadership has followed with a similar, although weaker and more hesitant, show of independence.

To some extent these national Party leaders are voicing the real indignation of the rank-and-file at Khrushchev's disclosures, and their own displeasure at the fact that these disclosures came from the capitalist press rather than the Party. As in the satellites, intelligence reports indicate that publication of the speech threw off the Kremlin timetable for gradual "education" of the local Parties on the realities of the post-Stalin era. The Khrushchev bombshell has exacerbated factionalism in the national Parties.

The new drive to create popular fronts in the Western democracies may provide the Communist leadership with a useful outlet for inner Party tensions. It is significant that Togliatti, while criticizing the Soviet leaders, called for a "new drive of the Socialist society in every direction on a wide, healthy, democratic base." In Italy, in France and in the other Western nations, the immediate goal of the Communists is to convince Socialists, youth, labor and intellectuals that they may safely work with a purified Communist movement to promote liberal reforms and progressive causes.

This Communist appeal may meet with some acceptance among leftist elements, especially if nominal shifts of leadership and other "de-Stalinization" moves are made by the Party. Much depends upon how well the liberals understand the real aims of the Khrushchev regime. For if they believe that a new order has really emerged in the Kremlin, they may not be alarmed by the prospect of increased Communist influence in their own governments.

At the 20th Party Congress, and on numerous subsequent occasions, it has been made abundantly clear that the Soviet leaders are not prepared to accept left-wing collaboration on any terms short of complete Communist domination. Mikoyan in his major speech served notice that "progressive ideas can exist only in the Communist Party." Khrushchev, in a public speech at the Congress, said that once the Communist-led working class had captured a parliamentary majority, legislative bodies could then be transformed into "genuine instruments of the peoples' will"--meaning, obviously, tools of the Party dictatorship.

That basic Stalin concepts for seizing control have undergone no fundamental change is further demonstrated by references at the Congress and subsequently to "the peaceful transition to socialism." The Estonian delegate to the Congress, Ivan Kebin, pointed to the past decade in the Baltic nations as proof that "it is possible, under certain conditions, for power to become peacefully transferred to the working people for the implementation of radical social reforms."

Czechoslovakia was similarly cited by Mikoyan as a nation where the transition to socialism had been accomplished by "peaceful" means. Although Party functioning demands that doctrine and tactics be spelled out for the membership in this way, both the Kremlin and the local Party leadership will skillfully mask these stated objectives in appealing to the non-Communist left.

The Communist threat to the Western democracies will remain critical until such time as the continued Soviet objective of world domination is widely recognized by Western liberals, or until a new disillusion is promoted by still another ugly demonstration of the rotteness at the core of the Communist system.