

IDEOLOGICAL TRENDS IN THE USSR*

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A SURVEY of current Soviet trends in party and ideology may take as its starting point the political crisis which developed in the Soviet Union in the second half of the year 1964 and led to Khrushchev's downfall. The crisis was a rather complex affair with many issues, trends, and attitudes involved, and it did not lead to any clear-cut solutions. The situation which has developed since Khrushchev's downfall has remained as ambiguous as that which had preceded it. By disassociating itself from its leader, the Soviet ruling group acknowledged tacitly the fiasco of the Khrushchevite policies and ideological conceptions; but they refused to make the acknowledgment explicit or to draw conclusions. Their reticence was not accidental. It reflected the profound embarrassment with which Khrushchev's successors viewed the discomfiture of his policies. Khrushchevism, to put it in a nutshell, had proved itself unable to cope with the many issues posed in the process of de-Stalinization. To have posed those issues was Khrushchev's historic merit: to leave them unsettled, unclarified and, in many cases, even aggravated was his sad destiny. The legacy of the Stalin era defeated him, and it still over-shadows the Soviet scene today.

It is now very nearly a commonplace that Stalinism was the product of a post-revolutionary, isolated, underdeveloped, largely pre-industrial society engaged in "primitive socialist accumulation", that is, in a process of rapid industrialization and modernization carried out under the aegis of the state, on the basis of public ownership of the means of production. As a system of government and an ideology, Stalinism represented both the backwardness of its national environment and the progressive transformation of that environment. Hence, the duality in the character of Stalinism and its Janus-like appearance. Hence, its crude violence and primitive, isolationist, ideological outlook on the one hand, and on the other, its historic Clan and determination in replacing Russia's archaic mode of production and way of life by a modern planned economy and extensive mass education. Admittedly, the whole phenomenon of Stalinism cannot be explained

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by these factors alone, but they do account for its most essential features. Stalinism was thus a phenomenon of social transition and not (as its adherents and also most western anti-Communist Sovietologists once maintained) the quintessence or the final shape of the post-capitalist or socialist society. The very success which Stalinism attained in changing and modernizing the social structure of the USSR turned it into an anachronism and made de-Stalinization a historic necessity. Khrushchevism, though it proclaimed this necessity, was unable to act as its effective agent.

To take the economic problem first, the Stalinist method of economic planning, with its bureaucratic rigidity and over-centralization, dated back to the early phases of industrialization, which were characterized by an over-all scarcity of productive resources, skilled labour, technological know-how, and educational facilities, not to speak of consumer goods. As these scarcities were being gradually overcome and as Soviet society entered upon a more advanced stage of economic expansion and educational progress, Stalinism lost its relative *raison d'être*. It was a relic of the past even in the early fifties, and it became a formidable obstacle to further advance.

The Khrushchev period brought important and positive changes, a radical reduction of coercion in economic as well as political life, easier labour relations, and a more rational outlook in the management of industry. It failed, however, to rationalize the system of planning as a whole. What it produced in this field was a purely administrative de-centralization of industrial management. Khrushchev disbanded the central ministries that had exercised absolute rule from Moscow over all branches of the economy. This was his panacea, but it did not work. By 1964 it had become obvious that the new administrative régime had resulted in a slowing down of industrial expansion and in a lower rate of growth of the national income. As these setbacks coincided with a whole series of bad harvests and a slump in agricultural output, the improvement in the popular standard of living also came to a halt. Thus, just as Stalinist bureaucratic rigidity and overcentralization had proved obsolete in the early fifties, so the Khrushchevite patchwork of de-centralizing reforms lagged behind the needs of the early sixties.

However, despite this slowing down—this should not be forgotten—the expansion and transformation of the social structure proceeded on a vast scale—and this called for reforms far more radical and comprehensive than anything Khrushchev and his colleagues envisaged. In the fourteen years since Stalin's death, the urban population of the USSR has nearly doubled. It has grown by about fifty million people, mostly rural immigrants who have been absorbed by industry. This gives us a measure of the momentum of the social-economic advance and of the demands it put on the leadership of party and state. The

mere overhaul of the administrative mechanism could do no justice to those demands. The Khrushchevite decentralization was in fact a narrow, one-sided, bureaucratic reaction to Stalin's over-centralization. Its effects were probably beneficial in some cases but harmful in others, and on balance inadequate. What Khrushchev's successors have since been trying to do is to substitute economic decentralization for the purely administrative one. This is the meaning of the latest industrial reform with its emphasis on the autonomy and profitability of each industrial concern. Incidentally, the novelty of this reform is far less startling than it appears to most western observers. And, although it too may have its beneficial effects and stimulate productivity temporarily, it is not likely to alter the bureaucratic character of economic management.

The issue of centralized versus decentralized management is, in my view, only part of the problem of the rationalization of the Soviet economy, and not its most essential part. The dilemma between centralization and decentralization is inherent in any planned economy. It cannot be resolved dogmatically or one-sidedly, and it cannot be conjured out of existence. The dialectics of planning consists precisely in this—that the planner must constantly search for a balance between the opposites and for their unity, as he must also search for an equilibrium between the general social needs and the profitability of particular concerns, between supply and demand, and between production and consumption. There can be no single prescription for achieving the equilibrium. The scales may and, indeed, must tilt one way and the other, and it is the planner's task to control the oscillations and correct them.

If in the Stalin era the equilibrium was upset by overcentralization, in recent years, Soviet (and Yugoslav and East European) economists, reacting against the past, have undoubtedly over-emphasized, in varying degrees, the principle of decentralization. Their almost exclusive concentration on the autonomy and profitability of each industrial unit may swing the pendulum much too far in that direction, at the expense of the social interests and of the coherence of planning. Some reaction against this trend is already making itself felt. Nevertheless, this is not, in my view, the main issue. It is at least premature to see in this trend a revival of a truly market-oriented economy or any tendency towards the restoration of capitalism. The Soviet economy was incomparably more market- and profit-oriented during the NEP period of the 1920's than it is likely to become, if and when the present reform is completed. But there was a far cry from NEP to a restoration of capitalism. Not even Libermanism spells economic liberalism.

The crucial issue posed by the failure of Khrushchevism is neither administrative nor economic in character but socio-political. The main

cause of the economic disarray revealed in the last years of Khrushchev's government lay in a crisis of morale, in the persistent discord between rulers and ruled, in the "we"-and-"they"-conflict, that is, in the feeling of workers and intellectuals that "they", the bureaucrats, "do what they like anyhow", regardless of "our" needs, demands and wishes. Bureaucratic arbitrariness, though it is less severe than it was in Stalin's days, prevents the mass of producers and administrators from identifying themselves with the national interest. That is why purely administrative or economic remedies cannot cope even with the economic and administrative difficulties; and neither Khrushchev nor his successors have been able or willing to deal with the moral-political aspects of the situation. It was because of this that Khrushchevism suffered defeat after defeat, nationally and internationally, and that it ran into a deadly impasse.

Nationally, Khrushchevism was unable to fill the political and ideological void left by Stalinism. Having analysed this question elsewhere, I shall say here only, that Khrushchev and his colleagues, the present Soviet leaders, have dealt with the legacy of the Stalin era in a manner which could only produce confusion and frustration. Brought up in the Stalinist school of thought, and ever mindful of their own stake in Stalinism, they merely sought to cover up the void by means of bureaucratic manipulations. They conducted even de-Stalinization in a Stalinist manner. Imbued with the characteristic Stalinist belief in the omnipotence of the trick, a belief which has with them the force of an ineradicable superstition, Khrushchev and his colleagues in the end turned de-Stalinization itself into a trick, into a huge and elaborate essay in deception and make-believe. They denounced Stalin's hypocrisy but sought to protect the hierarchical structure on which it had rested. They exposed his crimes and did what they could to conceal their own participation in them. They discredited the "cult of the personality" but clung to the orthodoxy the cult had epitomized. They cried out against Stalin's prodigious despotism but were anxious to save most of his canons and dogmas. They freed the Soviet people from his massive and ubiquitous terror but tried to keep the body-politic in the shape it had taken on under the press of that terror. They sought to preserve the monolith and to keep Soviet society in that amorphous and atomized condition in which people cannot think for themselves, express themselves, arrive at nonconformist opinions, and voice them.

Yet, the huge trick with all the evasions, subterfuges, and contradictions did not work. Underneath the monolithic surface, deep down in the mass of the people, and even higher up in the ruling group, ferments were released which were bound to escape control. Some people saw through the evasions and contradictions and began to press for a

more radical and genuine de-Stalinization. Others, especially among the bureaucracy, took fright at the ideological drifting and called for an end to the desecration of the old idol; many reacted simply with disgust and cynicism. Some were raising the demand for the mitigation or abolition of various forms of administrative control and thought control, the demand for more freedom; while others, again among the bureaucracy, afraid that popular discontent and criticism might rise in a flood, were anxious to close the gates. Khrushchev manoeuvred uneasily and clumsily between the conflicting pressures until he exhausted his moral credit. In 1956 he used Stalin as the colossal scapegoat for all the sins of the Soviet bureaucracy. In 1964 the bureaucracy quietly made of Khrushchev the scapegoat. But the men who took over from him inherited all his dilemmas without having any new programme or any new idea on how to resolve them. Their chief advantage over Khrushchev was that they could afford to mark time, as he could not.

The division between the de-Stalinizers and the Stalinist die-hards or crypto-Stalinists has lain on the surface of Soviet politics. It showed itself in Khrushchev's struggle against Molotov, Kaganovich, and their followers, and it has been widely reflected in Soviet literature. It corresponded broadly to the division between those elements in the ruling group that favoured a gradual and limited liberalization of the régime and those inclined to uphold the disciplinarian and authoritarian routines in the management of party and state. Khrushchev, attempting always to be all things to all men, in the end antagonized all. The crypto-Stalinists never forgave him his speech at the 20th Congress. The bureaucrats were eager to avenge themselves on him for his pogrom of the central economic ministries; and the disciplinarians resented the latitude he allowed the critics and muck-rakers who exposed not only Stalin's rule but the heavy remnants of Stalinism, surviving in every sphere of Soviet life. On the other hand, to the critics and muck-rakers, the liberals and the radicals, Khrushchev's benevolence was only too whimsical and deceptive. They knew only too well that every one of his liberal gestures made in public concealed many acts of repression. The writers and the artists resented his censorship and his attempts to impose on them his crude and uneducated tastes. In 1964 the anti-Stalinists and the crypto-Stalinists, the liberalizers and the authoritarians for a moment joined hands against him, each hoping to gain from his downfall. These hopes too have been frustrated. Khrushchev's successors have not identified themselves with either of the opposed groupings. They have rather tried to do what Khrushchev had done, only to do it with greater discretion and caution. They have pursued a middle line and have tried hard to keep the "extremes" at bay.

The division between the de-Stalinizers and the crypto-Stalinists, and between the liberalizers and the authoritarians, forms only part of the picture, its most conspicuous and superficial part. Overshadowed by it there is another division, largely latent and even inchoate but, in the long term, perhaps more essential, namely, the division between right, left, and centre. The reappearance of this classical division follows naturally from the cracking up of the monolith, the essential of which consisted precisely in suppressing the dialectics inherent in any live movement or party and in preventing any spontaneous differentiation of opinion, both within the party and without. The last time the Soviet Union witnessed any open struggle between right, left, and centre was in the middle and late 1920's. The present re-differentiation resumes to some extent, but only to some extent, the trends of the 1920's but it does so spontaneously, almost unconsciously, and confusedly. And in view of the change in the social circumstances and in the political context, the continuity of these trends can be only partial. That the tendency to a division between right, left and centre is at work in the international Communist movement is now clear enough, even though that division is blurred and distorted by many-sided bureaucratic manipulation, and even though each trend *tends* to be identified with a particular national interest and school of thought—the left or "ultra-left" with Maoism, the centre with predominant Soviet policy, and the right with Titoism and its multiple national varieties. However, a *resistance* towards this differentiation is discernible within each Communist party as well, even though each tries to maintain the official façade of its monolithic unity. This makes it often difficult to see and evaluate the hidden processes of division. But when the façade happens to be suddenly and dramatically blown off, as it has been in China recently, the reality of the division asserts itself. The Soviet party is hardly more monolithic or more united than the Chinese was just before the outbreak of the so-called cultural revolution. Here and there many indications point to the submerged pattern of differentiation—I repeat to an inchoate or, at best, half-potential and half-actual division between right, left, and centre. The division cannot become fully actual as long as the groupings involved in it are not free to express themselves and formulate their ideas or programmes, for it is precisely in the process of self-expression that ideological trends and political groupings become conscious of themselves and find their identity.

I should, perhaps, clarify here to some extent my criteria and explain what attitudes I describe as "left" or "right" in the context of Soviet social life and Soviet politics at this time.

The specific crucial issues over which the divisions tend to arise are those of egalitarianism versus privilege; of workers' control, or

workers' participation in control, over industry versus strictly managerial control; of freedom of expression and association versus bureaucratic dictatorship and monolithic discipline; and last, but not least, of socialist internationalism versus nationalism. Any careful student of Soviet affairs, indeed any attentive reader of Soviet literature and periodicals, familiar with its Aesopian idiom, will have little or no difficulty in tracing the conflicting attitudes, as they reflect themselves in Soviet writings or as they refract themselves in the zig-zags of official policy. These divisions were potentially there even in Stalin's days, but in those days, society was atomized; and the human atoms were absolutely unable to combine or coalesce into groups. They led an existence like that of Leibnitz's Monads, closed within themselves, isolated from one another, unable to communicate. When communication did occur, it was a mixed dialogue between two atoms only, like the one Yevtushenko reports in his *Premature* Autobiography, where he describes his ideological wrangling with a fellow poet, a bard of the Establishment, a Great Russian Chauvinist, antisemite and fervent authoritarian, a Stalinist descendant of the pre-revolutionary Black Hundreds, against whom Yevtushenko whispered, in hints only, his feelings about the Jews, his internationalism, his vague longing for an outlook broader than the official ideology, and his instinctive distaste for bureaucratic privilege.¹

No doubt such dialogues between two atoms went on in various places and you can detect in them the germ of a controversy between left and right. But the germ could not germinate and grow. What has been new in these post-Stalinist years has been the slow, hesitant movement and coalescence of like-minded atoms into groups, whether in the party hierarchy or in literature, among the sculptors and painters, the philosophers, sociologists, historians, scientists, and almost certainly also at the factory bench and in the kolkhoz community. People of similar ideological and political disposition recognize one another and are drawn toward one another. Where previously only bureaucratic cliques could exist, surrounded by a political vacuum, now groupings and trends form themselves, though they are still very far from crystallization. We know of the groupings among the writers who now engage in public, semi-public, and private controversy. Such groupings tend to form themselves in other occupations as well in all walks of life, on all social levels, in all milieus. But we do not hear about them because those milieus are, of course, not as vocal and articulate as men of letters normally are. This is largely still a molecular process, though it is sometimes more than that. And officialdom, of course, does all that it can to slow down the process and obstruct it.

It is in this way that the new right and the new left have begun to

stir. Trying to trace the features of the emerging political types, one is inclined to melancholy reflections about the price the Soviet Union is still paying, in spiritual and intellectual terms, for the forcible interruption by Stalinism of all open ideological and political confrontation. The level of political thinking and expression is lamentably low. The profile of a man of the right in the 1960's is simple enough. He usually defends privilege, favours wide discrepancies in scales of wages and salaries, and tends to be a Great Russian Chauvinist and power politician; he is contemptuous of the small Soviet nationalities and of such poor relations as Poles and Hungarians, but, above all, of the Chinese, against whom he will even vent racial prejudice. More often than not, he is an antisemite. Next to him stands a more moderate and educated **man** of the right, who may combine anti-egalitarianism and distrust of the masses, with a certain cosmopolitanism, with an eagerness for close relations with the West, and with an intense fear of any Russian involvement in class struggles abroad or in anti-imperialist wars of liberation. Western observers often come across this political type amongst Soviet diplomats, journalists, and industrial managers: but more plebeian versions of the type also abound.

The man of the Soviet Left is more often than not an intellectual, a philosopher, sociologist, or party historian; but he may also be a worker at the factory bench. He criticizes the present distribution of the national income, the wide wage differentials, and bureaucratic privilege. He attacks—sometimes even in public—the secrecy with which the earnings of the various "income groups" are surrounded, and presses for a radical narrowing of their discrepancies. He favours shorter working hours in the factories and demands better and wider educational facilities for working class children. That pressure on all these points has been effective is evidenced by the concessions which the ruling group has again and again had to make in regard to them. This new egalitarianism, inherently hostile to the Stalinist tradition, is also critical of the social implications of the new economic policy, with its heavy emphasis on profitability and the "laws of the market". The man of the Left recalls that Socialism has aspired and should still aspire to transcend gradually the laws of the market, not by means of rigid bureaucratic direction, but by a rational economic policy and the producers' participation in control over the economy. In ideology and politics, the elements of the Left seek to pick up the threads of the revolutionary tradition where Stalinism broke them, and to restore the true history of the revolution and of Bolshevism, for they feel that only if the ground is cleared to the end of the rubble of Stalinist legends and myths, will a new socialist consciousness develop in the people. In foreign affairs men of the left try to grasp the signifi-

cance of recent social-revolutionary events in the world, of Cuba and Vietnam, and of China's internal conflicts; and they attempt to relate these to Soviet policy. They are, no doubt, perturbed by the decline of international solidarity in the USSR and by the quasi-isolationist mood that characterizes both official policy and the popular frame of mind.

I do not undertake. I don't think anyone can undertake, to judge the relative strength and weight of these opposed currents of thought and feeling. Even the characterization of the types is, of necessity, fragmentary and patchy. Yet it is based on the internal evidence of the events, and on a wide range of philosophical, economic, sociological and literary indications. These are the hidden or half-hidden conflicting pressures under which, I think, Soviet policy finds itself and by which it is to some extent shaped. Official policy is, of course, centrist, cagey, and is trying to keep at a safe distance from the extremes or to reconcile the contradictions. But in the long run the basic trends seem more important: they are likely to become more effective as time goes on: they make up the submerged bulk of the Soviet iceberg.

The two patterns of the ideological and political division, the division over Stalinism and the conflict between right and left are not coincidental. They overlap and produce cross-currents. Among the adherents of de-Stalinization there are some with a rightist and others with a leftist bias. In the early years after Stalin, Khrushchev sought to rally the support of both wings; and therein lay his strength. In his later years, his own policy showed a markedly rightist bias in both domestic and foreign affairs. This circumstance undoubtedly brought a measure of discredit upon de-Stalinization. Occasionally, it lent colour to the Maoist accusation that, by undermining the Stalinist orthodoxy, Khrushchev released or stimulated latent reactionary forces, within the Soviet Union as well as without, in Eastern Europe, in Hungary, Poland and elsewhere.

Thus, paradoxically, the opposition to de-Stalinization, which at first came only from a rather narrow conservative bureaucratic milieu, found itself gradually strengthened by a spreading disappointment with various aspects of Khrushchevism. Seeing that de-Stalinization in Khrushchev's policy was, in his last years, associated with anti-egalitarianism, with a virtual wage freeze, and agricultural failure, and further with the Russo-Chinese feud and the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc, quite a few people inclined towards egalitarianism and internationalism became fearful of the implications of Khrushchevism. Critical, well-informed observers reported, for instance, in the years 1963 and 1964, the spread of something like a spontaneous, nostalgic Stalin cult among Soviet factory workers, a mood which expressed itself in biting popular witticisms contrasting some of

Khrushchev's failures with Stalin's wisdom and foresight. "Do you know what was the greatest of Stalin's crimes?" went one popular joke, "it was this, that he did not lay up a stock of grain that would last us longer than five years of Khrushchev's rule". What a paradox! Who would have thought in 1956 that anyone in the Soviet Union would only a few years later look back nostalgically to the Stalin era." But this was, in fact, the outcome of half-hearted, hypocritical and "rightist" de-Stalinization. One consequence of that state of affairs—one would like to hope an ephemeral one—is that the progressive, anti-Stalinist intelligentsia found itself frequently isolated from the mood in the working class. Another is that before the recent uproar and commotion in China Maoist criticism struck more chords in the Soviet Union than Soviet officialdom was ready to admit.

Seen against this background the task of Khrushchev's successors has not been an easy one. They were not well equipped to deal with the conflicting trends and cross-currents. They represent—in this respect the Maoists are right—Khrushchevism without Khrushchev. When they turned against their former leader, they held that his policies had been basically correct, but that he had distorted and compromised them by his temperamental outbursts, eccentricities, and excesses. There was a grain of truth in that, but not more. Khrushchev's behaviour became increasingly erratic as his policies were leading him into an impasse. He tried to get out of it by alternate over-emphatic gestures of conciliation and by aggressive vituperation, by attempts to ingratiate himself with his opponents at home or abroad, and by loud fist-banging or shoe-banging.

There is, in any case, a curiously repetitive logic in all this. It had been Khrushchev's strongly-held view that Stalin's policy had, over many years, been basically correct until Stalin spoiled everything by his morbid lust for power and his excesses. Khrushchev, as it were, appealed from the latter-day insane Stalin to the alleged sanity of the earlier Stalinism. Now Brezhnev and Kosygin react in the same way to Khrushchevism. They seek to rescue it from Khrushchev's latter-day distortions.

They began by moving on tiptoes and trying to hush discordant voices around them. There were to be no further drastic exposures of Stalinism, no more talk about the terrors of the concentration camps of the past; but there was to be no rehabilitation of Stalinism either, and no repudiation of the Twentieth and Twenty-second Congresses. There was to be no further liberalization; but neither was there to be any drastic curtailment of Khrushchev's semi-liberal reforms. There was to be no more voicing of egalitarian demands—the emphasis was and is on incentive payments and rewards; but neither was there to be any campaign against the egalitarians. In foreign affairs, Kosy-

gin and Brezhnev decided to put an end to personal diplomacy *à la* Khrushchev, but reasserted their faith in his interpretation of "peaceful coexistence". They tried to restore the unity of the Communist parties and to mend the bridge with China; but they are not willing to make any concessions of substance to the Chinese. Kosygin's first journey, on assumption of the office of Prime Minister, was to Vietnam and China; but since this journey yielded no positive results, Moscow decided to lapse into silence over China, a silence which it maintained for about two years. To undo the harm that Khrushchev had done to Vietnam, by declaring just before his downfall that the Soviet Union had no interest in defending Southeast Asia, his successors reaffirmed Russia's interest in that area; but they have been rather careful in doling out aid to the North Vietnamese and the "Viet Cong". At the twenty-third Congress, Kosygin and Brezhnev declared that the Soviet aid to the Vietnamese amounted to half a billion roubles, a negligible sum compared to the many billion dollars spent by the United States on the war in Vietnam. In a word, theirs was to be the good old middle-of-the-road Khrushchevism, not the one drifting more and more to the right, Khrushchevism without Khrushchevian excesses, Khrushchevism combined with silence, which is golden, and with wait and see.

It seems that the waiting game is drawing to a close. Brezhnev, Kosygin, and their colleagues are discovering that Khrushchev's "excesses", distortions, and drifting were not accidental or caused merely by his temperamental disposition. The point is that one cannot be afraid of radical egalitarian and of democratic socialist and internationalist trends indefinitely without lapsing into bureaucratic conservatism and drifting to the right. Brezhnev and Kosygin are indeed finding it more and more difficult to maintain a cautious, **non-committal**, centrist position. The conflicting pressures from right and left have been mounting, even if right and left are not any organized groupings but more or less diffused tendencies and moods.

And so, after an interval of silence, all controversies are resumed, even though they are as a rule conducted behind closed doors. But there they are conducted with a vehemence of which the echoes reaching the Soviet public or the Western World give only a faint idea. Egalitarian and anti-egalitarian voices are heard again, even though the former are muffled, and speak less openly than the latter. And in the background one can discern the renewed, though unfocused, discord between nationalism and internationalism, and, on a different level, the clash between various interpretations of peaceful coexistence.⁴

On all these issues, official policies are slowly but perceptibly drifting again to the right. The government tries to stem the anti-Stalinist

mood of the intelligentsia that keeps breaking through. Hence the heavy censorship of recent months. It also attempts to enhance the position of the managers vis-à-vis the workers, although the relative pro-consumer bias of the economic reform may have its anti-bureaucratic implications as well. But it is, above all, in foreign policy that, after a period of reticence and immobility, Brezhnev and Kosygin are driven to follow in Khrushchev's footsteps. The silence over the conflict with China is broken; and the controversy is again conducted in public, though the Russian contribution to it has not yet risen to the high pitch it had reached in Khrushchev's last days. True, the relentless vehemence and vituperation of the Maoists and the so-called cultural revolution have provoked the new exchanges. All the same, the renewal of controversy inevitably strengthens the nationalist mood in the USSR and brings out its faintly racial undertones. In diplomacy, the embarrassed *immobilisme* of 1964 and 1965 is giving place to a new period of active manoeuvring. The Soviet Prime Minister has in recent months indulged quite freely in that personal diplomacy which he and Brezhnev had censured ~~not~~ so long ago.⁵ The return to Khrushchevian diplomacy and to the Khrushchevian interpretation of peaceful coexistence has been strikingly exemplified by the recent signature of the Soviet-American agreement on withholding nuclear weapons from outer space. What is important here is not so much the agreement itself, which is of course unobjectionable, as its timing; coming at the moment of intensified American escalation of the war in Vietnam, this act has certainly been considered as ill-timed by some military "hawks" in Moscow; and it is not only the hawks who feel uneasy over the USSR's role in the Vietnamese conflict. Obviously recent events have done much to aggravate the quarrel with China even further. The logic of the situation had led the present leaders to do what Khrushchev had done; namely, to try and rally foreign Communist parties against China and to obtain from them a formal condemnation of Maoism. That the Communist parties have apparently proved as reluctant to respond as they were in Khrushchev's days is all the more remarkable, as the Chinese had in the meantime done their best, or their worst, to enhance the Soviet position in the Communist movement.

It seems to me that Soviet policy is indeed heading for an impasse very similar to that of 1964. At home Khrushchevism without Khrushchev cannot contain or stop the growing momentum of the contending trends. It is doubtful whether any government or party leadership not willing to allow those trends to come into the open can break the domestic deadlock. No government can do this that is not resolved to carry de-Stalinization to a democratic socialist consummation, that is, to an open confrontation of the now submerged ideological

and political currents. These currents can be tested only in an open, nationwide debate, which would enable Soviet society to achieve its ideological self-determination. Similarly, in foreign affairs, no government or party leadership addicted to the sacred national egoism in which Stalin bred the present generation of leaders can cope with the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc. The centrifugal forces now at work in Communism can be overcome, if at all, only on the basis of a democratically oriented socialist internationalism. Whether the forces that might work towards such a way out are strong enough, I cannot undertake to judge. The war in Vietnam and the outcome of the crisis in China will undoubtedly have their impact on developments in the USSR and influence the ideological balance. In any case, we need not take at its face value the apparent uneventfulness of the post-Khrushchevian period. In this respect, as in many others, the upheaval in China teaches a lesson. Who would have thought two years ago, that so much turmoil was pent up behind China's monolithic façade and that so many contradictions, some of them highly "antagonistic", were just about to explode in Mao's face? I am not claiming that I know that the Soviet political barometer is also set on storm. It may well be that current difficulties may just prolong the chronic post-Stalinist crisis in which the Soviet Union has lived since the end of Stalin; but they may also bring it to a sharp and dramatic turn.

NOTES

1. See, e.g. "The Failure of Khrushchevism" in my *Ironies of History*, pp. 121-146; and *The Unfinished Revolution*. Chapter VI.
2. Yevtushenko, *Une Autobiographie Précoce*.
3. In January 1968 the literary monthly *Oktyabr* published a poem by Feliks Chuyev expressing hope and belief that after some time Stalin's name would again be honoured and respected by the Soviet people.
4. (Footnote of July 1967.) This was, of course, said a few months before the crisis in the Middle East and the Arab-Israel war of June 1967. A few days after that war *Krasnaya Zvezda* wrote that it was perhaps time to revise the official Soviet conception of "peaceful coexistence".
5. This was also said before the Glassboro meeting between President Johnson and Premier Kosygin, which resumed, though not without some timidity, the line of "personal diplomacy".