PENGUIN BOOKS

Taken for the *Observer* by Jane Bown

Edward Crankshaw was born in London in 1909. Before he was twenty he had already seen much of Europe, earning his keep by teaching English. He started serious journalism in 1931, beginning with music criticism. In the next few years he translated many books and plays from French and German. Called up in 1939 as a Territorial officer in the Royal West Kent Regiment, he was later seconded for special duties, and from 1941 to 1943 was attached to the British Military Mission in Moscow. He was demobilized in 1946 with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

Khrushchev's Russia is his fifth book on Russia and, he hopes, his last. The others were *Russia and Britain*, *Russia and the Russians*, *Russia by Daylight*, and *Russia Without Stalin*. For many years he has been known as the *Observer*'s correspondent on Soviet affairs and has also written extensively about Russia for American journals. His most recent of many visits to the Soviet Union was early in 1959.

In addition to his Russian books Mr Crankshaw has written a study of Conrad, a book about Vienna, a history of the Gestapo, and three novels.

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Edward Crankshaw · Khrushchev's Russia

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KHRUSHCHEV'S Russia

A PENGUIN SPECIAL BY

Edward Crankshaw

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R. McLaren.

This book deals neither with the Russia of the tourist, nor with that much discussed enigma, the Russia of the conference room. There is a third country. Khrushchev's Russia, too seldom seen for what it is, too often confused with the mask it wears in the world arena.

The author does not discuss Russian foreign policy or (except in a brief account of the war and of the re-shuffling after Stalin's death) Russian history. He is concerned with the material progress and internal aims that have established themselves under Khrushchev, with the targets set to bring the country level with America in both *per capita* and total production, with Khrushchev the man (whom the author sees primarily as a superb practical administrator), with the new young Russians and their mental climate, and with the inside story of the Pasternak affair, of which he gives a fascinating account.

The result is a book not about an international symbol, but about a reality. It will thus appeal to those who are interested in what Russia is today, and not in what it has come to represent.

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A PENGUIN SPECIAL

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KHRUSHCHEV'S RUSSIA

EDWARD CRANKSHAW

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KHRUSHCHEV'S RUSSIA

'We are getting richer,
and when a person has more to eat he gets
more democratic.'

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV
MAY 1959

PENGUIN BOOKS

FOREWORD

ONE of our difficulties when it comes to understanding foreign countries is that we think of them almost exclusively in terms of foreign policy, whereas they are thinking of themselves much more in terms of domestic policy. This is natural and inevitable; but it is also unfortunate. It means, for example, that the Soviet Union is seen by us always in relation to our problems and hardly at all in relation to its own. To hear people talk, to read the Western newspapers, one would think that the Soviet Government devotes nine-tenths of its energies and ingenuity to making trouble for us, whereas in fact it is spending most of its time in trying to make the Soviet Union work. This, of course, cuts both ways. The Russians think of Britain or America almost wholly in terms of our foreign policies, whereas we know very well that most of our thoughts and most of the thoughts of our politicians are taken up by home affairs.

Hence the fundamental unreality which permeates the study of foreign countries. In face of the Soviet Union this unreality verges on the fantastic: we are so taken up by what the Russians say about us, which is usually vicious, and so little interested in what they say about themselves. It can surely do no harm if we make an occasional effort to see what the Soviet Union looks like from the inside and to discover what the Soviet Union is – especially in a time like the present when, year by year, Soviet society is changing very fast indeed.

At any rate, in this volume I have taken certain things as known: the Soviet Union is ruled by people who call themselves Communists who are basically hostile to our way of life; Soviet foreign policy is restless and ruthless and, in intention, disruptive of Western society. And so on. What I have tried to do is to sketch, very broadly, the sort of society which seems to me to be emerging under Stalin's successors, and the sort of problems it is faced with, and what the leaders are doing to solve them.

Mr Crankshaw's latest series of articles in the *Observer* on the origins of the cold war, which include a penetrating analysis of recent Russian history, has been reprinted as a pamphlet under the title *The Great Schism* and is available from the *Observer*, 22 Tudor Street, EC4, price 1s 9d post free.

Cover design by Hans Unger based on the *Observer* poster 'Russia Today'.

CHAPTER 1

The Size of the Problem

1

IT is six years since the death of Stalin let some fresh air into the Soviet Union and released certain cramped and pent-up forces which began, almost at once, to transform the conditions of life throughout the whole country. By the end of 1953 the movement referred to as the Thaw was in full swing; and this move ment reached a climax during 1956 after Khrushchev, speaking in a special closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, uttered his tearing denuncia tion of certain aspects of Stalin's character and policy. Then, in the autumn of that year, and directly as a result of the Thaw came the Hungarian uprising and Moscow's violent reaction to it. Nine people out of ten in the West saw in the Budapest Terror what was called a 'reversion to Stalinism'; and ever since then the conception of the 'Stalinist reaction' has gained ground outside the Soviet Union. It was strengthened by the remarkable incidents of 1957, when Khrushchev appeared to the outer world to be repeating the pattern of Stalin's own rise to power, as he threw down in ignominy first his colleagues and fellow members of the 'collective government', Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, Shepilov; then the great soldier Marshal Zhukov; finally his own constant companion and *alter ego*, the Prime Minister of the USSR, Bulganin.

Nowadays we hear more about the 'reversion to Stalinism' every time the Soviet Government commits a repressive action at home or a mischievous one abroad. There is a widespread impression that from March 1953 until October 1956 there was a steady development of the great Thaw, and that since Budapest the Thaw has been succeeded by a Freeze, growing steadily more rigorous. But in this connexion it is worth remembering that there were many ups and downs in the first three years after Stalin's death, and already then, and long before the de-

Stalinization campaign was seriously launched, people used to talk about the reversion to Stalinism: further, there were violent and oppressive actions at the height of the Thaw, not least the repression of the East German revolt in the summer of 1953. On the other hand, since October 1956, although the Thaw has in some ways been checked, in other ways it is still very much in being. By now we have room for a perspective view, and it is a good time to make a serious effort to discover just how the Soviet Union has changed since Stalin's day and how it has not.

This cannot be done without a clear view of the sort of man Stalin was, the sort of society he inherited from Lenin, and what he made of it. When people talk easily about the reversion to Stalinism and the Stalinist reaction it is hard to believe that they remember at all vividly what Stalin was and what he did, and how; or what sort of a country the Soviet Union was in the last years of his life. Because criticism of the Soviet Union is more forceful when it is spoken by Soviet leaders themselves than by foreign observers, readers are reminded that the text of Khrushchev's 'secret' speech has been published in this country. Those who wish to understand what would really be meant by a reversion to Stalinism may find illumination there, bearing in mind as they read that Khrushchev was selective in his criticism: for his own reasons he concentrated on Stalin's treatment of Communist Party members, a small minority (about one in forty) of the total population, glossing over, or ignoring entirely, his treatment of the masses.

But for immediate purposes it is enough to say that Stalin was an absolute tyrant, who treated those nearest him, his most powerful lieutenants, with the same ruthlessness with which he treated the Soviet peoples at large. He achieved supremacy by political intrigue, using one faction to destroy another until none were left except his own nominees. He made sure of his position by killing off all his rivals, actual and potential, once he had them at his feet. Impelled by a distant vision, now realized, of the Soviet Union as a great modern power, fit to stand against the world, he subordinated everything with perfect single-mindedness to the realization of this vision, breaking lives in millions to build machines in tens of thousands – in order that, one day, the machines should create conditions for a

better life for the survivors. In his last years, he forgot his original purpose and, rapt away in increasing paranoia, became the prisoner of his own machines and his own apparatus of terror – so that it could be said that he died in the nick of time to save the immense and formidable complex he had created from seizing up. The task facing his successors was to release the full potential of this new complex by giving life to the survivors of those who had created it and who were, in 1953, being crushed beneath its weight. But – and this is a crucial point – the society they now had to deal with was in many ways a very different society from the one upon which Stalin had been able to impose himself as an absolute dictator, step by step, after the death of Lenin in 1924. The nature of this society and the interplay between its masses and its more or less articulate pressure-groups on the one hand and the Government on the other it is the main purpose of this volume to explore.

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When Stalin died there were some 200 million Soviet citizens speaking 125 languages ranging in importance from Ukrainian in the West to tribal dialects in the Soviet Far East. They included the Moslem cotton-growers of Uzbekistan and the nomad herdsmen of Kazakhstan, the Georgians and Armenians of the high Caucasus, the Finns of the Karelian forest, the Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians of the Baltic State, the Poles of the Western Ukraine. All were dominated by the Moscow Government and by the 100 million Great Russians of the Russian Federated Republic, with Moscow as its capital.

Nearly half the total population worked on the land. In 1917, at the time of the Revolution, the proportion had been four-fifths. Stalin, with his Five-year Plans, beginning in 1928, had transformed a primitive agrarian society into an industrial one. In 1917 26 million people had lived in towns and cities, 104 million on the land. In 1953 90 millions lived in the towns, 110 million on the land. In other words, the rural population remained more or less constant, while the urban population had increased more than threefold. But housing in the towns had

not increased threefold, so that the great cities transformed now, with their new factories, into industrial bases, were overcrowded, and even in the new cities (hugely expanded Tsarist townships, like Stalingrad (Tsaritsin) on the Volga and Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg) in the Urals) could not keep pace with the swollen stream of new recruits to industry. These, it is obvious, came at first entirely from the villages, and from the poorer and more backward village families at that: the more able and prosperous peasant households had been destroyed in the drive against the *kulaks* during the collectivization. So that, during the great industrial revolution of the thirties, the new factories were largely run by workers who had been poor peasants the day before, and whose grandfathers had been serfs. The conditions under which they lived and worked were often atrocious; but they formed the new proletarian élite, and they lived a great deal better than their relatives who stayed on the land. For in spite of the great excitement about tractors in the thirties, Stalin almost wholly neglected the land and refused to regard agriculture as a profitable field for State investment. He had broken the conservative peasantry as an active resistance force by the brutalities of the enforced collectivization at the beginning of the first Five-year Plan. He was determined only that just enough food should be squeezed out of a depressed peasantry to keep the towns going by compulsory levies of grain at absurd prices. He did not want a prosperous peasantry, able to demand consumer goods which he did not propose to manufacture. And although even he must at times have been appalled by the catastrophic decline of agricultural production after the collectivization – a decline which still had not been reversed a decade later, on the eve of the war – so long as just enough food could be brought into the towns he seems to have been content.

In addition to the urban and rural population proper there was a strange and terrible limbo inhabited by slaves: individuals, men and women (but principally men) condemned to long terms of forced labour for 'political offences'. Into these camps there flowed an unending stream of the best, because the most individual-minded, elements of the population. The camps served two purposes: they isolated and worked to death

genuine oppositionists and assisted the security police in the maintenance of Terror as an instrument of compulsion; they also provided a vast pool of unskilled labour to dig canals, fell timber, and develop the mineral resources of the frozen areas of the North and the desert areas of the South, where no free citizen would dream of living of his own accord. This process was wasteful beyond imagination; but it seems to have been a calculated waste. The work had to be done somehow, and life was cheap, machines were dear. The period of forced labour, of a regimented unskilled proletariat, of an oppressed peasantry, corresponds in many striking ways with the early days of the English industrial revolution, when women and children crawled on their hands and knees pulling trucks in coal-mines, when the Enclosure Acts drove the yeomanry off the land and into the black satanic mills. In the first stages of each industrial revolution (Russia's far more violent and condensed than the English one) it is cheaper to employ human beings as beasts than to develop their potential skills. Then there comes a time when the machines have multiplied and skill is at a premium: now the workers have to be cared for. It was this stage which the Soviet industrial revolution was approaching when Germany invaded Russia in 1941 and threw everything back.

In 1931, when things were going badly with the first Five-year Plan, Stalin for the first time declared his nature as a Russian imperial statesman and a patriot in an impassioned speech to the men who were toiling to create modern industry in the Soviet Union. There was not a moment to lose, he said; the industrialization of the Soviet Union was not an academic exercise, it was a desperately urgent matter of survival. Presenting a sombre catalogue of past humiliations and defeats, he went on to say that throughout her history Russia had been beaten time and time again – and always because of her backwardness: if she remained backward she would be beaten yet again. And he committed himself to the remarkable prophecy that the Soviet Union had just ten years to turn herself into an industrial power capable of holding her own against assault by Western industrial power. In 1941, when the German armies crossed the frontiers into White Russia and the Ukraine, bombing and burning as they moved forward, the challenge was made.

In spite of Stalin's goading, the Soviet Union was not ready to meet it. Stalin's ten years were up, but he was still trying to buy time from Hitler, and, with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, he thought he had bought some years of it. The Red Army in 1941 had not yet recovered from the wholesale purges of the high command and the officer corps of the middle thirties, and its shortcomings had been exposed, and its morale further shaken, by the initial failure of the Finnish campaign, the tragic Winter War of 1939–40. From June to November 1941 it suffered one catastrophe after another, and it was not until the onslaught of an exceptionally severe and early winter and heroic fighting in the suburbs of Leningrad and at the very gates of Moscow had punctured Hitler's vainglory that the Russians could breathe again. That winter well over half a million civilians died of starvation in Leningrad alone; but the Russian armies managed to push the Germans back from Moscow and hold them on the Kaluga line. Next spring, however, the Germans thrust deep into the South-East, towards the Volga at Stalingrad, to Rostov and Odessa, and down into the Caucasus, so that they held practically the whole of the Ukraine, both the granary of the Soviet Union in those days and her main industrial base. In the winter of 1942–3, at Stalingrad, the tide turned. But there were hard times still to come. And before the Germans were finally driven out of the Soviet Union, in 1944, the retreating German armies had so effectively scorched the Russian earth that hardly a house, a barn, a plough, a telegraph pole remained. Nobody who did not live through that first terrible starvation winter with the Russians can have the least conception of the suffering of the people and the total ruin of the Soviet economy. Nobody who did not with his own eyes see the blank and total devastation of practically all of the Soviet Union west of the Volga after the final German retreat can have the least conception of the desolation which the Russians had to transform into a new land. These things are too easily forgotten over here, if only because they were never properly understood. They were not forgotten in the Soviet Union, and they are not yet forgotten.

Prodigious efforts, of course, were made to switch industry from the West to the Urals; and it was from these new bases

that Stalin was finally able to equip his huge and victorious armies. But Soviet industry in the closing stages of the war was a rock-bottom affair, its products rigorously limited. There were tanks in abundance, the finest tanks on earth; there were first-class field-guns (the Russians have a traditionally good artillery); there were tommy-guns galore; there were excellent fighter-bombers for close battle support; there were boots and uniforms for the troops. But there was practically nothing else at all. Stalin was not building warships, long-range bombers, wheeled or tracked transport. To the end the Army was short of wireless sets and rifles. There were no such things as atom-bomb projects; there was next to no merchant shipping; there was a bare minimum of food; there was practically no domestic fuel except in the forest areas; there were no consumer goods of any description whatsoever. What was left of the whole new economy, ruthlessly and sacrificially built up since the revolution, was reduced to a few carefully chosen instruments of survival – tanks, guns and tommy-guns, mortars, mines, the brilliant improvised field rocket units, operating from the backs of broken-down trucks. Anything extra had to come from Lease-Lend – and the most vital of these extras were the American and British trucks which, supplementing the endless trains of primitive horsed transport, began to make the Soviet infantry mobile in time to exploit the Stalingrad encirclement.

From this situation, in 1945, and with thirty million dead, including the flower of Soviet manhood, the new Soviet Union had to be built up. Stalin had just eight years to live.

The first three years, from 1945 to 1948, were atrocious. For a time loot from Eastern Europe helped to mitigate the most desperate domestic shortages. But, in 1947, and before the Cold War started seriously, every Russian outside the Communist Party was deeply, bleakly, angrily convinced that living conditions were worse than they had been at any time in the war. They were not, of course. Except in limited areas after the disastrous crop failure of 1946 people no longer fell down in the streets to die there, unregarded, of hunger and exhaustion. But in 1948 conditions were appreciably worse than they had been in 1945, and the long grind of misery was beginning to tell. Everybody had expected that things would be so much better.

They had fought together and suffered together and endured sustained privations unimaginable to the Western mind. In the end they had beaten the Germans and got to Berlin. In doing all this they felt that they had proved themselves and proved their patriotic devotion (as indeed they had, a hundred times over). They thought that as a result of this, and glorying in their new-found strength and confidence, they had won the right to a little ease and relaxation and a little trust on the part of the Government. Stalin, the terrible, had proved himself a great war leader and, in the later years of the war, had seemed closer to his people than ever before. The people, for their part, had proved their loyalty with their own sacrifices, had come to regard Stalin as their own. They expected that he would recognize the new spirit which had grown up between ruler and ruled, would ride them with a gentle rein, would put before everything else the easing of their burdens.

But Stalin thought otherwise. Already in 1946, at the great Victory dinner in the Kremlin, he was telling his Marshals that every nerve must be strained to push through the recovery of the Soviet economy in preparation for another war. He was setting production targets for fifteen years ahead which, as things then looked, were going to stretch the people to the limit in return for minimal rewards. There was to be no let-up at all. And the mood of the people when they discovered this was one of despair and black anger: despair because they asked themselves whether life was still worth living if, after suffering so atrociously, they had to prepare themselves for yet another war; black anger with Stalin for misleading them and with the outer world for, as they were told, threatening them. During the Foreign Ministers' Conference, which met in Moscow in 1947, unknown Russians would come up to foreigners in the streets and pluck their sleeves: 'How is the conference going?' 'Badly.' 'Badly, he says badly! Please God, not another war!' This was the mood Stalin played on with his notorious 'peace offensives'. And this was before the Cold War had got into its stride with Stalin's rejection of the Marshall Plan in the late summer of that year. After that, and for many years, Russia was almost wholly sealed off from the outer world: only certain scientists kept contact and exchanged ideas.

The first Five-year Plan after the war was known as the Plan for National Reconstruction. Everything went into rebuilding and developing heavy industry and into shifting the centre of industrial gravity eastwards away from the vulnerable Ukraine. It would have been bad enough without the catastrophic drought in the summer of 1946. This, it was later admitted officially by Khrushchev, was the worst drought since 1890, worse even than the drought of 1922. It brought large areas of the Soviet Union to the edge of starvation at the very moment when Stalin had been promising to abolish food-rationing. But the famine conditions which would have marked such a calamity at any earlier date in Russian history were avoided by improved distribution and drastic action at the Centre. The Bolsheviks had at least conquered famine.

The reconstruction went on, and at a feverish pace; but the resultant inevitable privations were magnified beyond bounds by Stalin's deliberate Cold War policy – in the prophetic words of Lenin 'neither war nor peace'. He had at some time decided not to sit back and, at the cost of loosening his hold on Eastern Europe, seek economic co-operation with the West: the opportunities in Eastern Europe were too good to be missed, cost what it might to seize them and exploit them. But the Cold War meant that the exhausted armies must be rebuilt and re-equipped in the modern manner; the threat of the atom bomb meant that tremendous resources had to be diverted from reconstruction to catching up with the Americans in this new and expensive field; the German successes in guided-missile development also inspired Stalin with a fierce and dogged determination to carry on this development for himself – with the help of Hitler's experts, removed to the Soviet Union. Everything else was neglected; housing, clothes, consumer goods, transport, food production. The people were worked to a standstill or to apathy. The guiding Party lost its dynamism and its authority. Increasingly, the only drive came from the Security Police, controlled by Beria. And while every material resource was put into vast new schemes for capital expansion and military rearmament, Beria found hordes to fill the slave camps with crude labour – prisoners of war, deportees from East Europe, dissident tribes in the Soviet Union, the Russians themselves.

During this insensate drive the intellect itself was killed. The notorious Zhdanov decrees of 1946 sought in vain to harness the artists, the writers, and the intellectuals to the task of the hour. The strange and equivocal figure of Lysenko became a symbol for the same action in the sciences – only those scientists working directly on problems of nuclear physics, rocket propulsion, and improved metallurgy lived and worked in a sort of free enclave which was still in touch, mostly through the learned journals, with the West. The rest had to submit to the universal intellectual paralysis. The peasants, meanwhile, upon whom the whole vast economy depended, were reduced to bare subsistence level. On the poorer collectives they were now worse off than the prisoners in all but the most benighted labour camps. The days of wholesale starvation in the camps had passed, and the prisoners, though still driven desperately hard, were, in the late forties, getting enough to eat. At this time there were stories going round that prisoners from many camps were actually sending food parcels to their starving families on the collectives; and some years later, after the amnesties, these stories were confirmed by numerous eye-witnesses.

And yet the system survived and the reconstruction proceeded, sometimes at a breathless pace. By 1951 there was marked improvement. The prices of consumer goods were astronomical; but goods of a sort began to appear. The Russians could buy boots and shoes. Through Khrushchev, Stalin at last began to pay some attention to agriculture; and wild attempts in various ways were made to rationalize food production and lift it from total stagnation. At the 19th Party Congress in the autumn of 1952, Khrushchev and Malenkov, already appearing as rivals for the succession, struck new and more vital notes. Stalin contented himself with issuing his new Economic Theses on the eve of the Congress. These were concerned with the gradual transition from Socialism to Communism, but they did contain an element of new thinking. War, he declared, was no longer inevitable between Russia and the West. Great wars there would have to be, to encompass the final defeat of capitalism; but, with luck and good judgement, the Soviet Union could keep out of them, leaving Britain and America, Germany and France, to tear each other to pieces in

the battle for markets. This sombre prognosis contained a new element of hope for the Russians. Malenkov's brisk and common-sense approach to economic questions and Khrushchev's appeal for the rededication of the Party gave practical point to this hope. The reconstruction was over. Though agriculture still lagged far behind, industry had vastly exceeded the 1940 volume of production and was still expanding at a tremendous pace. The Soviet Union seemed to have turned the corner.

And then, suddenly, in January 1953, came the announcement of the Doctors' Plot: the exposure of an alleged conspiracy upon the part of a number of Kremlin doctors, all Jews, to poison most of the higher command of the armed forces. For good measure, it was announced that this same group had in fact poisoned Zhdanov, Stalin's heir apparent, in 1948, and Shcherbakov, one of the runners for the ultimate succession, in 1941. At the same time a fantastic vigilance campaign was whipped up against Jews and 'cosmopolitans', against spies, against traitors. Russia trembled on the verge of a new Terror to match the Terror of the thirties. The people held their breath, waiting to see who would be indicted for organizing the 'doctor poisoners'. It might be anybody; it might be all: Molotov, Malenkov, Beria, Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Bulganin, Voroshilov, all the old familiar faces. It had to be some of these. And once the show-trials started and the purges got under way, how could there be an end? It was clear either that the terrible old man was deliberately plotting to rid himself of some of his most trusted colleagues (after the dramatic reorganization of the higher Party apparatus at the 19th Party Congress, four months earlier), or else, like a number of Tsars before him, he had gone mad and, driven by homicidal paranoia, was hitting out right and left, even if it meant plunging the country into misery and ruin.

This was the mood when, on 4 March, it was announced that Stalin had suffered a stroke. On 6 March, it was said that he had died. On 9 March, with scant reference to the virtues of their revered master, Molotov, Malenkov, and Beria made their funeral orations and begged the country not to fall into panic and disarray. The new 'collective government' was formed, with

Malenkov as Prime Minister, and, for a brief moment, First Secretary of the Communist Party too.

3

No good purpose is served by speculating about the real nature of Stalin's death. It is enough that he died in the nick of time to prevent a new Terror, to save some of his 'closest colleagues' from imminent destruction, and to give the Soviet peoples a desperately needed respite and a fresh start at the very moment when the country, overdriven beyond measure, was about to be submitted to further torments and oppressive violence which could well have dislocated the whole machinery of government and industry.

The Russia of 1953 was very different from the Russia of 1928, on the eve of the first Five-year Plan, and of 1936 at the height of the great purge of the old Bolsheviks. In those early days the new factories had been built and manned by unskilled labourers and peasants; whole industries had depended for their development on the experience and skill of foreign engineers and technicians; the drive had come from idealistic youth, enlisted in the *Komsomol*, the Young Communist League, and throwing themselves into the sacrificial tasks which faced them for the greater glory of Communism. Any Soviet-born individual who showed the least natural aptitude for administration or engineering was seized upon, sent for training at a technical college, and pushed rapidly to the front. Those who showed the particular qualities required by Stalin for his own personal apparatus of rule rose higher still.

Thus Khrushchev himself, a miner's son, passed through the Lenin Institute for Technology, via Party work in industry, to Party work in the central apparatus. Thus Bulganin found himself running with extreme efficiency the great Moscow electrical works, and passing, via Chairmanship of the State Bank, to high Party honours. Thus Mikoyan, who went to America to look at American production methods, was put in charge of foreign trade and canned goods. Thus Kaganovich developed into the arch-tycoon, moving from one branch of industry to another and, as it were, representing Stalin to the factory directors.

But as the industrial and governmental machines developed new men grew into them, at first in their thousands, later in their hundreds of thousands. So that in Stalin's last years to the country of labourers and peasants had been added a great new class: the bureaucrats of the industrial ministries; the technicians; the engineers; the factory directors. This class was flanked by the new caste of army officers, consolidated and developed during the war. The Soviet Union had become a great industrial twentieth-century State superimposed on a still backward agrarian community, and still partly dependent on forced labour. The whole was effectively ruled by Beria's political police, which forbade the development of initiative and a sense of responsibility, while encouraging apathy, column-dodging, and corruption. At the same time the intellectual life of the country was paralysed by the Party censorship operating through the Party witch-hunters.

There was a stirring even while Stalin was alive, and it may well have been evidence of this movement which precipitated the framing of the Kremlin doctors, perhaps even Stalin's death. The stirring began, paradoxically, when, at the end of the Plan for National Reconstruction, in 1950–1, conditions became a little easier, first in the great cities, then in the industrial towns, then in the labour camps, last of all in the small provincial towns and the villages. The most dramatic manifestation of this new movement was in the labour camps.

When the forced-labour prisoners were kept at, or below, subsistence level, they had no energy for anything but the battle for physical survival, victory in which depended upon the fulfilment of production 'norms'. But as conditions eased, as food became a little more plentiful, as the Government decided that it could afford to be less wasteful of human life and that it would pay to build up the strength of the army of slaves, the prisoners in their millions began to come to life. Segregated and sealed off from the country as they were (as the country, then, was sealed off from the West), crowded together in extraordinary concentrations of hutments behind wire, including among their number a very high proportion of the intellectually able and the independent-minded (these were the men most liable to be picked up by the police), living, as it were, in suspension,

and with little or nothing to lose, the prisoners were at once the boldest and the most politically articulate element in the population of the Soviet Union. In a later chapter it will be necessary to touch on the limitations of their political thought. For the moment it is enough to say that such thought existed. In 1950 and 1951 there was a totally unexpected outbreak of prisoners' strikes in a number of camps as far apart as Vorkuta inside the Arctic Circle and Karaganda in the dusty plains of Soviet Central Asia.

These strikes, inspired not only by revolt against camp conditions, but also by a sort of despairing fury at the news of widespread misery and deprivation of relatives living in so-called freedom, were, of course, put down. No word about them was allowed to leak out, and it was not until prisoners began to return under the post-Stalin amnesties that anything was known about them. But they are now better documented than the story of what was happening in free Russia at that time. Of this we only know that the peasants were putting up a passive resistance which often became active, that sweeping reductions in the price of spirits (which, for years, had been prohibitive) had resulted in a nation-wide outbreak of 'hooliganism' (the current word for all outbreaks of violence, from a drunken brawl to premeditated gangsterism), that writers and other intellectuals were passing forbidden typescripts from hand to hand (some of which were later to appear in print), and that student bodies were hard at work excogitating criticisms of the régime and new constitutions. It is highly probable that this general atmosphere of incipient revolt had affected many in high places: in the armed forces, in the bureaucracy, in the highest circles of the Party itself: and that Stalin, in his last days, came to know of it. But we know nothing of it beyond what Khrushchev himself has told us and implied, and beyond what has leaked out through non-Russian Communists about the dismay and suppressed fury of some of Stalin's henchmen at the vicious shooting in 1949 of their brilliant young colleague, the chief of the State Planning Commission, Voznessensky, for telling Stalin some home truths about economics at home and abroad.

It was against this background that the men closest to Stalin bundled him after his death into immediate obscurity and

positively pleaded with the Soviet people to resist 'panic and disarray'. It is quite clear that they themselves were very close to both, that at least some of them feared that the West might seize that moment to attack, or at least to launch a full-scale subversive campaign, and that the Soviet Union without Stalin might disintegrate under the impact. The West, whether out of inertia or good sense, did neither. The balance was restored.

But not without immediate and far-reaching concessions to popular feeling inside the Soviet Union. It was three years before Khrushchev was to make his formal attack on Stalin, and Khrushchev in that moment of crisis was not one of the three foremost figures: these were Malenkov, Stalin's immediate deputy in the Party hierarchy, who stepped into the dead leader's shoes as First Secretary and also as Prime Minister; Beria, the chief of Police and Security; and Molotov, Stalin's oldest and most loyal collaborator, whom many had expected to succeed him as Prime Minister. Of these three, only Molotov showed the slightest emotion at the loss of his old leader. The references to Stalin by Malenkov and Beria were perfunctory in the extreme. It was immediately clear that the memory of the great dictator was to be played down, even while he was being laid to rest. Within a few days it was also clear that, far from regretting his death, the chief mourners could barely contain their high spirits. They started behaving like children let out of school.

They also established an appearance of concord among themselves. Closing their ranks to withstand all possible threats to their supremacy, ostentatiously insisting on the virtues and the reality of collective leadership, each and every one determined that on no account should any individual among them inherit Stalin's absolute ascendancy, they moved and held their outward being in a state of perpetual committee, breaking the appearance of unanimity only to put down the one man who had the physical means to attain to a personal dictatorship, Lavrenti Beria, the chief policeman of the Soviet Union. Even after Malenkov had resigned the premiership in January 1955 they kept up the façade of collectivity, which was to persist, though increasingly cracked, until Khrushchev came out into the open in the early summer of 1957. During the greater part of this time they were making concessions both at home and

abroad. And these concessions, when added together, marked a decisive turn in the evolution of the Soviet Union.

Later in this narrative there will be an opportunity to reflect on the political struggle which ended in Khrushchev's ascendancy. It will be necessary to inquire into the real nature of that ascendancy and to compare Khrushchev's career with Stalin's. But to begin with a detailed study of Kremlin politics, though the fashionable thing to do, would be to put the cart before the horse. It is an exaggeration to say that it has not mattered who rules in the Soviet Union since Stalin's death. But it is certainly true to say that the Soviet Union is a going concern, moving erratically but with irresistible momentum in a general direction which no individual can change. To discuss the politics of the Moscow Kremlin as though they existed in a vacuum is absurd. Stalin was Frankenstein to the Soviet Union. In so far as he aspired to be an absolute and arbitrary dictator Khrushchev (or anybody else) would find himself reduced to the role of the sorcerer's apprentice. The Soviet Union has a life of its own. In the last eight years of Stalin's rule it achieved remarkable things, under heavy constraint. In the six years since Stalin's death there has been no holding it, and its achievements have in some ways been stupendous. In the new Seven-year Plan, laid before the Extraordinary Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in January 1959, provision is made for another huge stride forward, the first of two, which, by 1972, are supposed to make the Soviet Union, not merely absolutely the most productive country in the world, but also *per capita* the most productive country in the world. This aim may not be fulfilled, but it is certainly not absurd.

Our concern, then, is first with the nature and achievement of the formidable state machine which has made this dream possible, and the nature of the people on whom the machine is based.

First then, the broad achievement. Certain figures are called for. Since it is important that they should be remembered and constantly borne in mind, they will be reduced to a skeletal minimum.

In the closing passage of Kochetov's controversial and 'anti-Thaw' novel, *The Brothers Yershov*, one of the heroes, the old steel worker Dmitri Yershov, is introduced to some English visitors who have been shown round the works:

'Yes,' said the old Englishman. 'Certainly it's an achievement. A very real achievement. Terrific. Tremendous spirit. First class results . . . But . . . But in America they are turning out more than a hundred million tons of steel a year – while you, sir, produce only sixty million.'

'We also shall soon produce a hundred million, and more,' said Dmitri, slowly and carefully pronouncing the English syllables. He was suddenly filled with agitation lest they should find him absurd. But they understood perfectly, and all three Englishmen were looking at him with new interest.

'Excellent,' said the old man, smiling. 'No doubt you will. But when you are turning out a hundred million, then they will be producing two hundred million.'

'When we are producing a hundred million,' retorted Dmitri, 'they may well have their hundred and fifty million. Quite possibly. But when they have reached two hundred million, we shall have reached two hundred and fifty million.'

'You're a worker?' one of the Englishmen asked.

'Yes, a worker. The senior operator in this mill.'

'Where did you learn to speak English?'

'At home. But I still manage very badly.'

'You do very well indeed. And by the time you are producing two hundred and fifty million tons of steel a year, you will speak it perfectly.'

Dmitri caught the irony behind these words.

'By the time we are producing two hundred and fifty million tons a year, you yourself, sir, may find yourself sitting over a Russian grammar,' he replied.

That is the dream. It explains a great deal.

The reality?

On the eve of the first Five-year Plan, in 1928, the production of steel was 4·3 million tons; of coal 35·5 million tons; of oil 11·5 million tons; of electric power 1·9 million kilowatts.

At the end of the first Plan, in 1934, production had increased as follows: steel 9·7 million tons; coal 93·9 million tons; oil 24·2 million tons; electric power 6·3 million kilowatts.

By 1940, on the eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, production was as follows: steel 18·3 million tons; coal

166 million tons; oil 31 million tons; electric power 11·3 million kilowatts.

At the end of the war, in 1945, production had declined as follows: steel 11·2 million tons; coal 149·3 million tons; oil 19·4 million tons; electric power 10·7 million kilowatts. This in spite of the fact that much heavy industry had been shifted East, and that it had absolute priority.

In 1946 Stalin gave new target figures. First the country had to be restored, then the economy had to be sharply expanded, to make the Soviet Union, as he said, 'proof against all accidents'. He envisaged a series of at least three Five-year Plans. And his new target figures for 1960, at the earliest, were: steel 60 million tons; coal 500 million tons; oil 60 million tons. This was as far as Stalin's imagination could stretch. The achievement of these targets in fifteen years seemed not only to all outside observers, but also to the Russians and to Stalin himself, to mean at least another fifteen years of privation and unrewarding toil for the Soviet people.

And when the target was reached, in 1960, Soviet production would still be far behind American production as it was in 1950: steel 90 million tons; coal 700 million tons; oil 250 million tons.

What in fact has happened? In all cases Stalin's 1960 targets have been surpassed: in 1958 the output of steel was only 2 million tons short of the 1960 total; the 1960 figure for coal was reached; the 1960 figure for oil almost doubled – 113 million tons.

So although we can see that Dmitri Yershov's confident boasting was a little wild (the Soviet Union was producing a good deal less than 60 million tons of steel in 1956, and in fact is scheduled to produce well under Yermeshov's 100 million tons (86–91 million tons) in 1965) yet things are moving very fast indeed. More important, they are moving against a background of increased well-being throughout the country and increased freedom of thought, above all in the economic sphere.

The presentation of the new Seven-year Plan in January 1959 was a paean of confidence, which, as expressed by Khrushchev, might be summed up as boom or bust. The new targets make the post-war dreams of Stalin look shabby and old-fashioned: steel 91 million tons; coal 609 million tons; oil 240 million tons.

This is treading on America's heels with a vengeance. And by the end of the second Seven-year Plan, in 1972, Khrushchev has declared 'the USSR will emerge in the first place in the world, not only for the general volume of production but also for *per capita* production'. And this, he continued, abandoning fact for fantasy, is another way of saying that the people of the Soviet Union will then enjoy the highest living standard in the world.

In fact, as we shall see, it means nothing of the kind. And, indeed, even if we accept the expansion envisaged for the next fifteen years as likely, the proposition raises more questions than it answers. 'The total volume of production' is a very loose phrase. We want to know in some detail what will be produced and how it will be employed. We have to decide what, if anything, is meant by the concept of a high standard of living. We have to ask what sort of a backlog the Soviet Union has to work through before it can begin to challenge the advanced Western countries, even granted equal *per capita* output.

But for the moment we are concerned with present achievement, and we see that, starting from a very low level of production in 1928, basic Soviet industry had quadrupled its steel production by the eve of the war, almost quintupled its coal production, almost trebled its oil production, and trebled its production of electric power. Then came the great set-back of the war – not a total loss, because it stimulated the establishment of new industries in new places and led to swift increases in productive efficiency. Since that war, the Soviet Union has overcome the consequences of the German devastation and, in thirteen years, quintupled her steel production, more than trebled her coal production, more than quadrupled her oil production, and increased her production of electric power by at least five times.

What else has she done? In the early days of sacrificial and clumsy struggle under the first Five-year Plan, it was enough to think in terms of steel and coal and oil: these things had to exist before anything else could be done. In the dreary days after the war the same could be said: basic industry had to be put on its feet again and redeployed for peace-time purposes, a task bedevilled by Stalin's determination to retain and develop a

colossal military machine. But today the situation is different. Although still lagging far behind the advanced industrial countries in the West (e.g. America with 150 million population can produce 100 million tons of steel each year; Britain with 50 million population produces 25 million tons; the Soviet Union with 200 million population produces 60 million tons – all in round figures) in terms of production per head, Russia is now industrialized to the point at which a steep advance in the standard of living becomes not only desirable but absolutely necessary; and this means, among other things, that an increasing proportion of her resources must be diverted from capital expansion of the crudest kind to the provision of the goods and services, industrial, scientific, and personal, required to keep the great State machine going and to allow it to develop. It is the appreciation of this problem, and the dynamism and the vision to tackle it with a boldness bordering on the reckless, which has brought Khrushchev to his present position far more than purely political manoeuvring inside the Party committee rooms – though this too has had its place.

4

The capacity of a modern industrialized society is best measured by its steel production. Steel in one form or another, from tinplate to girders and rails, from turbine rotors to the most delicate parts of precision instruments, is the matrix of modern life. A society producing 60 million tons of steel in 1959 and proposing to raise that output to 90 million tons in 1965 can be nothing else but a highly complex, elaborately articulated society, containing a high proportion of able and intelligent individuals most variously skilled, and with the interests and appetites of able and intelligent individuals everywhere. The capacity to absorb and process 60 million tons of steel, transforming it into manufactures of every kind, from bridges to Diesel engines, from ships to space rockets, from the most elaborate machine tools to bicycles, argues not only a very wide spread of skill but also the existence of highly developed ancillary industries, from the whole range of non-ferrous metallurgy in the realm of raw materials to manufactories turning out by production-line

methods machines and engines which are themselves syntheses of innumerable specialized products. All this presupposes the existence of cohorts of office-workers engaged in designing, planning, co-ordinating, and distributing. There are in fact 54 million State employees in industry and the governing bureaucracy. They range from the extremely privileged research scientists upon whose discoveries the continuing development of the material base depends, through the highly paid directors and designers, who approximate to the great industrial bosses of the West, to the apprentice on the floor of the machine shop. All these have to be fed, housed, supplied with light and heat and water, transported, educated, entertained, and governed. The nameless crowds, still drab but no longer pasty-faced and apathetic, who fill the streets of the great cities are bound together in this colossal enterprise. Among them, not always immediately apparent to the untrained eye, are, in increasing numbers, the new élite. In Moscow university alone 3,000 physicists and 3,000 chemists are turned out every year. Throughout the whole of the Soviet Union 50,000 fully qualified engineers are fledged each year. Each has done a five-year course. In Britain we turn out 5,000 engineers after a four-year course. This means that the Russian output of qualified engineers is ten times greater than the British, while the Soviet population is only four times greater.

These instances are cited not as part of an argument for more scientific and technical education in Britain, but simply to stress the infinite complexity of contemporary Soviet society, which is composed in the towns and manufacturing centres of millions of individual human beings, each with his own place in the gigantic machines, each with his own special skill, each with his own private family interests and problems, each, thus, the secret centre of one of so many millions of universes – a human being, in a word, indistinguishable in all fundamental ways from all other human beings in all other industrial societies. It has seemed desirable to stress this point because there is a tendency in the West to regard the Soviet people as a sort of collectivity of mindless automata. They were never this, even when regimentation was at its most severe, even when cowed into total anonymity in the worst phases of police terror. Now they are neither

cowed nor anonymous, though still very wary, as Khrushchev well knows.

It may be that certain members of Stalin's old guard – perhaps Molotov, perhaps Kaganovich – believed that it was necessary and possible to maintain the fearful Stalinist pressure when its author no longer existed. It is certain that nobody else believed this. Malenkov did not, Marshal Zhukov did not, Khrushchev did not. They understood, as Stalin never began to understand, the sort of society which had been conjured into being by Stalin's own industrial programme and which, towards the end, was being slowly strangled by its creator, who saw only the steel and the machines and was oblivious of the men and women who made them, their increasing skill, intelligence, their developing aspirations. At the time of the revolution eighty per cent of the Soviet population was illiterate. If any progress was to be made they had to be taught to read and write, they had to be taught mathematics, they had to be taught to make and run machines. Stalin did all this, and thus brought into being powerful forces whose very existence he ignored and which could only be pent up by an authoritarian system, based on a police force of monstrous size and total ruthlessness, imposed and maintained by the iron will of one of the most remarkable men in the history of the world. How long this system could have lasted without bringing the great machine to a grinding standstill, or without provoking major upheavals, it is impossible to say. That was a question very much to the fore in Stalin's last years and extremely relevant to the uncertainties of our own future. It is now a purely academic question. Stalin died and his successors gave ground a little, as they had to, whether they liked it or not. The pent-up forces were unloosed. The problem of government in the Soviet Union today is how to use these very necessary forces without letting them get quite out of control. It is, perhaps, not too far-fetched to compare the new society created by Stalin out of the poor peasants in his forced industrialization, a society made ever more aware and ever more demanding by the great educational drive, as being, in the late 1940s, very much to the Government of the Soviet Union what the new societies created by education in the British colonial territories have become to the United Kingdom Government.

The British, half blindly, half consciously, educated primitive colonial peoples to the point at which they began to take their destinies into their own hands and break away from the London Government; Stalin, largely unaware, educated the poor peasants of Russia, and their children, to the point at which, once the tyrannic pressure of the centre was relaxed, they demanded concessions which Stalin's successors knew to be reasonable and inevitable – and, indeed, *necessary*, if the Soviet Union was to continue moving forward. Child labour in coal-mines as in early nineteenth-century Britain, forced labour in intolerable conditions as in mid-twentieth-century Russia, go well enough with the crude early stages of an industrial revolution; bitterly ruthless tycoonery, as in turn-of-the-century America, arbitrary police oppression, as in Russia, go well enough with the rapid opening up of natural resources over vast areas: none of these things go at all with the period of development and consolidation. Then industry has to be stream-lined and rationalized. Man-power has to be carefully economized and husbanded. Skilled workers, engineers, scientists, and administrators in ever increasing numbers and with ever increasing material demands, or needs, have to be kept in good heart if they are to carry out the tasks required of them with efficiency and economy. Human beings are no longer seen as 'hands', indistinguishable and expendable. The child torn away from its parents in the days before the Factory Acts to sweep chimneys or creep along on hands and knees dragging little trucks, like a beast of burden, in the perpetual darkness of the coal-mines must be saved for daylight, looked after, sent to school, and nurtured, so that any talent he may possess can be developed and put to more rational use. The clever adult who may be of use for office work or the production line, for intelligent food production or for building, for administration or for scientific development, can no longer be wasted as a draftee in a labour camp: his expertise must be trained, developed, and put to good use – and rewarded, so that his interest is maintained.

Stalin was slow to see all this. Perhaps he never saw it. But in his last days it reflected the situation in the Soviet Union, and his successors saw it and at once started taking appropriate action.

Their task was complicated by the fact that there were still two Russias, existing side by side – or, rather, inextricably entangled with each other. For with the rapidly advancing urban and technical society there marched, almost untouched by the miraculous industrial achievements of the towns and the pioneer 'projects', the mass of the peasants, clinging to their old ways with a tenacity not at all understood in the West, and shot through with superstitions and beliefs utterly at odds with official doctrine. So that even today, in the age of the sputniks, of the first stupendous space-flight to the moon, the old, immemorial Russia exists side by side with the new, complicating the administration of the new.

The Soviet Union, of course, is not alone in this sort of division. New York, San Francisco, and Detroit exist side by side with the poor whites of the deep South, the hill-billies of the Virginias and the Dakotas, the subsistence farmers of the bad lands. England in the pride of her industrial and engineering primacy was ridden with noisome slums: the England of Harwell and Jodrell Bank is still the England of Notting Hill and of barely solvent smallholders. But in the Soviet Union of today the proportions are different. The peasants still form a vast, dark mass, distorting the whole economy; and they swarm into the towns to form a pool of unskilled labour, living out their lives in overcrowded squalor and, in their hordes, almost obliterating from sight the grandiose material achievements scattered so thinly over the vast land. The peasants of Chekhov do not simply persist: they outnumber by far the human products of Stalin's industrial revolution and threaten at every point to drag them down.

CHAPTER 2

Stalin's Heirs

1

THE Government of the USSR in the last years of Stalin consisted, in effect, of Stalin and his personal agents. The chief among these agents at the time of Stalin's death were Molotov for Foreign Affairs; Beria for the Police; Malenkov and Khrushchev, running in uneasy harness, for the Communist Party; Bulganin for the Army; and on the industrial and trade front Kaganovich and Mikoyan. In addition to these public figures there was a shadowy and sinister character called Major-General Poskrebyshev, whom nobody knew except as a bogey and a portent, who held no official Government or Party office, but who, as the head of Stalin's personal secretariat, held unlimited power under Stalin, acting as his right hand, and as his private executioner.

All these, except Poskrebyshev, were long-standing members of the Politburo of the Communist Party. All except Poskrebyshev and Khrushchev were members of the Council of Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers. They thus doubled in themselves the role of Party leaders and Constitutional leaders. There were others with them; but these were the major figures from whom Stalin's successor must be chosen.

Five months before his death, at the 19th Party Congress in October 1952, Stalin undertook a radical reorganization of the Communist Party hierarchy. The Party at that time had about 6,000,000 members. It was supposed to hold a Congress every three years at which the delegates from all over the land elected its Central Committee, of some 200 odd members, and the small standing committees which ran the business of the Central Committee in between plenary sessions. The chief of these were the Political Bureau, the Secretariat, the Organization Bureau, and the Party Control Commission. The Politburo, which usually had a dozen or so members and three or four non-voting

candidate members,* laid down the policy of the Party in all matters, domestic and foreign – i.e. the policy of the Soviet Union. The Secretariat had absolute control of the Party, and it was as Secretary-General, or First Secretary, that Stalin had won his supremacy. The Organization Bureau controlled Party cadres, and, working with the Secretariat, made all Party appointments. The Control Commission looked after Party discipline. Thus it is clear that when a Malenkov combined membership of three of these bodies, as well as being a Deputy Prime-Minister, there was little he could not do, Stalin alone permitting.

But in fact Stalin allowed thirteen years to pass between the 18th Party Congress, in 1939, and the 19th Party Congress in 1952. During all this time there were no elections, even pretended ones; there were practically no plenary sessions of the Central Committee; and the Politburo, the Secretariat, etc. had become self-perpetuating bodies. That is to say, Stalin himself had filled vacancies and made promotions and demotions – rarely formally announced – at his own pleasure. The Party apparatus had become his personal tool of government; and the Party rank and file did what the apparatus told them. Discipline was absolute, and there was no answering back.

Every Russian fervently believed that Stalin's first act after the war would be to convene a new Party Congress and announce a new deal. But the years dragged on with no change, seven long years, until October 1952. Then there was indeed a new deal; but it affected only the higher leadership. For what Stalin did was to abolish the small, compact Politburo of veteran trusties and replace it with a much larger committee called the Presidium of the Communist Party of the USSR. And into this Presidium he brought more than a dozen new members, men prominent enough in their own localities, but virtually unknown to the mass of Russians. On the face of it, what he had done was to throw wide open the question of the succession by confusing the issue and making it possible for new groupings to form at the top. And he emphasized the point of this reshuffle

* It is the custom for all aspirants to the Communist Party itself, and, as they are promoted, to its higher organs, to pass through a probationary period before full membership is granted.

by detailing as chief rapporteur not Malenkov, who was the senior secretary after Stalin, and who, since the sudden death of his great rival, Zhdanov, in 1947, had been the obvious candidate for the succession, but Khrushchev, who had never before stood so high.

For whereas Malenkov had spent his whole career at Stalin's right hand, first on his personal staff, then in the innermost recesses of the Party apparatus, Khrushchev, ten years older, and with a working-class background (Malenkov was a bourgeois), had spent very little time at the centre. He had run the Ukraine for Stalin; he had come back in 1950 to take charge of agriculture, the hardest assignment of all. Now he was put up to report on the state of the Party and declare that it was by no means what it should be and must be purged and revitalized. It was Khrushchev's first blow at Malenkov, Stalin's putative heir, and it was struck with Stalin's approval and under his personal aegis. There was barely time to reflect on the implications of this reshuffle of the Party hierarchy before the country was thrown into deeper confusion, and also blank dismay, by the 'discovery' of the so-called doctors' plot. Among those whose lives were said to have been attempted were a number of Marshals with the closest Party affiliations. The two men said to have been actually poisoned were Shcherbakov and Zhdanov. In 1943, when Shcherbakov died suddenly, he and Malenkov and Zhdanov were the three most fancied candidates for the ultimate succession to Stalin. That left Malenkov and Zhdanov. Zhdanov died in 1948. That left Malenkov. Now, in the new year of 1953, it was put out that Shcherbakov and Zhdanov had in fact been poisoned and that investigations were in train to discover who had been responsible for suborning the 'doctor poisoners'. It was also stated that their activities had only been made possible by the slackness of the security organs – which meant Beria. But these were not alone. Khrushchev was involved, because his subordinates in the Ukraine were being fiercely attacked for lack of vigilance; Kaganovich was involved because he was a Jew; Mikoyan was involved because of a whole series of alleged scandals in the trade network; Molotov was involved in the concurrent purge of his Foreign Office. Only Poskrebyshev was safe.

Then, almost at once, Stalin died.

The first casualty was evidently Poskrebyshev, who has never been heard of from that time to this.

The next casualty was Stalin's enlarged Presidium and Secretariat. Once Stalin's body had been hustled away – there is no other word for it – Malenkov, as first Secretary of the Party after Stalin, abolished at one stroke the new apparatus and reverted to the pre-19th Party Congress set-up retaining only the new nomenclature – i.e. Party Presidium, as opposed to Politburo. Elected Prime Minister in Stalin's place, Malenkov convened a meeting of the Supreme Soviet and announced various concessions to the Soviet people.

The next casualty was the 'doctors' plot'. This was denounced as a fabrication, the doctors were set free, and with them thousands who had been arrested. Senior members of the Security Police, Beria's police, were arrested for concocting false evidence.

The next casualty was Beria himself; his arrest was announced in June 1953, his execution not until December of that year.

Meanwhile Malenkov, still Prime Minister, had resigned, or been forced to resign, the first secretaryship of the Communist Party, and Khrushchev had moved into his place. Meanwhile, also, Marshal Zhukov had been summoned from the provinces, where Stalin had jealously banished him, and made Deputy Minister of Defence, under Bulganin.

The new collective was now in being.

Looking back it is possible to see how uneasy it must have been. But at the time the collective succession went to almost lunatic lengths to din into the consciousness of the country and the world that they were acting as one man. They had good reason.

It is clear that in that moment the men with a vested interest in the system were alarmed at the possible consequences of an interregnum. Stalin had held the whole complex of the Soviet Union together so rigidly that with the least loosening of the steel bonds the country might be expected to fly apart. I have already suggested that they feared a determined attempt by the West to exploit uncertainty and confusion, and they may well have been surprised (as they were to be surprised later during

the Hungarian rebellion) when the West did nothing. But at home, also, the situation could have all too easily got out of hand. Their only hope was to stand together and pray that they would not hang together. The immediate curtailing of the arbitrary powers of the police could be satisfactorily demonstrated by the exposure of the 'doctors' plot' as a swindle; but this did not alter the fact that one of their number, Lavrenti Beria, had at his personal disposal a vast army of police, including at least 500,000 organized in military formations and equipped with everything the soldier's heart could desire, from aircraft to tanks; Beria, too, possessed elaborate dossiers on all of them. The obvious response to this was to get the armed forces on their side; and this they did by summoning the war-time hero, Marshal Zhukov, from rustication in Odessa and bringing him into the Government. The other obvious response was to make it morally impossible for any one of them, above all Beria, to put himself forward as a new dictator. They had had enough of dictators.

It was not until three years later that Khrushchev himself in his denunciation of Stalin was to tell the Russians, and the world, just how much Stalin had tyrannized over them all – his personal lieutenants, his 'closest' colleagues, no less than the rank and file. What then emerged was a picture of degradation and indignity, with this whole gang of tough and extremely able men reduced to impotence by their master's whim, unable to stand up against him individually (the last man who did this was the brilliant young chairman of the State Planning Commission, Voznessensky), and apparently (though Khrushchev did not say this explicitly) incapable of trusting one another enough to make an effective combination possible. It was not until the Khrushchev speech that we knew this as a fact; but in the very earliest days after Stalin's death it was already obvious that his successors were new men. They smiled, they chattered, they mixed with the world. They had never smiled in public before: only Stalin was allowed to smile. They had never chattered: the occasional set speech in stereotyped language was all they were allowed to utter. As for mixing with the world, such a thought never seemed to have crossed their minds.

It was soon obvious that this was the one thing they had been

dying to do all their lives. There were plenty in the West to say that this new *bonhomie* was simply part of an act, designed to lull us into a sense of false safety. But nobody who saw the new masters of Russia positively unfolding, blossoming like leathery cacti, at one diplomatic gathering after another, and quite clearly having the times of their lives, like men let out of prison, had any doubts about the matter. A great weight had been lifted from them; and each and every one of them was determined that never again would he have to submit to the tyranny which had lain almost as heavily upon their lives as it had lain over the breadth of suffering Russia.

They had two things in mind: to demonstrate to the Russian people (and the world) that the days of individual dictatorship were over; and to make sure that this was in fact so. Sometimes they went to absurd lengths to make their points: instead of travelling to functions and parties in their own individual cars, half a dozen of them would pile into a single car, packed to bursting, and, arrived at their destination, come bursting out on to the pavement like a football scrum: nobody had precedence, nobody was even to appear to have precedence. They were very self-conscious about this; and they had some excuse. Because one of Stalin's favourite games had been to list the names of his 'closest colleagues', on all official occasions, not in alphabetical order but in order of favour; and the order shifted from year to year, sometimes from month to month, as the mood took him. Now the order was alphabetical, as it still is at the time of writing. One day an enterprising journalist thought he had a scoop: Khrushchev, he discovered, came last on the list. But Khrushchev always came last on the list, for the very simple reason that in the Cyrillic alphabet his name begins with a X, the Russian letter for the gutteral Kh, as in Kharkov. . . .

This mood continued. One day in June, at a gala performance at the Bolshoi Theatre, Beria was absent from this gang of equals. In a few days it was given out that Beria had been arrested as an agent of British intelligence. But the rest of the band of brothers continued as before. And although as time went on Khrushchev seemed to be adopting an increasingly commanding position, the principle of 'collective leadership' was still insisted on and hammered home at every opportunity –

even after Malenkov's deposition from the premiership nearly two years after Stalin's death, in January 1955.

Stalin, as already observed, was an absolute tyrant. Khrushchev, even now, is not that. It will be desirable to consider his real position at a later stage. The point to be made immediately is that for the past six years there has been in fact a considerable degree of collective rule, even though the members of the collective have changed, and even though the Presidium and the Secretariat of the Communist Party do in fact dictate the policies of the Soviet Union in general and in detail.

The formal and constitutional government of the USSR is the Supreme Soviet – the Supreme Soviet of the Union, and the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities. These twin bodies total some thirteen hundred delegates representing All-Union constituencies on the one hand and national groupings on the other. These bodies meet only occasionally and for a few days at a time. Under Stalin they never met more than twice a year, and their sole function was to rubber-stamp the decrees passed by their standing committee, in perpetual session, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, whose chairman is the titular head of State, the so-called President of the USSR – at the time of writing the 75-year-old veteran, Marshal Voroshilov. Under the new régime the Supreme Soviet has met far more often; and although it is still largely a rubber-stamp, it has been brought much more closely into contact with the real government of the country; and delegates to it have been allowed to get up and voice carefully vetted criticisms of this or that aspect of government policy (exclusively domestic and economic). It is possible now for a delegate to this august but useless institution to feel that he really is participating, if indirectly, in the making of laws.

The executive arm of the Supreme Soviet is the Council of Ministers, which is elected every four years. Under Stalin the Ministers proliferated. Apart from such institutions as the Foreign Office, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of State Control, the Ministry of Education, etc., these Ministries were concerned almost exclusively with the running of industry and agriculture. The Ministers were, in effect, Communist tycoons, or the administrative heads of vast complexes of industry and agriculture, larger than the gigantic concerns of the

West – General Motors, United Steel, Krupps, Unilever, the late IG Farben, ICI. They took their orders from the State Planning Commission, which took its orders from the Presidium of the Communist Party. They were responsible for the actual working of the whole Soviet economy along predetermined lines. To this end they built up formidable bureaucratic machines, all centred on Moscow, with strong vested interests in the preservation of the *status quo*.

Under Stalin these Ministries were constantly being multiplied. In 1953 there were about sixty of them, and it seems to have been Stalin's general idea that the division and subdivision of the industrial ministries prevented any individual Minister from achieving too much power. Above the individual Ministries he set a number of overlords, designated as Deputy Chairmen of the Council of Ministers, or Deputy Prime Ministers, some of them responsible to him for groups of industrial Ministries. These men were nearly all members of the Politburo, later the Presidium, of the Central Committee of the Party and thus played a dual role. In their capacity of Party chieftains under Stalin they laid down the economic policies which they executed as Deputy Prime Ministers.

The Supreme Soviet, with its Council of Ministers, was in theory the constitutional government, working under the 'guidance' of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in its role of 'vanguard of the proletariat'. In fact the Supreme Soviet was a figurehead, based on a descending series of local soviets, or councils – Republican, Regional, District, Town, Village, all of them taking their instructions from the corresponding Party organization ruled more or less despotically by its Secretary and periodically submitted to more or less drastic disciplinary purges by Moscow.

In Stalin's later years, as we have been told officially by Khrushchev, and as everyone who lived in the Soviet Union during the relevant period very well knew, all orders came from him. He allowed his 'closest colleagues' to discuss and argue about policy matters inside the Politburo; but the final decision was always his. It was then the business of the relevant 'colleague' to see that the decision was implemented. And so tuned and disciplined were their subordinates, all the way down the

line, so exactly did all the media of communication reflect the decision of the moment (known as the Party line), that these decisions were put into effect throughout the whole country with remarkable speed. The Communist Party, thus, backed by the punitive sanctions and the information network of the Security Police, developed into an effective driving-belt, transmitting Stalin's decisions in the requisite form to villages, factories, and farms. By the time of Stalin's death this had become its only real function. It was no longer the vanguard of the proletariat; it was no longer even ideologically alive: it was a privileged bureaucracy engaged in executing the instructions and propagating the ideas of a despot. Without the despot to drive it and keep it in order and tell it what to do it was nothing. It was, thus, nothing when Stalin died.

Indeed, it was less than nothing. It was a liability. In the eyes of the mass of Russians, non-party members – and only one in thirty-five of the people are in fact Party members – it stood for tyranny and corruption, or, at best, humbug and dreariness. It was the ruling caste, the Establishment, without a head and without direction.

But the Government had to go on. In broad terms, if breakdown and rebellion were to be avoided, there were four possibilities: a police dictatorship under Beria, who had the physical means to make a bid for it; a military dictatorship under Zhukov or some other military leader – but the army was divided; an attempt to organize and vitalize the quasi-constitutional forces of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers; an attempt to regenerate the Communist Party and make it into an efficient governing body.

Whether Beria did in fact try to establish a police dictatorship we do not know. But it is clear enough that his colleagues, at the very least, suspected him of harbouring such intentions, and within four months of Stalin's death he was under arrest and the autonomous power of the political police was curtailed very drastically indeed. As for Marshal Zhukov and the other military leaders, it is doubtful if any one of them was in a position to command the undivided loyalty of all the others. Zhukov himself seems to have been content with lending his support to Stalin's political heirs in exchange for his own personal elevation

and some lessening of the Party's interference in purely military matters. Thus two major elements were left: the Party apparatus, for what it was worth, and what for convenience I shall call the industrial bureaucracy, headed by the industrial chieftains in the industrial ministries and backed by the directors of trusts, combines, and individual factories throughout the land – all men with a strong vested interest in stability and the perpetuation of the *status quo* – with a difference.

For some time before Stalin's death Malenkov, for long regarded as the Party functionary *par excellence*, had become increasingly associated with this class of men. It was believed, not without reason, that the promotion of quite a number of them to high political posts above the heads of career Communists had been largely his work – men like Tevosyan, the steel king; Pervukhin of the chemical industry; Malyshev the mechanical engineer, who, before his death in 1956, was to pioneer automation in the Soviet Union; Saburov, the economic planner. These men, and hundreds besides, were all, of course, Party members: membership of the Party went hand in hand with ambition. But they were not at all Communist ideologists. They were interested not in world revolution, not in 'the transition from Socialism to Communism' at home: they were interested in production and in making the great industrial machine work – in preserving their own privileges and in turning the Soviet Union into a better place for their children and their grandchildren. They formed, as a body, an all-important new class, the class of technocrats and industrial bureaucrats; and among their number were sufficient individuals to provide an adequate government for the Soviet Union.

Opposed to them were the Party functionaries, the *apparatchiki*, thus nicknamed because their careers had been mainly spent inside the Party apparatus: career Communists, who might or might not believe in Communist ideals, but who had certainly been brought up to believe that the seat of all power lay in the Communist Party, and that he who served it best rose highest. These men were deeply perturbed at the intrusion into the higher government echelons of outsiders who had not been through the Party mill, who had been brought in because of their native administrative and executive ability. In this opposition there was the making of a first-class conflict; and it was very soon apparent that one side was grouped round Malenkov, the other round Khrushchev. While Malenkov was clearly subordinating the Party machine, with its complex administrative network, to the interests of the bureaucracy and the technocracy, putting much weight on the Council of Ministers, Khrushchev, formally installed as First Secretary of the Party less than a year after Stalin's death (he had been acting First Secretary ever since Malenkov had given up the post in the great reshuffle of March 1953), was sternly and more and more insistently calling on the Party to purify itself and prove itself as the fit and only ruling body of the Soviet Union. He was doing more than this. With Malenkov out of the Party secretariat, Khrushchev was busily appointing his personal supporters to key positions in the Party – and persuading many of Malenkov's supporters to desert to him.

2

Already by the winter of 1953, the close observer of Soviet affairs had begun to notice signs of a breach in the 'collective'. Khrushchev had been taking more and more of the limelight, and Malenkov was being publicly contradicted – though not by name – both in Khrushchev's speeches and in the Party Press, which Khrushchev, as First Secretary, controlled.

Malenkov, for example, announced that nuclear war was unthinkable, because it would mean the annihilation of the human race. Khrushchev very soon afterwards, without mentioning Malenkov, jeered at those who held that the Soviet Union could not survive a nuclear war: such a war, he said, would certainly mean the end of the 'imperialist' powers; but the Soviet Union would survive, though she would suffer grievous wounds.

Malenkov, in a formal speech to the Supreme Soviet, announced that at last the Soviet Union had solved the problem of adequate grain production and could begin to think of luxuries. Khrushchev, soon afterwards, made his first major speech as acting First Secretary, in which he laid bare the true condition of Soviet agriculture, long understood by close students of Soviet economics, but always indignantly and circumstantially denied by Soviet spokesmen – prominent among them Khrushchev

himself – and by non-Soviet fellow-travellers, such as the Dean of Canterbury. For the first time the Soviet people and the world were told officially that Soviet agriculture had never recovered from the fearful disaster of the collectivization – a disaster which Stalin himself admitted to Churchill had been more terrible than the worst disasters of the Second World War.

(It is worth noting in this connexion that nobody, neither Khrushchev nor the fellow-travellers, has ever uttered a word of apology to those Western critics, whom, in the past, they had bitterly and circumstantially denounced, for being right about the state of Soviet food production, about Stalin's crimes against the Party, about his blunders at the beginning of the war with Germany.)

Malenkov was optimistic about consumer goods. The Soviet Union, he said, had achieved such triumphs with her heavy industry that the pace of capital development could now be slackened and more material and resources diverted to light industry and to the manufacture of all kinds of consumer goods. He pointed out that in 1940, when, for the first time since 1928, consumer goods were beginning to come on to the market in any quantity, the ration of heavy to light industry had been as 60 to 40; but in 1953, even though the Soviet Union had completed her post-war recovery Plan, it stood at 70–30. This had to be changed. The Soviet Union, he said, could now afford to divert resources from heavy industry to light industry, and would immediately do so.

But at the end of 1954 Khrushchev came out with a counter-blast. In *Pravda*, the Party newspaper, an article appeared, the first of many, which was a scarcely disguised attack on Malenkov. It restated in the sharpest possible terms the doctrine of absolute priority for heavy industry and condemned as heretics certain individuals, unnamed, who, it was said, had got it into their heads that the time had come to give priority to light industry and consumer goods. In fact nobody had ever spoken publicly about priority for light industry. Malenkov in his most optimistic mood had never gone as far as this. But Malenkov, as the champion of the rapid expansion of light industry (but still with heavy industry and capital expansion having priority) was the clearly designated object of this attack.

And, indeed, two months later, Malenkov, as Prime Minister, got up to speak at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet, only to announce that he had decided to resign from the premiership because of his 'inexperience'. Khrushchev rose to recommend Marshal Bulganin as his successor. The recommendation was unanimously accepted; and that, for the moment, was that.

The façade of the collective government was to be maintained for another two years; but behind the front presented to the world it was already clear in February 1955 that there existed bitter conflicts of personalities and views. Malenkov did not even resign the premiership to a man of superior or equal calibre. He handed over to Bulganin, his inferior in every way, who, it was at once apparent, was content to act as a foil for Khrushchev as Party Leader. Furthermore, although Malenkov retained his seat on the Party Presidium, he was virtually dropped from the constitutional government machine, which he had sought to make his stronghold: instead of relinquishing the premiership and accepting the office of first deputy-premier, he fell far. One of the two or three most able men in the Soviet Union, and the only man to offer a serious threat to Khrushchev's supremacy, he was relegated to a routine ministerial job as head of the Ministry of Electric Power Stations.

But he was not finished. For the next two years he was very much in evidence on all public occasions. His smiling, almost gay demeanour, the absence of public recrimination between him and Khrushchev, and the international and domestic excitements of the years 1955 and 1956, all helped to conceal the extreme bitterness of the struggle between the two men. During 1955 the attention of the world was focused on the extraordinary duo performance of Khrushchev and Bulganin, first in Belgrade in May, then at the Geneva Summit meeting in July, then, in the winter, in India, Burma, and Afghanistan. While these two breached their own iron curtain and swept out into the larger world with every appearance of huge delight in their own enlargement, Malenkov stayed at home, still a senior member of the Party Presidium, still, apparently, in spite of his nominal preoccupation with power stations, working away with Molotov, Mikoyan, Kaganovich, Suslov, and the rest at making the wheels of State go round.

Then, in February of 1956, came the celebrated 20th Party Congress. It was a Congress dominated by Khrushchev, both in his public report and in the better known attack on Stalin, delivered in secret session. Mikoyan came out as his chief supporter. But although Khrushchev allowed himself a few remarks which seemed to open the way to trouble for some of his colleagues, above all for Malenkov, at some future date, and although it was clear enough that the denunciation of Stalin was, among other things, Khrushchev's own way of disassociating himself in the eyes of the Russians not only from Stalin but also from certain of his colleagues (including above all Malenkov, who had been very close to Stalin), the position early in 1956 was that the collective was still a collective and that the bitterness of personal rivalries was still kept in check by the first imperative: namely that Stalin's successors, minus Beria, still needed to stand together, if only in a defensive alliance.

In April of that year, when the first very incomplete reports of Khrushchev's secret speech were leaking out, Malenkov himself made a journey to London, ostensibly as the leader of a delegation of electrical engineers, in fact to spy out the land for the formal visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin in May. Apart from Molotov, he was the first high-ranking Bolshevik ever to visit London. He went about the country and among the people, and he scored a remarkable personal success. He discovered a good deal about basic British attitudes, which he was able to pass on to Khrushchev. He exuded confidence and charm, so that it required a sharp effort to remember that this remarkable little man, so much more human, flexible, and swift-witted than his photographs suggested, had in fact spent the greater part of his life at the very centre of power in the most hideous era of Russia's history. For Malenkov, with all his charm, with all his intelligence and wit, with all his demagogic skill, with all his boyish charm, with all his bourgeois upbringing and his passion for the poetry of Robert Burns – Malenkov had risen to power inside Stalin's private office: it was he who, during the atrocious purges of the middle thirties, as controller of the Party cadres, went over the lists with Yehzhov, the notorious GPU chief, and decided who was due for liquidation.

How much his great personal success in Britain paved the way for his own subsequent liquidation we do not know. But it cannot have pleased Khrushchev. In the first place, he went about saying that he still thought that he, Malenkov, had been right about consumer goods. In the second place, as the man sent out to prepare the way, he stole Khrushchev's thunder, and neither Khrushchev nor Bulganin, when their turn came, succeeded half as well as Malenkov had done in impressing the British public. In a little over a year Malenkov had gone, accused this time not only of inefficiency but of anti-Party activity (which meant anti-Khrushchev activity) and, on an even more sinister note, of complicity in the so-called 'Leningrad Plot'.

The 'Leningrad Plot' had first been heard of when Khrushchev mentioned it in his secret speech. Very few people knew what he meant by it. But to the few it rang a loud and clear bell. It referred to the homicidal goings on in Leningrad in 1948–9 after the death of Zhdanov. Zhdanov, besides being a strong claimant for the succession to Stalin and, as such, Malenkov's chief rival, had been head of the Leningrad Party organization, the key post in the Soviet Union outside Moscow. And when Zhdanov died, whether naturally or as the result of poison, there followed a major purge of his Party supporters, mainly in Leningrad, but also in Moscow. Some of these disappeared for ever. All were replaced by Malenkov men. And one of the signs of Khrushchev's own success in the early days of his subsequent struggle with Malenkov had been the quiet removal of certain of Malenkov's nominees from the Leningrad apparatus and their replacement by Khrushchev's own supporters.

All this deadly manoeuvring behind the scenes was going on while the fiction of the 'collective government' was steadily maintained. Though 'fiction', perhaps, is not the correct word: there was indeed some sort of collective government, in the sense that until the summer of 1957 no single individual, neither Khrushchev nor anybody else, was master of the scene. In the sphere of agriculture Khrushchev was having things more or less his own way. His colleagues seem to have realized that food production was indeed in a sorry state and that radical steps had to be taken to improve matters; they gave Khrushchev his head, not without misgivings, and not, perhaps, without the hope that he might run into such serious trouble that he could then be got

rid of. In the sphere of industry there was less going on. Khrushchev in the winter of 1954–5 had carried his point about absolute priority for heavy industry, but no major reorganization was undertaken. In the summer of 1955 Bulganin, speaking as Prime Minister, made a major speech to a Plenum of the Central Committee exposing the weaknesses and anomalies of Soviet industry and foreshadowing drastic reorganization, rationalization, and stream-lining. This speech was never digested by the West because, for reasons best known to themselves, the Russians did not publish it until the eve of the Summit Conference at Geneva, a meeting which pushed all other things into the background. And, in fact, nothing happened. It was not until the early summer of 1957, two years later, that it became apparent that the question of industrial organization had been, in fact, Khrushchev's main battleground, once his agricultural reforms had begun to pay off.

In the sphere of consumer goods, the country went on much as Malenkov had promised: in spite of the official emphasis on heavy industry, a great deal more attention was in fact being paid to improving the standard of living, through the production of more consumer goods and in other ways.

In the sphere of morale and intellectual freedom, the Thaw, which made itself felt in the late summer of 1953, only to be checked in 1954, was more vigorous than ever all through 1956 and was not seriously checked again until the summer of 1957.

In the sphere of foreign policy there was clearly a bitter conflict between Khrushchev on the one hand and Molotov on the other (we do not know how the remaining comrades aligned themselves) over the *rapprochement* with Yugoslavia in the spring of 1955 and the concessions to the East European satellites after the de-Stalinization in 1956. And, after the successful resistance of the Poles in September 1956 and the armed revolt in Hungary in October of that year, it was clear that Khrushchev was in a very shaky position indeed.

Through all this time, thus, from the death of Stalin until the disgrace of the 'anti-Party Group' in June 1957, the 'collective' was in being, with Khrushchev first rising, then suddenly falling – until, at the eleventh hour, he checked his fall, fought back, and vanquished all his rivals. The policy of the Soviet Government, then, for the first four years after Stalin's death, was not the policy of one individual, but of a group, with individual members of that group dissenting sharply from different aspects of the overall policy, but being voted down by a majority of the Party Presidium. In June 1957 Khrushchev himself was heavily voted down, in circumstances which, in spite of all that has been written and all that Khrushchev has himself given out, remain unclear. He was not content, however, to submit to a majority decision. According to an inspired 'leakage', via Poland, he exercised his right, as First Secretary, to convene a full meeting of the Central Committee to hear his case and decide whether he was to remain Secretary or not. The Central Committee, of course, consisted very largely (though far from entirely) of his nominees. Nobody knows what went on at that meeting; but from it Khrushchev emerged triumphant; and in no time at all Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov were expelled from the Presidium and from the Central Committee itself. Although they were accused of fractionalism and anti-Party conspiracy, the most heinous crime in the Soviet calendar, no overt violence was done to them and, in spite of strong rumours to the contrary, there seems never to have been any intention of putting them on trial. Molotov, the elder statesman, was sent out as Soviet ambassador to Ulan Bator, the capital of Outer Mongolia; Kaganovich, Stalin's brother-in-law, who had done more than any individual to build up Soviet heavy industry, was given a minor appointment in the provinces; the much younger Shepilov, who owed everything to Khrushchev and had been put in the Party Secretariat by him and made Foreign Minister, was sent off into the wilderness. Malenkov, Khrushchev's only really dangerous rival, was packed off to run a power station in Siberia. All these men with the exception of Malenkov have since been seen alive and well in and out of Moscow. Only Malenkov has vanished entirely, which suggests that if he is still alive he is under physical restraint.

With these four named 'enemies', two others fell less dramatically – both close associates of Malenkov, both members of the Presidium, and both big names in industrial planning: Pervukhin and Saburov. But Saburov remained a member of the Central Committee and Pervukhin was reduced only to

candidate membership of the Presidium. Both these men made qualified confessions of their errors at the special 21st Party Congress early in 1959.

At the same time there was a marked diminution in Bulganin's prominence. Nothing was said about him at the time; but, as titular Prime Minister, he simply dwindled: according to inspired reports, he had wavered, oscillating between Khrushchev and his opponents on the occasion of the fateful Presidium meeting; and in fact, in January of the following year, he resigned the premiership and was made Chairman of the State Bank, the first stage in a progressive decline which reached its climax in December 1958, when, at the celebrated Plenum of the Central Committee, he got up to confess, without warning, that he had in fact been involved with the plotting of the anti-Party group to the extent of allowing them to use his office in the Kremlin for their meetings.

When Bulganin resigned, in January 1958, Khrushchev, as we know, assumed the Premiership in his place, thus, like Stalin before him, combining the offices of Party chief and chief of the constitutional government. Before he took this step he had to remove one other extremely powerful figure, Marshal Zhukov, to whom he owed a great deal. According to all reports it was Zhukov, as head of the armed forces, who turned the tide in Khrushchev's favour at the critical meeting of the Central Committee in May 1957. Certainly immediately afterwards Zhukov was promoted to full membership of the Party Presidium, thus becoming the first professional soldier ever to assume the highest Party office. This glory did not last long. Six months later, immediately after his return from a much publicized visit to Marshal Tito, he was accused of working to make the Army independent of the Party and dropped from the Presidium, the Central Committee, and the Ministry of Defence.

3

It is time to ask what sort of a man Nikita Khrushchev is. It is so easy to get the proportions wrong. On the face of it his rise to power has in so many ways resembled Stalin's rise before him: many are still convinced that he is simply another Stalin in

sheep's clothing. But in fact the differences quite outweigh the similarities. Certainly he learnt a great deal about political tactics from Stalin, and put his learning to good use. And yet, I believe, it would be hard to find two men more unlike.

He started with nothing, and he is very conscious of this fact, priding himself on it in the manner of a self-made business man of the old school. A year or two ago he was holding forth at an Embassy reception in Moscow to a small group of distinguished Western diplomats. It was one of those occasions, his own special invention, which he uses so skilfully to amplify his calculated indiscretions, to air views which could never be formally expressed. He had just put one of his provocative questions – it may have been about a non-aggression pact – which most Moscow diplomats have come to dread: to answer them seriously would carry them into the realms of high policy – and Allied policy at that But to parry them elegantly calls for a brain which moves with the speed of light, or for the wit of an Oscar Wilde. On this occasion, as so often, the diplomats simply looked foolish, and Khrushchev went one further: 'Look at me!' he exclaimed. 'Here am I, a simple Communist. I worked with my hands. I never went to school. You great gentlemen went to the best schools in the world. You are trained professionals. And yet I make rings round you. Tell me why!'

Nobody cared to tell him why. Nobody cared to remind him that he had also made rings round such tough and polished performers as Malenkov and Molotov and Zhukov, quite uninhibited by considerations of diplomatic protocol, and fighting for their very lives. Nobody cared to tell him by what arts he had risen in four short years after graduating from the Lenin Industrial Academy to be political boss of Moscow. Nobody cared to ask him in what school he had learnt to make friends in order to liquidate them. Perhaps, if they had, he would have paraphrased Castruccio, Prince of fourteenth-century Lucca, Machiavelli's hero: 'I do not liquidate old friends; I liquidate new enemies.'

He was right about not going to school; but he has made up for it since. He was born in 1894 in Kalinovka, a poor village near Kursk not far from the Ukrainian border. Kalinovka has since been made into a model village, embodying all Khrushchev's

agricultural reforms. His father was a coal-miner under the Tsar; but the name Khrushchev is an old and aristocratic Ukrainian name: serfs often used to take their master's name, so Nikita Sergeievich may well be a descendant of serfs on the Khrushchev estates. Certainly his childhood must have been as hard as it is possible to imagine. Perhaps if he had not risen high he would have been a man with a chip on his shoulder. But from quite early days he seems to have been determined to rise high.

After being a shepherd-boy and then learning to be a locksmith he was swept up by the Revolution. He was then twenty-three. Like most peasant Russians he could not read or write. He had never played at revolutionary politics, and it is not clear why he was not conscripted into the Imperial Army. It was not until 1918 that he joined Lenin's Bolsheviks, and then he did fight, it is said, in the civil war. He also discovered ambition in himself and certain qualities necessary to sustain it. One of these qualities was far-sightedness, another was leadership. The latter became apparent almost at once; the former was always there but was not generally realized for many years.

The first thing he had to do was to put himself to school. He worked with his hands by day and attended night-classes. He joined the local Party organization and, in a time of chaos, became a leading spirit. So much so that, at thirty-five, this rough, uncouth, shrewd, entertaining, convivial, and immensely talkative 'character', a Prole of the Proles, was sent up to the Moscow Industrial Academy. By the time he passed out in 1931 he was bossing the Academy Party organization and had been noticed in high places. He has been bossing people ever since.

These were bad years for the talkative. Stalin was clamping down; and as year followed year people talked less and less and were more and more careful of what they said – especially members of the Party – until, in the middle thirties, at the height of the great purges, nobody was saying anything at all. Nobody, apparently, except Nikita Khrushchev. I once asked a Russian, a Party member who knew a good deal about him, how so talkative a man had managed to keep quiet during all those years. He had *not* kept quiet! came the reply: he had always been a chatterbox. The only difference was that in those days what he said was not printed. He was allowed a great deal of

rope by Stalin because he was an invaluable man, and he had a sixth sense which told him just how far he could safely go. Certainly the recorded impressions of a man like MacDuffie, the UNRRA official responsible for provisioning the Ukraine after the war, when Khrushchev was boss in Kiev, bear this out. Khrushchev talked to MacDuffie with a freedom and an authority which no other Soviet chieftain at that time would have dreamt of showing in front of a visiting foreigner. As lord of the Ukraine he talked just as he talks today as lord of the USSR: Stalin might not have existed. And yet, when the occasion called for it, Khrushchev could crawl to Stalin with the best of them. Listen to him addressing a meeting in 1937 to rally opinion behind Stalin on the occasion of the first of the great show trials of the 'Trotskyites':

> These miserable nonentities wanted to destroy the unity of the Party and the Soviet State. . . . They raised their treacherous hands against Comrade Stalin. . . . Stalin – our hope; Stalin – our desire; Stalin – the light of advanced and progressive humanity; Stalin – our will; Stalin – our victory!

Nobody, as far as is known, got up to remind Khrushchev of that speech, and others like it, when he turned on his late master at the 20th Party Congress just nineteen years later.

It seems to have been Kaganovich, for long Stalin's right hand, who first discovered Khrushchev – as he also discovered Bulganin. Kaganovich in 1931 was Party chieftain of Moscow. The old-guard Bolsheviks were being edged out in preparation for their physical extinction a few years later, and Stalin needed new operators, who were practical and tough. Kaganovich took Khrushchev into the Moscow Party office on the old Bolshaya Dmitrovka, one of the two main forcing houses (the Leningrad office was the other) for future Party leaders. Bulganin at that time, also under Kaganovich's patronage, became Chairman of the Moscow Soviet, or Mayor of Moscow. And it is worth remembering that Malenkov, nearly ten years younger than Khrushchev, and with his bourgeois background, was already firmly installed in Stalin's private office.

The young barbarian from Kalinovka was to move faster than

them all. Malenkov could read, and did read, Horace and Robert Burns; Bulganin, suave and well turned out, could talk economics and town-planning to the manner born with Western visitors; Khrushchev was in his twenties before he could read or write. But within three years of his Moscow appointment – by 1934 – he was on the Party's Central Committee. A year later he took over the Moscow Party apparatus from Kaganovich, who moved up and into the Kremlin. He was now forty-one and held one of the key posts in the Party hierarchy, with virtual certainty of promotion to the Politburo fairly soon. That promotion came four years later, after Khrushchev had proved himself to Stalin, not as Kaganovich's valued lieutenant, but as a powerful figure in his own right, steering the Moscow Party machine through the holocaust of the great purges at the most critical time in the history of the régime since the collectivization, ten years earlier. His final assignment before he was taken into the supreme policy-making body was the most difficult one of all: he was sent to the Ukraine in 1938 to finish off the purges there and reorganize the administrative machinery. He did so well that immediately after his assumption into the Politburo he was sent back to Kiev as First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party to rule this vast land of forty million people, many imbued with a keen desire for separatism, all tougher and more independent-minded than the Great Russians – the most advanced part of the Soviet Union, its granary as well as its chief industrial base.

He was still there when the Germans came in the summer of 1941, and during the war, whether organizing partisan armies or visiting the regular fronts, he was out of Moscow more often than not. When the Germans were driven out, he went back to Kiev to supervise the work of reconstruction, to smash the then powerful and active separatist guerillas, who engaged large regular formations of the Soviet Army and Beria's militarized police for several years, to see the Ukraine through the famine caused by the disastrous crop-failure in 1946, and, not least, to Sovietize, by enforced collectivization and all other means, the population of the new Western lands taken from Poland.

During all this time, right up until his final return to Moscow

in 1950, three years before Stalin's death, Khrushchev was virtually unknown to the West. Even those (I include myself) whose business was to know about him underrated him completely. The main reasons for this, looking back, were his uncouthness, remarkable in a land which was trying hard to become 'respectable'; the fact that he had spent so long away from the Kremlin ante-rooms; finally, when he did turn up in Moscow, the spectacular failure of a gigantic scheme for agricultural reorganization which he was allowed to put forward as his own in the days when everything was done in Stalin's name.

Malenkov, Beria, Zhdanov, and Molotov: these were the names to conjure with in the first post-war years – above all Malenkov, whose only apparently serious rival, Zhdanov, conveniently died in 1948: Malenkov whose whole career had been made in the very centre of power, always at Stalin's elbow. It seemed in the highest degree unlikely that such a born and cultivated schemer, with all the strings in his hands, need think twice about the man in the cloth-cap and the flapping trousers from the Ukraine. He might have his work cut out to put down Molotov, immensely respected and very much his senior, or Beria. But how could a man with nothing but bluntness to recommend him come up from the country and barge his way into the innermost citadel of power to which Malenkov held all the keys?

Khrushchev did just this. In 1950 he began to make himself felt. His first job was the supervision and reorganization of Soviet agriculture at that time, in 1950, as for many years before, in a state of catastrophic neglect. In a later chapter we shall consider Khrushchev's agricultural reforms in more detail. The point to be made now, in connexion with this astonishing man's climb to supreme power, is that his agricultural appointment looked like the kiss of death. It was exactly the job to give a man whom it was considered desirable to break. But Khrushchev was not broken. His first major task, the amalgamation of small collective farms to make much larger units, went well enough, without as far as is known having any immediate effect on production. His second campaign, which was peculiarly his own (and which he is now beginning to revive) ended in a fiasco: this was his attempt to break up the old villages and

resettle the peasants in brand-new *agrogoroda*, or Agri-towns, replete with all modern amenities, including up-to-date administrative and police headquarters. Given the conditions of the time, it was about as lunatic an idea as it was possible to conceive. It flopped, as it had to flop (there was no way of building the towns: there was nothing to build them with), and Malenkov publicly jeered at it. It was now clear that there had come into existence an intense rivalry between these two men; and it was hard to see how Malenkov could fail to win.

But Stalin was backing Khrushchev, perhaps as a counterweight to Malenkov, who, he may have thought, was collecting too much power. At the 19th Party Congress, held in October 1952, it was Khrushchev, not Malenkov (then senior Party Secretary after Stalin), who was given the task of reforming the Party statutes. And he went at it with the spirit of a revivalist. The Party, he declared, had become corrupted by bureaucracy and careerism. It had lost its drive and its purity. Both must be restored and examples would have to be made, if necessary, of the most high and mighty.

This, with Stalin on the platform, was a scarcely veiled attack on Malenkov, who, since Zhdanov's death, had been master of the Party apparatus and, at the same time, as already observed, had been increasingly favouring the new class of apolitical managers and technocrats at the expense of the professional Party functionaries: he had first bid for the support of these as far back as 1939, when he had declared at the 18th Party Congress that many outside the Party were 'better Bolsheviks' than many inside. The lines of the Malenkov–Khrushchev clash were now clearly marked. It was to be a clash between the new managerial class and the Party apparatus as such. Something very queer, and still unexplained, was going on behind the scenes before the 1952 Congress. Since the previous Congress in 1939 the Soviet Union had been governed by Stalin, the half-dozen Secretaries of the Central Committee, and the small Politburo, usually about twelve strong, which, with rare casualties, had been virtually self-perpetuating. Now the Politburo was replaced by a much larger Presidium; and into the Presidium were brought a number of tried Party chieftains from the Republican and provincial Party organizations. It was as

though Stalin, now seventy-three and taking no active part in the Congress, was trying to curtail the power of his strongest colleagues.

Then came the 'doctors' plot', with its threat of new and disastrous purges. It is fascinating, but useless, to speculate about who was behind the plot, and who were its intended victims: there are so many possible permutations and combinations. It came to nothing because Stalin suddenly died, in March 1953; and the plotters and their victims closed ranks immediately, declaring that the so-called plot had been a frame-up (which it clearly had been: but by whom, against whom?), releasing the venerable doctors accused of wholesale poisoning, and making scapegoats of certain prominent members of Beria's Security forces.

Looking back, it is easy enough to see how the estimates of Khrushchev's character went wrong (I am still thinking of the days when he was unknown in the West). The long apprenticeship in the provinces should have shown us that here was a man who knew the Soviet Union at grass-roots level and had a passion for organization. The swift rise, when he finally came to Moscow at a period of extreme danger for all Party officials of any prominence, showed that he was either a most polished yes-man, or else an intriguer and cool-headed calculator of formidable power: we knew that he was not a polished yes-man. The viceregal position in the Ukraine should have shown us that he was a man who preferred the substance of power to the shadow, the born boss with a strong turn of independence. And when he came back to Moscow in 1950 and started hectoring the peasants and talking to them like a Dutch Uncle (in his own name, not Stalin's), instead of thinking of him as a clumsy exhibitionist who was riding for a fall, who was being encouraged to ride for a fall, we should have seen him as the unthinkable exception that proved the rule – as the one Soviet boss in the shadow of Stalin who did not mind publicly assuming responsibility for his own actions, and who was bold and confident enough, perhaps reckless enough too, not to care what others said of him. It seems quite evident now that his long absences from Moscow, from Stalin's ante-rooms, were a source of strength, not of weakness. In the Ukraine he had learnt to fend for himself, and

his character was not sapped, day in day out, by the exigent demands of the Great Leader in the next room.

All these qualities, and others since made evident, add up to a formidable sum. It seemed in the highest degree unlikely that the Soviet Union would, the moment Stalin died, throw up another leader of remotely comparable calibre. But this is just what the Soviet Union has done.

It did not look like that in 1955 when, with Malenkov dethroned, but still very much in being, and still a member of the Presidium, Khrushchev took the reins into his own hands and, first in Belgrade, then in Geneva, then in Delhi and Rangoon, always with Bulganin in tow, always with Mikoyan at his elbow, burst upon the world's astonished gaze. He drank too much; he talked too much; he was indiscreet; he lacked dignity; he clowned. Sometimes he bullied. But the general effect at first, and from a distance, was of a man who could not last. Close to the effect was different. I have no doubt at all that the Belgrade clowning, though partly due to high spirits, partly to ignorance of foreign manners, was calculated to mislead: Khrushchev was determined, even at a cost, even at the risk of not being taken seriously to begin with, to dissociate himself entirely from the dark Terror from which he had sprung. But, speaking personally, on one occasion during the Yugoslav visit I had occasion to watch him and listen to him when he was not on public exhibition – talking in a very small room to the management of a Ljubljana factory. The transformation of the man was total. All the clowning fell from him like a cloak. Here was a little man of immense natural authority, his mind given entirely to the matter under discussion (how to run a turbine-factory), talking quietly and with extreme lucidity, and listening, listening with total concentration for just long enough to grasp each new point, and then docketing the point and passing quickly on. As he sat there he showed himself as one of those men, very rare, who have the power of perfect detachment and perfect concentration, not giving out, but taking in – until, like a born commander, he was ready to give out. After that experience I found it never again possible to see the characteristic, ebullient, and noisy Khrushchev without being acutely conscious of the still centre of the man who knew what he wanted and was getting it.

CHAPTER 3

New Policies: New Methods

1

WHAT was it that Khrushchev wanted? First of all, of course, he wanted power. But the whole course and tenor of his career, and the general bias of his character as lately revealed to us, suggests consistently and strongly that he was not one of those who sought power for the sake of power: he wanted power obviously because he liked it (nobody who does not like power need have it), but, still more, because he needed it in order to get certain things done. And there seems to me no doubt that what he wanted done was nothing less than the transformation of the Soviet Union into a prosperous and enlightened society, always within the framework of the Leninist idea, fit to hold up her head in the company of other prosperous and enlightened countries: more than this, to surpass all others. This, at least, is the general direction of Khrushchev's movement since he made his first major declaration as acting First Secretary of the Communist Party in October 1953, with Malenkov still Prime Minister. Wise after the event, we can now see that this was his general direction when he came back from Kiev to Moscow to regenerate Soviet food production in 1950. Progress has not been even, and there have been sharp backslidings, but, over the years, it has been steady enough. In 1955 I published a book about Russia since Stalin which had as its sub-title 'The Emerging Pattern'. It is not too soon, I think, to record that the pattern has now emerged. It is Khrushchev's pattern.

We may never know, and it is profitless to discuss, whether Malenkov or Khrushchev set the pace when it came to inaugurating the great reforms which have distinguished the post-Stalin era. Malenkov is frequently presented as the man who wanted to move fastest; but there is no hard evidence of this. It was under his premiership that the silent debunking of Stalin began, as distinct from the formal enumeration of some of his crimes; that Beria, the police chief, was arrested and executed; that the

virtual autonomy of the Security police was abolished, and their sad and evil organization brought to heel; that the slave labour camps were largely done away with; that striking concessions were made to the peasants; that the Soviet leadership started civilizing its contacts with the outside world (the signal for this, it may be remembered, was when Malenkov presented a bunch of flowers, picked in his own garden by his own hands, to Dr Edith Summerskill); that the emphasis of economic propaganda was switched from heavy industry to the manufacture of consumer goods. It was under his premiership that the intellectuals, above all the writers, of the Soviet Union, celebrated with such remarkable abandon the first Thaw – and it was under his premiership that they were first checked. It was Malenkov, as Prime Minister, who committed himself to the view that a nuclear war would mean the annihilation of civilization everywhere; and it was Khrushchev as First Secretary who contradicted him and said it would mean only the annihilation of capitalism. The unfortunate Imre Nagy, who was later shot when Khrushchev was supreme, found an early champion in Malenkov, and when Malenkov was deposed from the premiership in 1955, Nagy, then Hungarian Prime Minister, also fell. Malenkov charmed Britain with his poise and address and flexibility when he came to London in May 1956. Khrushchev irritated Britain two months later by his lack of all these things, and by his behaviour at the celebrated dinner given by the Parliamentary Labour Party. Malenkov could quote Burns and Horace. Khrushchev could not. And so on.

But none of these things seem to me to prove anything – beyond the fact that both Malenkov and Khrushchev are first-class politicians, the latter rather more first-class than the former. And, against the general idea of Malenkov as a benevolent reformer, we must set his known career. He was, as we have seen, closely and actively associated with the killings more than any individual outside the Security Police.

What is important, however, is that the post-Stalin reforms, or some of them, were inevitable. The problem facing the new leadership, collective or individual, was how to massage life back into the numbed limbs of society, how to encourage the new vitality to express itself and fructify, and how, at the same

time, to keep it within bounds, so that the whole elaborate edifice of administration was not swept away. And it seems to me that Khrushchev survived because he, more than any of his colleagues, proved himself equal to this task. The initial concessions to the peasants, the promise to reform the judicial code, the curtailing of the powers of the police – all these, and more besides, we may see as the outcome of collective decisions, meaning compromise decisions, on the part of Stalin's heirs. They were all part, however, of a general loosening-up process without direction. It was Khrushchev, while Malenkov was still Prime Minister, who first indicated a genuine movement forward. Until he began to assert himself, as First Secretary of the Party, the leadership was effectively in retreat: it was making concessions perhaps because some or all of its members believed in them, certainly to win time and popularity. So that when Khrushchev began to speak, indicating future tasks of extreme difficulty and stressing the all-important role of a regenerated Communist Party in tackling these tasks, his intervention had a reactionary look about it: but only to the superficial view. In fact it was a dazzling mixture of private Kremlin politics and national statesmanship in the grand manner. The private politics were concerned with Khrushchev's personal rivalry with Malenkov and his supporters; the national statesmanship was concerned with subduing the resistance of the old Stalinists (e.g. Molotov and Kaganovich) to necessary reforms and getting those reforms started on a tremendous scale.

The first task Khrushchev addressed himself to was the revival of the Communist Party. It will be remembered that even before Stalin's death, at the 19th Party Congress, he had proclaimed that such a revival was overdue. Now he set about it in earnest. There were many in the West who took the resurrection of militant Leninism seriously: some still do. But, again speaking personally, the new emphasis on revolutionary zeal struck me from the beginning, immediately after Stalin's death, as a matter of expediency rather than conviction. The new masters of the Soviet Union lacked moral authority. Stalin was dead and they were glad to forget him. But Stalin had ruled the Soviet Union by native cleverness and sheer force of will. He had, through the years, manufactured his own overwhelming

authority; but he had shared it with nobody and he had bequeathed it to nobody. The new leaders were neither rulers elected by the people nor the Lord's anointed. They were nothing. The first thing they had to do, collectively, was to invoke an authority above themselves, and that authority could only be Lenin, for long a golden legend, his real personality obscured and romanticized by all those millions who looked back with longing to the brave days of revolutionary hope.

So the ghost of Lenin was paraded, much larger than life. The ghost of Lenin, obviously, could speak only through the Party which he had created and which, for better or for worse, must carry on his tradition. All the leaders invoked Lenin: those, like Molotov, who mourned for Stalin; those, like Beria, who must at the very least have been pondering the possibilities of a *coup d'état*; those, like Malenkov, who were associating themselves increasingly with the increasingly bourgeois spirit of the New Class. Also Khrushchev: Khrushchev, as Party Secretary, more than anyone. And this necessary and inevitable lip-service to Lenin and the Party played into Khrushchev's hands: he was proposing to *be* the Party, and to demand for it something more than lip-service into the bargain.

This is how it seemed to me in 1953, and this is how it seems to me now. I have never thought of Khrushchev as a revolutionary zealot; I have always thought of him as a supreme politician, a first-class manager of men and a human dynamo. He chose the Party as his instrument and proceeded to reforge it. It was a discredited Party, and dead; but through its organizational network, paralleled only by the organizational network of the Police, an individual who knew what he wanted to do could reach out to every town and village in the land, to every factory, to every farm. The Ministerial bureaucracy and the New Class of managers and technocrats certainly contained more men of natural ability, initiative, and drive – to say nothing of responsibility – than the vast Party apparatus; but they lacked cohesion as a force. The only other possible alternative forms of government were a police dictatorship under Beria or a military dictatorship under Marshal Zhukov. We know what happened to Beria. As for the Army, it is very doubtful whether it could be said to exist as a unified political force: there are,

and were, too many bitter rivalries among the Marshals and the Generals, and some of these would also, for reasons of their own, have supported the Party against their own colleagues.

So Khrushchev's choice of an instrument was a wise and a logical one. It had everything he needed, always provided that he could make it work.

The Communist Party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is not an abstraction. It is a body of men and women. At the time of Stalin's death it contained six million members out of a total population of over 200 million. In addition to the Party itself there is the *Komsomol*, this at the time of Stalin's death having 18 million members between the age of sixteen and twenty-eight.

The Party was described by Lenin as the Vanguard of the Proletariat. Its job was to do the thinking and provide the leadership for the politically illiterate, and also to educate more and more of the illiterate so that they too should come to swell the ranks of the Party. There was a time when it did just this. In the beginning every Party member was a devotee, if not a fanatic, eagerly accepting the crushing disciplines imposed upon him by his own elected leaders, and living wholly at the Party's service for little reward. But even before the death of Lenin in 1924 men with a taste for organization, men seeking a career 'open to the talents', men of ambition, were joining the Party for reasons other than political idealism or revolutionary zeal. It had become the only gateway to high place.

Immediately after Lenin's death this process was accelerated. In the process of building up his own position and packing the Party with people who could be relied upon to support him, Stalin, as First Secretary and very much at grips with Trotsky, proclaimed the so-called 'Lenin Levy'. This was in effect a mass enrolment of new members designed to swamp Stalin's opponents. Thus at the 12th Party Congress in 1923 membership stood at 386,000; a year later, at the 13th Congress, it had risen to 735,881. By 1929, with Stalin supreme and preparing to liquidate his senior colleagues, this figure had doubled: there were 1,551,288 Party members.

The next development was a most astonishing change in the composition of the membership. Between 1930 and 1934 the

Party ceased to be a workers' organization. In 1930 actual workers formed nearly 49 per cent of the membership; in 1934 this proportion, as reflected in the Party Congress, had dropped to 9·3 per cent. Hand in hand with this went the virtual monopolizing of the Party by the rising boss class. Thus in 1923 only 23 per cent of all the factory directors in the Soviet Union were Party members. By 1936 the figure was close on 100 per cent. And so it went on, until in the year of the German invasion of Russia there were nearly three million Party members, most of them engaged in administration of one kind and another.

The war changed things somewhat. The new idea was to broaden the base of the Party by trying to include in it everyone, men and women, who fought well in the war or did outstanding service behind the lines. A very great many of these were killed. But, even so, in 1947 total membership stood at 6,300,000. When we reflect that the old Party had been almost wiped out by Stalin during the purge years of the middle thirties, that Party functionaries all down the line were used regularly and deliberately as scapegoats for the mistakes and excesses of the higher leadership, it is clear that the post-war Party was very different from the body through which Stalin climbed to supremacy and had not the faintest resemblance to the original Party of Lenin. Consider, for a moment, what happened at the top during the purge years. In 1934, before the purges, the newly elected Central Committee consisted of seventy-one individuals. When the 18th Congress assembled in 1939 it transpired that of these seventy-one nine had been executed, twelve declared 'enemies of the people' (almost certainly executed), and twenty-four had simply vanished without a word and without a trace (either executed or sent to Siberia). Of the sixty-eight candidate members elected in 1934, by 1939 fourteen had been executed, two had committed suicide, nine had been declared 'enemies of the people', and thirty-four had vanished. Thus, out of a total of 139 full members and candidate members elected in 1934 *only 35 had survived.* The rest had been liquidated, in violence.

Obviously the heaviest casualty-rate occurred among the men towards the top; but the same sort of thing happened all down the line. To dwell on this terrible and shabby history for a moment is not to suggest that the past is not past: it is necessary

because it has a direct bearing on the present. Those who survived were not the best men and women: these, just because they had qualities of independence and honour, were the first to go. Those who survived were the men and women who had the highest talent for self-preservation; and, although there are exceptions, in times of fearful stress self-preservation depends as a rule on the less admirable qualities: sycophancy and hypocrisy, corruptibility, cunning and plain viciousness. It is not too much to say that many of those who survived the purges of the middle thirties, to say nothing of the less spectacular purges of the post-war years, corrupt and cunning yes-men, that is to say, or men and women without an idea in their heads – Bolshevik Blimps, in a word – had risen to high positions in the Party which Khrushchev took over after Stalin's death. It was thus no longer a Party of idealists. It was a Party of careerists and moral dead-beats.

It is necessary to distinguish between two sorts of Party member. The first kind, the minority, are the full-time Party functionaries. These, like Khrushchev, like Malenkov, like a hundred thousand lesser men, start their Party careers as a rule by showing talent for administration and leadership in the Party organization of the factory, the ministry, the *kolkhoz*, the university or institute in which they are employed. They are then taken up and given special training and sent back to do full-time Party work in the provinces. There they rise, some remaining in one place most of their lives; others being shifted about from province to province, from town to town, as the need arises; others, the select few, being chosen, perhaps quite early in their careers, perhaps only after achieving great powers in the provinces, for the great key organizations in Moscow or Leningrad or Kiev. The Party, in a word, is their life; but the Party for most of them is a great administrative nexus rather than the repository of revolutionary faith. They are the very type of 'organization man'. Their organization reaches from the Presidium and the Secretariat of the Central Committee at the apex to the individual cell of a handful of members in the factory shop, the *kolkhoz*, or the bureaucratic department. The chief man on every level of the organization is the Secretary – the First Secretary on the higher levels, which run to more than

one. Under the system of 'democratic centralism' the central organizations have absolute control over all the lower organs.

First, below the Centre, come the Republican organizations. Each Republic consists of a number of Regions (*oblasts*); within the Region are the urban (*gorod*) and the rural (*raion*) organs. Within the urban and rural organizations are the cells, known as the primary organs, with an average membership of about twenty. The primary organs are the grass-roots, and all Party members belong to one of them, getting their orders from the full-time urban or rural secretaries.

The rank-and-file, non-professional, membership is something other. It is a cross-section of the more able elements of the country. As we have seen, virtually all factory directors are Party members – so are most Army officers; university professors; departmental managers in the ministries – and now in the National Economic Councils; police officers; collective-farm managers; writers; engineers – the élite of the Soviet Union. The full-time Party functionaries, the *apparatchiki*, thus, form the governing class; the rest form what is in effect the new Soviet bourgeoisie. This is not what Lenin had in mind.

Parallel with the Party organization is the constitutional pyramid of Soviets, already described, with, at the apex, the Supreme Soviet of the Union and the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities: the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union is commonly known as the President of the USSR and is thus titular head of State. Below the Supreme Soviets extend a series of gradually diminishing local Soviets – from the Republic to the village. Under Stalin the Supreme Soviets were reduced to the function of rubber-stamping the decisions of the Party leadership; but the local Soviets took a fairly active part in local administration on the lines laid down by the relevant Party secretary. Technically it has always been the task of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to appoint the chiefs of the various Ministries responsible for running the country in all its multifarious activities; but in fact they were appointed by Stalin, and the most important among them were also high-ranking Party leaders. Be that as it may, all the way down the scale the relevant Party secretary 'guided' the work of all the executives, whether factory directors or professors,

in his command. In the armed forces, too, Party secretaries in uniform, called various names at various times, 'guided' the work of the regular officers. 'Guided' meant 'controlled'. When in 1931 Molotov became Prime Minister – that is to say, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, as the Council of Ministers was then called – he made a speech in which he said that his sole task was to carry out with loyalty and devotion the directives of the Party. The Party in that context meant technically the Politburo, of which Molotov himself was a senior member: practically it meant Stalin, who, for whatever reason, did not see fit to assume the premiership himself until the eve of the German invasion.

If this seems a complicated set-up it is not my fault. It is only complicated on paper; in fact it is painfully simple. The central organs of the Party dictate. Their directives are transmitted down the line and enforced by subordinate organs. The Soviets and the Council of Ministers carry out the directives as best they can. There are signs today of the beginnings of change; but these can be left for a later chapter.

What was Khrushchev to do – always assuming that he wanted power to carry out certain reforms? The power lay in the Party apparatus, once the Police had been subdued. But the sort of men he needed to help him carry out his reforms in the spirit in which they were intended were as often as not non-Party men or, at most, lip-service members. For just as a certain type of careerist had for years gravitated into active Party work – and this in spite of the fearful risks involved – so the more independent minded, men of initiative and resolution, men of high technical skills, men interested above all in making and doing, men who regarded with contempt the blighting rigidities of Party discipline, had tended to avoid Party work (although most joined the Party as a matter of expediency) and to employ themselves in industry, in engineering, building, mining, or transportation – in anything which would give them a chance to develop their creative abilities or their talent for handling men on the job.

Khrushchev needed these. But it should not be thought that every Soviet engineer or industrialist who was not an active Party worker was on the side of the angels. On the contrary.

We may speak broadly of a New Class in the Soviet Union; but the New Class has many varieties. And when Stalin died, for every able individual at work in the management strata of Soviet society who wanted, above all, to see a better life for the country as a whole, there were ten who did not care – provided their own lives were made better. Some of the most stubborn opposition to the new Government's schemes for betterment was to come not only from the second-raters in the Party apparatus but also from the apolitical managers and industrial bureaucrats who had staked out useful claims for themselves and regarded with dismay what they regarded as a dangerous movement towards the relaxation of labour discipline, towards putting ideas above their station into the heads of the workers. For the Soviet Union is now officially divided into two classes: the intelligentsia (including responsible office workers) and the working class (including the peasants). The attitude of the bulk of the white collar class to the manual labourers is very like the attitude of the upper and middle classes in Victorian England to the rabble. To hear the way some charming young woman, daughter of an Army general or a high official or a big industrialist, speaks of the masses makes the blood run cold. And the situation resembles the situation in Victorian England even more closely than the official divisions suggest. For in fact there are more than two classes. There is a distinct upper class of the very highly privileged, who live so closely to themselves that they are scarcely seen in public. There is an upper middle class of the highly prosperous engaged in constructive work. There is a vast lower middle class of white collar workers. There are the factory workers, themselves highly differentiated. There are the unskilled urban workers of various categories. And there are the peasants. These classes are still fluid; but the movement between them is beginning to slow down as society, without constant purges, without the ever-present threat of the labour-camp, begins to stabilize itself, and as the children of the well-to-do grow up in increasing numbers to demand as their right their parents' inheritance. All this stems from Stalin's deliberate introduction of sharp incentives and wage differentials as far back as 1931, when he surprised the world by condemning the egalitarian ideal as a 'petty-bourgeois' conception. . . .

In a word, there are large numbers of the privileged and well to-do in the Soviet Union who have a strong vested interest in the *status quo* – as in every other country. Khrushchev has to take these into account. Further, because much of the outstanding ability of the Soviet Union is concentrated in their ranks, he has to use them.

His first task was to take the firmest possible grip of the Party *as it existed:* this involved, among other things, promoting his own most loyal and trusted supporters to key positions throughout the country and offering special inducements to others so that they would rally to his side. His second task was to appeal to the creative imagination of all Party functionaries who possessed this quality and give them a chance to use it: this killed two birds with one stone, bringing out the talents and drive of those who had it in them and encouraging Party secretaries everywhere to take a more active part in the supervision of every sphere of activity within their parishes. His third task was to break the industrial bureaucracy, in so far as it was a cohesive force with its own vested interests, and strengthen the Party apparatus *vis-à-vis* the State bureaucracy: this he achieved by the so-called decentralization of industry, the substitution of the great centralized industrial ministries by regional Economic Councils, or *Sovnarkhozy*, distributed throughout the Union. His fourth task, now that he had the strength, was to scotch all dangerous opposition to his person and his policies at the top: having done this with the victory over Malenkov and Molotov, he could then turn on Marshal Zhukov and re-establish strong and detailed Party control of the armed forces. His fifth task, and the one in which he is still engaged at the moment of writing, is to transform the whole aspect of the Party, of which he is now master, by introducing into high Party offices all over the country men who have proved themselves in industry, engineering, science, agriculture, etc., while, at the same time, working out a new balance between Party and State machines.

While all this has been going on he has been fighting incessantly and with imagination to revolutionize Soviet agriculture and bring about a radical increase in food production. More recently, he has taken important steps towards raising the living standards of the very poor and the pensioners, making life

better for the peasants, increasing the amenities of life in the towns, and tackling with determination the appalling housing shortage.

The interesting thing is that with all this, and with all his efforts to move among the people, talk to them, and make himself known to them, Khrushchev has still not achieved general popularity and respect. Life in the Soviet Union has been transformed, has been improved almost out of recognition in the past five years. This improvement has been due more to Khrushchev than to any other individual; and it has been achieved with surprisingly few tears. Yet Khrushchev is still a suspect figure.

2

The reasons for this distrust are several, and they vary with the different kinds of people. In the first place Khrushchev has given Soviet society a thoroughgoing shake-up, and people rarely like being shaken up. He has upset and offended at one time and another almost every group in the Soviet Union except for the very poor. In the second place, with all this activity, more often than not high-handed rather than ruthless, he has not made himself respected. He talks too much; he used to drink too much; he lacks dignity *vis-à-vis* the outside world (though, in fact, when relaxed and assured he can assume a remarkable natural dignity); he clowns in public; he has committed monumental blunders; he is widely thought to be insufficiently aloof and withdrawn to be the fit ruler of the mighty Soviet State. For most Russians, in spite of the hot denials of refugees and 'defectors', have a deep hankering after a stern, remote father-figure, standing high above the hurly-burly of ordinary life. If he is terrible and cruel they will still respect him even as they hate him, as witness the ambivalence of their feelings about Stalin: Stalin may have been the most terrible man-eater in the world; but at least he was *our* man-eater! One of the most interesting aspects of the reactions to Khrushchev's attack on Stalin was the exaggerated impact of that part of his speech which dealt with Stalin's shortcomings as a war-leader, at any rate among the young. The recital of Stalin's crimes against his one-time colleagues and subordinates they took more or less in

their stride: of course we all knew that terrible things were going on; but, nevertheless, he was a great and strong man, and we needed a great man! If I have been told that once by a young *komsomol*, I have been told it twenty times. On the other hand, the revelation that this great man had failed abjectly in the early days of the war was almost too much to bear; and even today it is the thing that rankles most.

In considering Khrushchev's standing among his own people it has to be remembered that life in the Soviet Union was beginning to improve even before Stalin's death, especially for the better-off. The panic produced by the 'doctors' plot' was almost at once forgotten. And all that the millions of comparatively comfortably situated individuals (as opposed to the tens of millions who were still very badly off indeed) asked of Stalin's successors was that they should go on making life *more* comfortable more quickly for *them*. The last thing they wanted was to surrender hardly-won privileges to make life easier for the masses.

Soviet society in 1953 was corrupt. All societies in which the demand for goods and services greatly exceeds the supply become more or less corrupt; but in few countries has the black market been developed into such an all-embracing institution as it was in Stalin's Russia. Even the famous free markets for the peasants were, in effect, State-permitted black markets. And in no European country to my knowledge has the very survival of the individual depended so completely and over so long a period on active and incessant participation in rackets of every kind. The key-word, the most important word in the language, was *blat*. *Blat* stood – it still stands – for a peculiarly Russian mixture of spivvery and graft. It dominated the lives of tens of millions. For years it was impossible, without the necessary *blat*, to get a railway ticket from Kiev to Kharkov, to find accommodation in Moscow or Leningrad, to purchase a new valve for a wireless set, to find a man to mend a hole in the roof, to obtain an interview with a Government official.

There was plenty of straight bribery; there still is. Bribery more often in kind or special services rendered than cash. It is used above all for extracting favours from Government officials; for getting permission to live in one of the big cities; for

wangling idle or ungifted children into Moscow University; for evading postings to remote and inclement areas. But *blat* is much more complicated than bribery: it represents a way of life. To have *blat* means that you are in a position to give favours in return for favours received. In bad times, and in its crudest form, it may mean that you are well in with the storeman on a near-by collective, who will let you have two hundredweight of potatoes (earmarked for delivery to the State) in return for a word in the ear of some State or Party official; and with these potatoes you can feed yourself and buy all manner of badly needed things. On a much higher level it may mean that you can get a doctor to sign a certificate saying that you need a month's free holiday in the Crimea. What do you do in return? Not necessarily anything: the doctor simply feels that you are a useful person to be friendly with because you have a cousin in good standing in the Moscow Soviet.

It may be said that this sort of thing goes on everywhere; and so it does. What distinguished Russia under Stalin from other countries was that for many years it was the *only* way to get what was needed.

Out of *blat* grew 'speculation'. The hey-day of 'speculation' was after Stalin's death. Goods were still in desperately short supply, but they had begun to appear; and semi-professional speculators began to use every conceivable device to intercept what goods there were, like touts for Cup Final tickets, and redistribute them at a profit. The devices ranged from bribing factory employees to organizing phoney waiting-lists. And two or three years ago the 'speculation' racket reached such a pitch that, unless a busy citizen was prepared to stand in a queue all night for many nights, he had to buy from a 'speculator'. The 'speculators' formed, in effect, a sort of illicit retail network, offering infinitely quicker and better service than the official State shops – at a price. Their activities extended from motor-cars to books. And in recent years the Soviet Press has been full of the most fantastic rackets, revealed by the Government in its very determined campaign to stamp out 'speculation', which was making nonsense of the whole State distributive network.

Blat on a universal scale also ranged through the great industrial ministries and trusts. Here the hero was the Fixer, or

tolkach. Western observers have often wondered how on earth the monstrously over-centralized and over-planned industrial network managed to work at all. The answer is that the Fixer made it work – by short-circuiting the central bureaux and ignoring the planners. It is impossible to understand the Soviet industrial bureaucracy – or, indeed, Soviet life in general – without a fairly clear image of this hero of the *Krokodil* cartoons, this wholly illegal and yet officially tolerated figure, the very negation of the best aspirations of the régime, who, nevertheless, prospered through the régime and, in return, made it work.

Until Khrushchev's great industrial reorganization in the early summer of 1957 all production in the Soviet Union was controlled by more or less specialized production ministries, with their headquarters in Moscow: ministries for steel, for coal, for oil, non-ferrous metallurgy, chemicals, shipping, heavy machinery, medium machinery (a euphemism for atomic development), timber, electric power, electric power stations (Malenkov's province after his fall in 1955), machine tools, food production, agriculture, State farms, light industry, and so on and so on. These ministries became empires. The Minister for Steel Production, for example, controlled enterprise and output larger by far than any Krupp, larger by far than any individual steel tycoon in the United States or than the Chairman of the Iron and Steel Board in Britain. He was responsible for everything to do with steel production, and yet he was constantly vulnerable to the monstrous bottle-necks and failures of proper liaison inherent in the centralized planning system. He was responsible for fulfilling his Ministry's Plan and was committed *by law* to produce so many million tons of finished steel each year. His obvious course was to insulate his steel industry as completely as possible from the effects of all outside accidents and failures. And this he did. He found it expedient to manufacture much of his own specialized machinery, to build his own workers' houses, to develop his own transport networks – regardless of what his colleagues in other Ministries were doing. By the time of the Khrushchev reorganization it was possible to envisage a future in which the Minister of steel would be mining his own coal and building his own railways and his own river fleet in order to be entirely self-sufficient. And the same was true of other ministries.

Lower down the line the situation was even more chaotic. When it came to the directors of local trusts and factories their whole future depended on fulfilling their individual plans, and each was trying to make his organization self-sufficient. On the one hand this led to a motor-car factory making its own components, from lamps to carburettors, from windscreen-wipers to nuts and bolts; on the other hand it produced the mobile contact man, or Fixer, who arranged inter-ministry, inter-trust, inter-factory barter deals, cutting out the red tape, making hay of the central planners' calculations, and, at this level, working *against* their own headquarters in Moscow. There was hardly a trust or sizeable factory in the land that did not have a number of these Fixers on their pay-roll, entered as 'representatives' of the firm. This, in fact, was what they were, with the difference that one man might serve several trusts or factories. Perhaps the main task of the Fixer was to ensure the smooth delivery of raw materials, building materials, special machinery, vital components, and so on; and his ways were often devious. If a bicycle factory in Novgorod found its production, its Plan, threatened for want of inner tubes, the Fixer would know where to get those inner tubes without red tape. The proper channel would be for the factory director to request his trust to indent for the tubes through the Moscow Ministry, which would then contact the relevant tyre trust – and so on. The Fixer would cut across all that. He might arrange a straight barter deal with an individual tyre-factory: so many inner tubes in return for so many finished bicycles for the use of the tyre-factory workers. But that depended on the director of the tyre factory being in need of bicycles, which he probably was not. So the Fixer, in contact with fellow-Fixers, would discover that bicycles were badly needed by a cement works in the next town: most of its employees were housed in a settlement too far from the works for walking, and public transport existed only on paper. The bicycle factory had no interest in cement; but a neighbouring electric-cable factory was screaming for cement to complete a new range of buildings. Without the Fixers this would not seem to help very much. But it would take no time at all for an accomplished Fixer to discover that electric cable was just what the tyre factory needed most in the world, and in that case nothing could

be easier. The bicycles would go to the cement works; the cement would go to the cable factory; the cable would go to the tyre factory; the tyre factory would pay in tyres – which would go direct to the bicycle factory. . . . The circle was complete; and the cross-deal, involving four separate factories, would be arranged to the mutual satisfaction of everybody but the central planners, whose plans would be upset by the lateral diversion of products intended for quite different destinations. And yet even the central planners, the State Planning Commission itself, could not grumble too loudly; for without these informal arrangements production would have stopped or been slowed down while the various factories waited for the slow, creaking, ponderous machinery of the central bureaucracy to get to work, moving inner-tubes from A to B. Even Khrushchev, when he had some ironic words to say about the Fixers in the spring of 1957, did not denounce their activities with any real conviction. He did say, however, that one of the main reasons for his industrial reorganization was to obviate such anomalies. What did this reorganization amount to?

It involved the abolition of some thirty All-Union production Ministries, all based on Moscow, and the setting up in their place of 105 brand-new bodies called *Sovnarkhozy* on a regional basis. According to Khrushchev, the main object of this little revolution was rationalization. He gave hair-raising examples of waste and duplication arising from the operation in parallel of the great centralized ministries, each building its own empire. The debates which followed the promulgation of his Theses produced many more. To quote Khrushchev himself:

> The existing structure of the industrial and construction ministries is a multi-stage and complicated one. Ministries and departments exercising leadership from the centre over enterprises situated throughout the country inevitably accumulate round themselves numerous parallel organizations – various offices for sale and supply, depots, trusts, and so forth. The ministries have many different central administrations, departments, divisions. . . . The territorial central administrations in charge of enterprises in Siberia, Central Asia, the Far East, and other remote regions are, as a rule, situated in Moscow. . . . The workers of the ministrie are forced to spend much

time on inter-departmental correspondence . . . reports and memoranda. . . . The huge streams of paper coming from the ministries divert a large number of workers at enterprises from practical work. Many specialists are called to the centre from the regions . . . and spend months at the ministries.

Khrushchev concluded that the '200,000 industrial establishments and 100,000 construction sites' throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union could not be controlled efficiently from Moscow. The system had to be changed.

His new proposals were put forward in February 1957. They were first published in March of that year. From the beginning they were associated exclusively with Khrushchev and were known as the Khrushchev Theses. No other member of the Central Committee or the Council of Ministers put his name to them; and soon it was clear that it was over these proposals that Khrushchev had been fighting one of the most critical battles in his career. At the May session of the Supreme Soviet the Khrushchev Theses, with certain modifications, became law. The whole structure of the administration of production, covering the greater part of the vast industrial machine slowly built up since the early days of Stalin's first Five-year Plan nearly thirty years earlier, was to be torn down and rebuilt to an entirely new pattern. And the period Khrushchev allowed for this formidable undertaking was – seven weeks. . . . The job had to be completed by 1 July 1957. There was clearly something more than Khrushchev's normal ebullience behind this demand for speed at all costs. The obvious deduction was that he had met with heavy opposition from his colleagues and from the heads of the Ministries concerned, that he was now hustling his opponents, and that he could afford to give them no time to regroup. In fact, within a month of the Theses becoming law, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov were in disgrace and banished, and two of the leading technocrats in the Presidium of the Party were degraded – Pervukhin, head of the short-lived National Economic Commission, and Saburov, late head of the State Planning Committee.

It is impossible to treat industry and politics in the Soviet Union separately. On the face of it Khrushchev's Theses inaugurated a much overdue reform of an absurdly top-heavy

administrative machine. But it was not as simple as that. On the face of it the new regional authorities, the *Sovnarkhozy*, were to exploit and develop the industries of their separate regions as balanced units under the overriding control of a strengthened State Planning Commission. Thus the Chairman of each of the 105 Economic Councils would be virtual dictator of all the production of his region, from steel to salt, from diesel locomotives to kitchen chairs. Obviously no single region could hope to be entirely self-supporting and there would have to be a great deal of importing and exporting between regions. But at least the new system would put an end to such idiocies as the ships of the Ministry of Timber carrying timber up the Volga from Yaroslavl to Kuibyshev – and then returning empty, while the ships of the Ministry of Machine Construction carried machinery from Kuibyshev to Yaroslavl – and then returned, also empty.

The other objects of the revolution were to scatter the Moscow bureaucrats far and wide, to cut down paper-work, to compel the various industries to co-operate fruitfully. But even at the time the revolution had a political look about it. For example, if the regional division of the vast territory of the Soviet Union were to make sense at all from the economic point of view, the regions themselves would have to be large, and the boundaries drawn between the regions would have to be based mainly on economic considerations. Neither of these two conditions was fulfilled. The regions are not large, and their boundaries coincide almost invariably with the old provincial boundaries of Tsarist Russia.

We have to ask why. The answer, surely, is that the virtual ruler of each region is the Regional Party Secretary, appointed and controlled by the First Secretary in Moscow, by Khrushchev. And when he launched his Theses Khrushchev made it a special point that the local Party Secretaries must play a far more active part in the on-the-spot supervision of industrial production in their areas than ever before. The new Chairmen of the Economic Councils were all appointed by Moscow. In every case they were either local industrialists already used to working under the supervision of the local Party Secretary, or else men sent out from one or other of the dissolved Moscow

Ministries, strangers to their new abodes, and utterly dependent for support and guidance on the local Party organization.

In other words, at a single blow Khrushchev took control of industry away from the new managerial class, atomized the powerful bureaucratic concentration in Moscow, drastically reduced the Council of Ministers in size and in importance, and put the power into the hands of his own agents in 105 separate regions. Remembering that it was Malenkov who had tried to build up the power of the Council of Ministers and had put much of his trust in the support of the managerial class, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the Khrushchev Theses and the reforms proposed in them had at least as much to do with politics as with economics.

It was all, moreover, part of an unfolding pattern. Already in 1955, when Khrushchev was still primarily concerned with agriculture, he had made one of his bold moves to strengthen Party control in the countryside. Ostensibly in the interests of efficiency he had picked up no fewer than 6,000 Party functionaries from the towns and appointed them managers of collective farms. Six thousand urban administrators were sent out into the wilds and told to improve production and labour discipline by modern administrative techniques, regardless of the feelings and the prejudices of the practical farmers.

Even the celebrated Virgin Lands campaign was part of the same pattern. For when Khrushchev in 1954 announced his scheme to reclaim and put down to arable farming ninety million acres of virgin or waste agricultural land in Kazakhstan and South-Western Siberia he was concerned quite as much with establishing tight Party control over a newly settled area larger than the whole cultivated area of Britain, France, and Spain combined as with increasing food production. For this colossal operation, carried out by half a million 'volunteers' from the *Komsomol*, from the Army (whole units moved out to Siberia on completing their national service to start new settlements), and from the collectives themselves, was from the beginning centrally controlled. All the drive came from the Party supervisors, and the huge new farming units were organized on the lines not of the *kolkhoz*, with its old village traditions, but of the State Farm; not of co-operatives, with the members sharing

the profits in kind and cash, but of State enterprises, with the farm-workers paid as State employees, as in industry. And the fact that in the first years the scene of this huge gamble reminded one of nothing so much as the days of the covered wagon as American settlers opened up the West, with hundreds of thousands of men and women, mostly young, torn up from their roots and scattered over the vast steppe in tents, in primitive huts, in dug-outs, freezing through the long cruel darkness of the first winter, seared by the blazing summer sun as they toiled at the first giant harvest over an area the size of France – in spite of the almost unimaginably primitive aspect of the first harsh beginnings of this onslaught, what Khrushchev dreamed of was the day when these tented settlements in the steppe would be transformed into the first of his legendary *agrogoroda*, or agricultural townships, which sooner or later were to supersede everywhere the dark villages with their stubborn traditions and superstitions with a clean, well-regulated, antiseptic paradise.

3

Few people who do not know the Soviet Union well can have the faintest conception of living conditions in the remote villages and collectives. And the great majority of villages *are* remote. Even in the villages on the outskirts of Moscow and other great cities, now with television aerials sprouting from every roof-top, life is fairly primitive, except on a few model farms. Even the ten-day tourist visiting the Moscow markets must be aware, as he regards the bowed and wrinkled peasant women, the tottering old men, bringing in their produce of the private plots for free sale at free prices, that not many miles from the Dynamo Stadium and the lights of Gorki Street there must still exist another world not far removed from the world of Chekhov and Turgenev. These old men and women, in fact, are sent to market because they are too feeble for work in the fields, and the villages and farms they come from are usually prosperous by Soviet rural standards. But far from the cities, far from any main road or any railway, millions still exist in a world virtually untouched by the material progress of the twentieth century. The

Soviet Union is not the only country of astonishing contrasts; far from it. But the Soviet Union is the only country to my knowledge which, until 1953, officially pretended that such contrasts did not exist. It is only since Khrushchev became articulate that their existence has even been admitted; and Khrushchev is the first Soviet leader to tackle the appalling problem of 'the two nations': the new urban 'nation' educated by Stalin and brought, if by the roughest methods, to a comparatively high pitch of efficiency, and the old rural 'nation', oppressed, trampled into apathy, then deliberately neglected.

Very few in the West have even glimpsed that second nation: had it not been for certain war-time journeys I should never have glimpsed it myself. It consisted of half the population of the Soviet Union. Stalin's only interest in these unfortunates was that they should give up their young and able-bodied for the Army and the factories, and, no matter how wastefully or how painfully, produce just enough food to keep the towns going while staying alive themselves. But the legend of the mechanization of the countryside, propagated so brilliantly by films about tractors in the hey-day of the Soviet cinema, was hard to scotch. Stalin had not the least intention of mechanizing the farms on any considerable scale so long as the hands existed to wield sickles and scythes. There were machines in some quantity on the rich, rolling plains of the Black Earth zone, where farms were vast and fertility great. But the ordinary small collective in ordinary rural districts with poor to medium soil knew nothing of mechanization. The very term 'collective farm' produced a false image.

Before 1928 the rural unit was the village, usually a long, rambling street, immensely wide. The land surrounding the village was farmed partly by individual peasants, partly in common. There were rich peasants, medium peasants, and poor peasants. In each category there were good and bad men; but the land of the rich peasants was better farmed, and it was to these that the country would naturally have looked to develop modern agricultural practice. These, too, employers of labour, accumulators of petty riches, equally naturally formed the hard core of resistance to interference from Moscow.

Stalin decided to break them. He formed paper 'collectives'

and ordered all the peasants to join them, putting their land, their implements, their livestock into the common pool. The poor peasants, who had nothing to lose and nothing to give, obeyed. The rich and medium peasants resisted. These were the so-called *kulaks*. Stalin proceeded against them with total ruthlessness. All were forcibly dispossessed; many were killed; millions were banished to labour camps or to settle, homeless, in the remotest regions. This was the action which Stalin was later to confess to Churchill was more terrible and dangerous than the worst crises of the Second World War. It was made more terrible because it coincided with one of the most disastrous droughts in the history of Russia and the Ukraine. The peasants slaughtered their livestock and burnt their crops rather than surrender them to the new collectives, to Moscow. The land was untilled, unsown, unharvested over millions of derelict acres. The drought of 1930 hit what harvest there was. But Stalin insisted that the compulsory deliveries to the State should go on, even if the peasants starved. The peasants did starve in hundreds of thousands.

In 1928, ten years after the revolution, there were 70 million head of cattle, 26 million pigs, 146 million sheep and goats, and 33 million horses in the Soviet Union. In spite of the terrible depredations of war, revolution, civil war, and famine, the Russian peasants, uncollectivized, had caught up and surpassed the pre-revolutionary level of production. But in 1932 the 70 million cattle had fallen to 40 million, the 26 million pigs to 11 million, the 146 million sheep and goats to 52 million, the 33 million horses to 16 million. Nothing could summarize more sharply the catastrophic nature of the collectivization.

It was an enduring catastrophe. The survivors were the poorest of the poor, and the most inefficient farmers in a land where farming had always been slovenly and inefficient. Women, moreover, greatly outnumbered men, except very old men, and had to do most of the work: the men were in the factories or the towns. So there was no immediate recovery. Thirteen years after the beginning of the collectivization, in 1940, on the eve of the war, when Soviet agriculture for years had been cynically represented as the most 'progressive' and glorious in the world, and with the population steadily increasing, the farms of the

Soviet Union were still producing less than they had done in 1928. Industry had done wonders in a rough and ready manner; but food production had gone back disastrously – although still more than half the people were employed on the land. And, of course, the war put things back still further: cattle were slaughtered and starved in millions; the fields were neglected; there were no able-bodied men at all: years after the war it was still possible to pass through village after village without seeing an able-bodied male farm-worker. Also, during the war the collectivization broke down: many collectives simply vanished into thin air. It took the Politburo agricultural boss, A. A. Andreyev, Khrushchev's predecessor, several years and a great deal of quasi-military police action to wrest back the land which the peasants had 'stolen' from the collectives, or which the collective managers themselves had embezzled and sold to the peasants. Nothing of this came out. Everything was said to be going wonderfully well. Every propaganda picture had a team of tractors. But even in 1950 there were only 600,000 tractors in the whole of the Soviet Union, and most of these were useless because of bad maintenance and a lack of spares: there were 260,000 on the tiny fields of Britain at that time; 3,000,000 in the United States. In 1950 again, only 64,000 trucks and lorries for all purposes, including agriculture, were delivered in the Soviet Union. The figure for the United States was more than two million.

So much for the legend of a mechanized agriculture; so much for the image of the gay and prosperous collectives impressed on the world by a series of swindling films.

The final commentary was given by Khrushchev himself in his shattering speech on the state of agriculture a few months after Stalin's death. After decades in which every Soviet leader had boasted about the glories of Soviet agriculture (Khrushchev with them) and denounced with venom those Western commentators who persistently questioned their figures – either because they had seen with their own eyes, or because, boring through the mass of false statistics, presented always in percentages of unknown base figures (unknown unless you know how to go back far enough) – after all this, Khrushchev came out with the desolating truth, which confirmed almost exactly the lowest

estimates of Western investigators. On the question of cattle, for example, he admitted that in 1953 there were still 3·5 million cows fewer than there had been in 1941 and 9 million fewer than in 1928. Further, this could not be attributed to the war: in spite of recent claims about the rapid expansion of the livestock population, Khrushchev had to announce that in 1952 there had been a drop of two million head.

This admission was partly inspired by Kremlin politics: Khrushchev was already gunning for Malenkov, who, in his inaugural speech as Prime Minister, had stated that the Soviet Union now had all the grain it needed. But he was also in deadly earnest. There can be no doubt at all that Khrushchev for some time had been taking food production very seriously indeed. He had had his wild ideas, like the premature scheme for *agrogoroda*; but he had had his good schemes too. And for some time he had been laying immense stress on livestock breeding. It was not simply that the livestock population was scandalously low: the quality of the existing animals was shocking, and the milk yield per cow, the grain yield per acre, the egg yield per hen, added up to a national disgrace. Khrushchev's first emphasis was on proper feeding of animals: for this fodder and grain was needed in enormous quantities; but the Russian peasant at his best is not good at looking ahead, prefering to live hand to mouth, is slovenly and feckless when it comes to animal husbandry (or any kind of husbandry) and the installation and maintenance of buildings and machines. His ideas of farming are traditional (a bad tradition) and unimaginative; and the total absense of any incentive under Stalin meant, among other things, that provided he could feed himself and his family and produce just enough for the compulsory deliveries he had no further interest. The best way he knew to feed himself and his family was to cultivate intensely his own permitted 'private plot', with its few animals, who, as it were, lived in. The surplus from this he would sell on the free market if he lived anywhere near a town. On the collective fields he would put in the bare minimum of time or 'labour days'.

Khrushchev had to revolutionize this attitude. To do so he had first to improve conditions on the old collectives, which he

did; second to conduct rampaging campaigns for new techniques, which were less successful; third by model farms and exhibitions, and, simultaneously, by altering the wage structure, to prove that it would pay the individual to adopt his policies; fourth, by taking in vast areas of unused or neglected land, farming them with ranch techniques, to add to the supply of grain, above all of feeding-stuffs for animals, and to accustom the up-and-coming generations to a new kind of communal life divorced entirely from the ancient village groupings.

It is against this background that his wilder policies must be seen. One of the wildest was the celebrated maize campaign: every farm in the Soviet Union, regardless of soil and climate, was to cultivate maize on a large scale. The maize was for cattle-feed; and if it did not ripen, no matter: it would serve very well as green silage. The maize campaign was overdone to the point of farce and won Khrushchev the disrespectful nickname of *kukuruza* – which is the Russian for maize. It involved much wastage and many fiascos. But there is no doubt at all that it had a good effect: it shook the peasants out of their slovenly rut and gave them the idea that with better feeding for livestock there would be more and better meat and milk and butter. Although the cultivation of maize has been quietly dropped in many areas, in those regions where it pays to grow it the Russians now have a new and invaluable crop.

It was against this background, too, that Khrushchev saw to the rehabilitation of the notorious agro-biologist, Lysenko, raised to great heights by Stalin, who, after smothering like an incubus all original research into plant-breeding for many years, fell into disgrace after Stalin's death. Lysenko is no longer allowed to lord it over the Academy of Sciences: Khrushchev appreciates his theoretical charlatanry as well as anybody; but he has been pressed into service again, and the professors have been warned not to attack him, because he can talk to the peasants and is a mine of useful practical ideas – though the theory behind them is frequently nonsensical.

Nobody who has not heard Khrushchev talking to the farm managers of the Soviet Union or read his speeches delivered all over the countryside can have a proper appreciation of the nature of this extraordinary man. This is a pity, because the

speeches are so long that they cannot be printed in translation, and so minutely detailed that they cannot be summarized. But what he has done, in effect, is to go down to the farms and lecture circumstantially and in intimate detail, the farm managers of practically every region of European Russia – telling them just what to do and what is wanted, speaking their own language, common-sensical and down-to-earth, illustrated by Russian proverbs, funny stories, and frequent invocations of the Deity. Nothing is neglected: the desperate need for green vegetables, and how to plant and sow and harvest them; the best ways of planting potatoes and maize; how to fatten pigs by letting them grub up potatoes; how to feed cows to increase their milk yield; how to *milk* cows.... And so on and so on. And if anyone thinks this sort of elementary instruction is not needed, let him look at an ordinary Soviet farm – let him read one of Khrushchev's informal talks. He will find, for example, that until a year or two ago it was the custom, universal throughout Russia, for the cow-girls to milk their cows five or six times a day: they did this because of the old belief that the last drops from the udder have a peculiar magic; so that the logical thing was to have as many milkings as possible in order to multiply the 'last drops'.

Reading these speeches, as in no other way, the essential passion of the man comes through: it is the familiar Russian passion of a man who is proud of his country and infuriated by it, who has found that the only way to stir things up is to go out into the provinces and do the stirring himself. The energy expended is colossal. During those critical weeks early in 1957 when his colleagues in the Kremlin were preparing for the final show-down, Khrushchev, instead of keeping an eye on them in Moscow, was stumping the country making speech after speech in places that Stalin had scarcely heard of, much less dreamt of visiting. And in between the frequent platform appearances he was, according to reports of those near him, sitting up to all hours night after night in town after town arguing his policies, man to man, with the local chieftains, so that when the show-down came they would be on his side.

Khrushchev was lucky. Early on in the Virgin Land campaign, when people were saying (and not without truth) that this wholesale deep ploughing of the vast empty plains would create

another dustbowl, would be hopelessly vulnerable to drought, he replied in effect: 'Never mind. If in every five years we get one bumper harvest, two indifferent ones, and two complete failures, the scheme will have justified itself.' In the event he has had luck on his side and done better than that. He has had three tremendous harvests in succession and the second saved the country, because it was a year of drought in the Ukraine. Meanwhile his new policies towards the collective farms are also beginning to pay off: in the past four years the quantity, quality, and variety of food produced has increased and improved quite remarkably, and the foundations have at last been laid for a decent and flourishing agriculture in a land where the winter cold and the summer droughts make high farming, even in favoured areas, very difficult and chancy indeed.

My own belief, on the available evidence, is that the transformation of the Soviet rural economy into an affair worthy of a great country, and the transformation of the Russian peasant into a prosperous and efficient husbandman, is the main driving passion of Khrushchev's post-war career. It would not surprise me in the least to learn that it was this passion which drove him, through all obstacles, to the top. He has uttered a great deal of wildly exaggerated talk about catching up with America in the production of butter, milk, meat, and so on. But his progress has in fact been fast and far. For many years, ever since I have been involved in Soviet affairs, I have always insisted that food production was Stalin's great failure, that it would have to be increased dramatically if the Soviet régime were to be saved from catastrophe. It was not simply that more than half the population of a great state aspiring to world supremacy was living in the Dark Ages: more immediately serious was the food situation in the towns. Stalin had turned the sons of an oppressed peasantry into the artisans of a great industrial power; but he was continuing to feed them on subsistence rations. A Russian with a pick and shovel and a wheelbarrow can exist indefinitely on a diet of bread, salt fish, and pickled cucumbers – and much sleep. That same Russian, educated to the Western level, and operating a capstan lathe, or sitting all day over a drawing-board, and, in his spare time, instead of sleeping on the stove, using his intelligence, needs more protein in his diet – and much

variety. Soviet agriculture as organized by Stalin offered not the slightest prospect of supplying this urgent need. Khrushchev saw the need – with Mikoyan at his elbow – and has quite literally staked his whole career on his ability to supply it. The only sure way would have been to abolish the collectives and the State farms and return to an improved version of free agricultural enterprise. But this would have meant the end of the régime. So Khrushchev has had to work, whether he likes it or not, within the framework of the *kolkhoz* system, with all that this entails.

He is well aware of its shortcomings. His first act, when Stalin brought him back from Kiev to Moscow in 1950, was to carry through the *kolkhoz* amalgamation scheme, whereby the number of collectives was heavily reduced. His second was the abortive attempt to substitute his *agrogoroda* for the *kolkhoz* villages. At that time, I do not mind admitting, I believed, with most other critics of the Stalin régime, that the ultimate aim was to tear the villages up by their roots, destroy the individuality of the villagers, abolish the sense of belonging and also the sense of ownership fostered by the precious private plots, and group the peasants in nameless settlements, soulless, with neighbour suspicious of neighbour, being driven out to work each day under strict discipline in fields far removed from their old homes. I believed the aim was to create a new and highly organized system of State serfdom. This would have been perfectly in keeping with Stalin's ideas.

Now I think differently. The dream to which Khrushchev constantly reverts is of a prosperous, educated peasantry using the latest machines and the latest techniques and living civilized lives – artisans of the soil. The dream is to close the great gulf between the town workers and the peasants: to make the peasants worthy of the new Soviet Union. For if one thing is clear about Khrushchev it is that he is deeply wounded in his pride by the continued squalor of so much of Soviet life. He believes with passion in the Soviet Union. It is *his* Soviet Union. And it has to be made worthy of *him*. One can catch this feeling in a thousand seemingly disconnected remarks. These in the past year or so have ranged from bitter and obviously deeply felt reflections on the shortcomings of a great nation which,

sputniks notwithstanding, allows old women to chop away all night with primitive tools, clearing the snow from the main streets of its capital city, to spirited criticism of Soviet tailors responsible for the depressing combination of loose, flapping trousers and clumsy, square-shouldered jackets which for years produced the characteristic silhouette of the Soviet male – Khrushchev included, until he started travelling abroad.

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It is fair to say that from the moment he became First Secretary until the special 21st Party Congress in January 1959 everything that Khrushchev did on the home front was directed towards strengthening the Communist Party apparatus while he tightened his own grip on it. One of the last acts in this long process was the replacement of the professional policeman, Serov, one of Beria's most notorious lieutenants, by the *Komsomol* leader, Shelepin, as head of the Committee of State Security – the post-Stalin name for the political police (Cheka, GPU, NKVD, MGB in previous incarnations). Shelepin was one of Khrushchev's loyal Party supporters, and his new post meant that Khrushchev had gained absolute control over state security. His very last act of all before the 21st Congress was to preside over a much-publicized Plenum of the Central Committee in December 1958 at which Bulganin, without warning, stood up and confessed that he had been deeply implicated in the activities of the anti-Party group of Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, 'and Shepilov, who joined them'. At this meeting denunciations of the anti-Party group ran so high and wild that most Western observers believed that the whole matter would be brought to a head at the impending Congress, and the immediate consequence would be a show-trial. It was also widely assumed that Khrushchev would use this Congress to start a new purge, filling still more key posts with his own nominees.

I was lucky enough to be in Moscow at the time, and inside Russia it did not look like that at all. The speculations of Western commentators left out of account the mood of the Soviet people. From London or Washington it looked as though Khrushchev was moving effortlessly from one triumph to the

next in a thoroughly confident, not to say aggressive, spirit. In Moscow the picture was a very different one: what Khrushchev was doing in effect was trying to vindicate himself in the eyes of his own people.

So that when the Party Congress came two months later very little was made of the anti-Party group, and it was soon clear that what was in train was not a renewed offensive but the burial of an old one in a general atmosphere of least-said-soonest-mended. One or two people got up and shouted, saying that Bulganin's confession had been a mockery; but Bulganin had nothing to add. One or two got up and said it was high time Pervukhin and Saburov publicly confessed their own complicity with the anti-Party group; and these two did make very partial and limited confessions. But when it was all over Pervukhin was still Ambassador to East Germany and a candidate member of the Party Presidium; Saburov was still on the Central Committee. And the official tone was set by Khrushchev's own right hand, Kirichenko, who, as it were, closed the case: he spoke of the activities of the anti-Party group as something over and done with; the group had been broken and that was that. Enough was said to justify Khrushchev's action in breaking it (a great many people had been seriously disturbed: the humiliation of Molotov in particular had been widely resented). Enough was said to indicate clearly that no further action was contemplated, and that this was a proof of Khrushchev's strength and confidence and magnaminity. The affair was then dropped. It could be brought up again at a later date: Malenkov's complicity in the 'Leningrad Plot' could be made a capital charge. But if it ever is brought up again it will, I am sure, be a clear sign that Khrushchev feels himself slipping and thus compelled to use all weapons, including the weapon of Terror, to fight for his existence. At the moment of writing he stands firm, but defensively firm.

The 21st Congress was indeed a turning-point. It marked the end of the struggle for power as such and the beginning of Khrushchev's campaign to get himself accepted by the *people* of the Soviet Union as their natural leader. It marked also the beginning of his attempt to win back the groups and individuals he had alienated while building up the Party as his weapon.

Kirichenko, who, from being Khrushchev's right-hand man in the Ukraine, has moved up quickly to being his right-hand man in Moscow, again set the tone. He took up and elaborated one of the most interesting and significant points Khrushchev had made in his monumental formal Report to the Congress. Khrushchev had spoken in very general terms about a new problem facing the Party: how to arrange swifter promotion for the young, how to get the most able men into key appointments, above all, how to retire gracefully yet efficiently those who had proved themselves incompetent (Stalin simply liquidated them) and also the old faithfuls who had served loyally and long, but who were past their best or who could not keep up with the times?

This is indeed a new problem. For many years the Soviet Union was the land of youth. It is still the land of youth in the sense that youth largely predominates over age. For decade after decade from the beginning of the First World War until well after the end of the second, the effect of war, revolution, famine, purges, and the routine deportations by the political police on the mature of both sexes, but particularly men, has been consistently devastating. At the same time the fast expansion of the economy has demanded ever new recruits to every kind of work; so that it would be no exaggeration to say that until quite recently gifted young men of thirty were automatically being appointed to senior posts of the kind that in Britain would not normally be achieved by any man under forty-five or fifty. But in the past few years the pattern has changed. Since the last war people have stopped dying prematurely. Since Stalin's own death men in important positions have not obligingly made way for their juniors by getting themselves sent to Siberia. For the first time the Soviet Government has more able youngsters with a higher education than it knows what to do with. They are coming on all the time. And their way is being blocked, and looks like being blocked very severely in the years to come, by seniors of often very dubious calibre, the survivors of Stalin's purges, who themselves are only in their fifties and thus a long way from reasonable retiring age.

I hesitate to mention names. Indeed, it is not necessary. I have already referred to the Party functionaries born between roughly

1890 and 1920 as the lost generation. The flower were killed in the great purges or in the war; what remains, with exceptions, are the survivors – who survived either because they were too stupid to be considered dangerous, or because they brought sycophancy to a fine art, or because they were as cunning as the fox. Nothing in this world is more depressing to contemplate than the average Soviet official of high or low degree at present between the ages of forty and sixty. And, as would be expected, those who started their rise in their thirties during the great purges of twenty years ago, climbing over the dead bodies of their seniors in circumstances of total outrage, are incomparably the worst. They are now in their fifties, and they occupy the most important Party jobs all over the country. I find it impossible to believe that Khrushchev himself contemplates them with anything but dismay. He found them useful enough in his rise to power; but now that he has risen they have no place except to carry on the business of repression where repression is required, as a sort of ballast in a word. There is far too much ballast, and we may expect a great deal of it to be shed before long.

It was Kirichenko who supplied the formula. While Khrushchev at the 21st Party Congress talked in general terms, Kirichenko, following him, said this:

> Now life demands that there should be more specialists and experts in different branches of the economy among the leading Party, Soviet, business, and trade cadres.
>
> It is desirable, for example, that a rural district should be managed by individuals with agricultural training, or who are good and experienced practical men of affairs, experts in their jobs and with organizing talents. Again, it is important that the secretary of the Party committee of a town largely concerned with machine building should himself be a specialist in that branch of industry or an experienced practical engineer who knows his job backwards. Again, it is necessary for a scientific establishment to be directed by a man in full command of the branch of science in question, and so on.
>
> We have many outstanding, politically mature, and experienced men on the spot – teachers, doctors, and specialists in other branches of knowledge – who can and must be advanced to leading posts. Thus our task is to open all doors wide for the nomination to leading Party, state, and business appointments of individuals possessing

higher education, practical men who have deep experience of life and have authority among workers.

Kirichenko was addressing delegates from every major Party organization in the land, and many of these, listening to him speaking, must have seen the writing on the wall: men who had made their careers inside the Party apparatus, privileged and apart, largely cut off from reality, obeying orders from on high and passing them down the line: most would have started life in a factory or on a farm; but of these a very great proportion would have long forgotten anything they had ever learnt about 'practical' affairs. A purge was on its way, but not the purge expected in the West. It was to be a gentle purge, and it was to affect the Party trusties who had nothing to recommend them but their understanding of the Party ropes. That purge, without bloodshed or banishment, is now going on. The most glaring second-raters are being weeded out. In Khrushchev's own words:

> Most of them are good comrades, loyal to the Party. They have fully earned the profound respect and gratitude of the Party and the nation. The great experience and knowledge of these comrades must be used by giving them work suited to their physical abilities and talents. These comrades must not be kept back when they feel the need to change to other work, or to retire. It is our duty to create good conditions for such people.

He was referring there to those who

> worked actively and fruitfully for many years for the good of our cause, but who now, because of age or other reasons, can no longer carry out the work entrusted to them with the necessary energy and active spirit.

He was less benevolently inclined towards the third-rate:

> Some Party organs do not always appreciate efficiency and ability when they see it or advance those who should be advanced. They tolerate feeble individuals who cannot cope with the job entrusted to them and lag behind life, sometimes filling responsible posts for long periods. Instead of such workers being got rid of, they are moved from one place to another, transferred from district to district, from region to region. And this means stagnation. It prevents the influx of fresh forces.

And the fresh forces? Khrushchev revealed that the Party in January 1959 had over eight million members and candidate members. It had increased by over one million since the 20th Party Congress three years earlier. And two-thirds of these new members, he said, were genuine workers and peasants from the factories and the fields. The old Stalin trend had at last been effectively reversed. The Party was to be made more representative of the people as a whole, and the new Party functionaries were to be drawn increasingly from men who had proved themselves in an infinite variety of fields *outside* the Party apparatus.

This is what I had in mind when I suggested that Khrushchev's first task, having made the Party his own, was to change its character. Malenkov had sought to transform the face of the Soviet Union by a frontal attack on the Party apparatus, mobilizing the strong, the enterprising, and the able in every sphere against the Party careerists. Khrushchev, having conquered the Party, is seeking to transform it from the inside and to mobilize within its discipline precisely the same sort of men, often the self-same men, whom Malenkov had tried to mobilize against it. And this is what I had in mind very early on in this book when I suggested that we in the West have been laying altogether too much stress on Kremlin politics and that it makes very little difference – except as a matter of more or less efficiency – which individual aspirant is master of the Soviet Union at any given moment. The Soviet Union is moving quite visibly in a certain direction which is, I hope, already discernible in these pages. The man who comes out on top is the man best qualified to keep some sort of control of that movement without coming into head-on collision with it and without making himself vulnerable to the still powerful forces which are trying to stop the movement.

The reader will have discovered that I have a point of view. I do not pretend to certain knowledge of these matters. But most of the evidence seems to me to point in the direction I have tried

to indicate and away from the more familiar picture of Khrushchev as a doctrinaire Leninist who is trying to emulate Stalin – in any case a self-contradictory conception.

I have shown how he seized the Party apparatus and made it strong enough to bear him up. I have shown how he has now embarked on a course of transforming the character of the machine to which he owes his position. He is going further than that. He now shows every sign of wishing to curtail the activities of the Party as such and to bring new groupings into play. As Prime Minister as well as First Secretary he is now in a position to take liberties of this kind.

In an interview last autumn with two British politicians Khrushchev developed at some length an idea which had existed in embryo for some time. He looked forward to the day, he said, when the regular police of all kinds would be very largely superseded by voluntary public organs. The embryo of this idea already existed in the formations of 'People's Militia', voluntary groups of public-spirited citizens, usually *Komsomol* members, formed a few years ago to assist the regular police in their dealings with 'hooligans' – of which more later. But it seemed a far cry from this modest step to the 'withering away' of the regular police. It was the kind of thing, one felt, that Khrushchev might permit himself to say to a couple of British Labour politicians; but it was not the kind of thing he would be expected to say to the Soviet people as a whole. Yet within a few months, again in his Report to the 21st Party Congress, he was to do just this – and more. The whole concept of the 'public organization', as distinct from State and Party organs is so new and radical that his words should be quoted in full:

> For us, democracy means the true power of the people; it is the all-round development of spontaneous action and activity on the part of the working masses, their self-government.
>
> Now it is clear that many functions hitherto carried out by State organs must gradually pass into the hands of public organizations. Take, for instance, certain questions of popular cultural services. It is not at all necessary that they should be administered by State organs. They can perfectly well be run by public organizations. Life also teaches us that it is essential to alter the organization of the health and health resort services. It seems that we are reaching the time when responsibility for the health services can be step by step transferred in the cities to trade unions and in the countryside, at the present stage, directly to the local Soviets. Hitherto, also, the administration of the physical culture movement has been the responsibility of State organs – the State Committee for Physical Culture and Sport. Now a more expedient form of organizing the physical culture movement has been devised, in which the decisive role will be played by public organizations. A Union of Voluntary Sports Associations is being formed. This will not be a State body but a public one.
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> Questions of maintaining public order and the code of socialist communal living must increasingly come under the jurisdiction of public organizations. In the Soviet Union there are now no cases of persons being made to stand trial for political crimes. That is unquestionably a great achievement. It speaks of the unprecedented unity of political conviction on the part of our whole people, of their cohesion around the Communist Party and the Soviet régime. But we still have no few cases of violation of public order, and a decisive struggle must be waged against these. Can the Soviet public not cope with violators of socialist law and order? Of course it can. Our public organizations have equal possibilities, means, and resources for this with the organs of the Militia, the Courts, and the Prosecutor's Office. Things are developing in such a way that the functions of maintaining public order and security will be fulfilled by public organizations working alongside such State organizations as the Militia and the Courts. This process is already beginning in our country. The apparatus of the Militia has been drastically reduced. The apparatus of the organs of State Security has also been reduced to a very considerable extent. The socialist society is creating such voluntary organs of maintaining public order as the People's Militia, Comrades' Courts, and similar organizations. They will work in a new way and discharge public functions in a new manner.
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> The voluntary detachments of the People's Militia must take it upon themselves to maintain public order in their own localities and ensure the maintenance and safeguarding of the rights and interests of all citizens. The time has come when more attention should be devoted to the Comrades' Courts, which must seek mainly to anticipate all kinds of infringements. They must deal not only with questions of production but also with questions of everyday life and of a moral nature, cases of wrong behaviour by members of a collective who have permitted a departure from recognized standards of public order to take place. When public Comrades' Courts are

functioning actively and when the public itself puts forward individuals pledged to the maintenance of public order it will be a great deal easier to combat the violators. It will be possible to detect a violator not only when he has committed his misdemeanour or crime, but also when he is seen to be departing from recognized standards of social behaviour which could lead him to anti-social acts. He can then be influenced in good time, so that his evil inclinations may be nipped in the bud; measures must be taken calculated to inhibit and then to eliminate completely all socially harmful offences by individuals. Preventive methods – education – are what matter. Of course, certain duties must be left to the Courts, the Militia, the Prosecutor's office. These bodies will continue their activities for the purpose of dealing with persons who maliciously disregard the norms of socialist society and are impervious to education.

The transfer of certain functions of State bodies to public organizations should be carried out without haste. In some circumstances they can be pushed on with resolution, in others only the first tentative steps should be taken so that people may learn the art of maintaining order themselves. It stands to reason that the transfer of certain functions from State organs to public organizations in no way signifies a weakening of the part played by the Socialist State in the building of communism. The implementation by public organizations of a number of functions which now appertain to the State will broaden and strengthen the political foundations of the socialist democracy.

In the same speech Khrushchev went on to exalt the role of the Trade Unions and the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. Both these organizations, he said, must be encouraged to play a broader part in the life of the country, assuming ever-increasing responsibilities. He announced that it had been decided to increase the number of deputies to *local* soviets by some 350,000.

It is hard to convey to the reader unfamiliar with the Soviet scene the radical nature of Khrushchev's proposals about the part to be played by 'public organizations'. The very concept of a 'public organization', in the sense of what we should call a voluntary organization working outside the formal apparatus of the State, has been completely alien to the Soviet system until the last few years. The sort of work done in Britain by hosts of societies – the WVS, the Playing Fields Association, the

RSPCA, Youth Clubs, the Churches and the Salvation Army, the National Trust, the British Drama League, innumerable professional associations, and all the rest is, in the Soviet Union, when it is done at all, organized exclusively by the State and controlled rigidly by the Party. The very idea of 'the spontaneous action and activity' of the people is enough, not only to make Stalin turn in his grave, but also to chill the spines of tens of thousands, of hundreds of thousands, of professional functionaries with firm vested interests in the *status quo*. 'Spontaneous activity, indeed! Where, if you please, will that end?'

Where indeed?

Let there be no mistake. Khrushchev has no intention of allowing the Communist Party to be superseded in its governing role by any other group. The Party, so long as it exists, will have the last word; and when it decides that such and such a 'spontaneous activity' shows signs of going too far, it will come down sharply enough. But there seems to me equally not the slightest doubt that the Party itself stands at the beginning of a process of broadening and, indeed, dilution.

Dilution? Perhaps fortification would be the more appropriate word. Because what is happening is not at all the same as the real dilution of the Party under Stalin, particularly during the war. Then, for a variety of reasons, outsiders of ability and good repute were brought in to swell the Party ranks. But, effectively, if not in name, most of these were never more than, as it were, honorary members. Khrushchev is doing something different. He is broadening the Party, and at the same time, if we are to believe Kirichenko, he is proposing to move into positions of influence and power in the Party hierarchy men who have already gained distinction in other fields and whose primary interest is in getting things done as distinct from making careers for themselves in the usual Party manner.

And while he is doing this (or while he appears to be doing this: I may be reading too much into the 21st Party Congress and certain subsequent dismissals and appointments; ever since 1953 it has been my expressed belief that the process I have just been describing was inevitable), he is encouraging the people themselves, the rank and file, to participate in the running of the country with his 'public organizations' and with his new stress

on the importance of local Soviets. There will be strict limits set for the time being to the extent of their participation; but for a Russian ruler to invite the people to take a direct and active share, even though the Party remains sovereign, is something new and important in itself. We may echo the die-hards, but with hope instead of dismay: where will it end?

CHAPTER 4

The Great Thaw

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THE important thing to grasp is that the Thaw, of which we heard so much some years ago, is still in being. That is to say, the atmosphere, the mood, and the physical conditions of life in the Soviet Union today are all very strikingly different from what they were under Stalin – so much so that it is impossible to believe that they can ever revert to their old state. Life in every conceivable way has changed very much for the better, and it continues to change for the better, regardless of intermittent checks here and there which have been especially noticeable in the sphere of literature and drama: it is not merely better in degree; it is different in kind.

I am not suggesting that the Soviet Union has turned into a libertarian paradise. It has not. There was never any question, even in the two wildest moments, when self-expression seemed to be on the point of getting out of control – the autumn of 1953 and the autumn of 1956 – of any sort of political freedom being allowed. The Thaw has manifested itself in four main spheres: the economic sphere; the administrative sphere; the intellectual sphere; and the social sphere. These are loose and unsatisfactory categories. Further, they overlap. What we have chiefly been concerned with in earlier chapters has been the relaxation in the economic and administrative spheres. It is time to look at the life of the mind.

It was, as one would expect, in the intellectual sphere that the Thaw was at first most spectacular, that twice it nearly got out of hand, and that the hand of authority in due course was felt most heavily.

In the late summer of 1953, after the arrest of Beria, everyone suddenly started singing, at first tentatively, then, in a rush, as a full dawn chorus. A poet, Olga Berggoltz, discovered to her amazement that, on looking through back numbers of the

literary magazines, she had been unable to find a single poem which dealt with the problems of the human heart. There simply was no lyric poetry. She had been put on to this by an audience of young people in Leningrad, which had assembled to listen to one of her own poetry readings. 'Read us some lyric poetry,' they cried at the end; and it suddenly dawned on her that there was no real lyric poetry: 'In a great many of our lyrical works the most important thing of all is lacking: humanity, the human being. I don't mean there are no human beings in any of these poems. Indeed there are; there are operators of bull-dozers and steam-shovels; there are horticulturalists, all carefully described, sometimes well and even brilliantly described. But they are described from the outside, and the most important thing is lacking in all these poems – a lyric hero with his own individual relationship to events and the landscape.' Olga Berggoltz went on to demand the involvement and identification of the poet with 'the image of man' in his verse. She then asked how it had come about that 'the image of man' should be so totally absent from Soviet poetry. And she found the cause in the general critical condemnation of all subjective emotion, of whatever kind, whether doubt, irresolution, private joy, or private sorrow.

She was correct in her diagnosis. Subjective feeling in the arts, the presentation of the complete human being, of the human heart in its complexity, its weakness, and its strength, had been virtually forbidden by the notorious Zhdanov Edict of 1946, which sought, more crudely and directly than ever before, to harness the writers, the painters, the musicians, to the juggernaut of the Five-year Plan. The artist, so-called, had one task and one only: to present the fiction of the New Soviet Man and the New Soviet Woman, perfect imbeciles with good teeth and fair hair, striding steadily and unthinkingly onward and upward, smashing down every obstacle to material progress, and regarding not only professional saboteurs and spies and counter-revolutionaries as the enemy, but also anyone who at any time in any context raised the least doubt to shadow the mood of State-organized optimism. For the real enemy was indeed doubt and self-questioning – indeed, any other kind of questioning. The only possible hero was the young man with a steam-shovel who thought solely in terms of fulfilling his norm, of then exceeding it; the only possible heroine was the young woman who was prepared to turn her back on the man she loved if the man she loved showed the slightest sign of putting his private concerns, including her, before his allotted task. So that the novels and the poetry and the paintings of the post-war period dealt, as Olga Berggoltz implied, not with human beings, but with the conventionalized figures of crane-operators, agronomists, capstan-lathe operators, shock-brigades in the potato-fields, and all the rest. To read the plays, the novels, the poems of the period (I speak particularly of 1946–53) nobody would have guessed that the Soviet writers were hating every moment of their lives: they poured the stuff out, as demanded, seeming to have no thought for anything else at all. A few were silent: Sholokhov, author of one of the few Soviet works of genius, the original version of *And Quiet Flows the Don*; Zoshchenko, the satirist, driven out of the Writers' Union on Zhdanov's orders; Leonov, one of the Soviet Union's most distinguished and complicated writers; Akhmatova, the poetess of Leningrad, whose gentle questioning of the fundamentals of human existence had been savaged by the Zhdanovites; Pasternak, the greatest of all Soviet poets, who supported himself by his translations from Shakespeare and other cultural monuments.

But most still scribbled away, and it was only in one or two of the women, Vera Panova, Vera Inber, Vera Ketlinskaya, that the reader could detect a deep, if largely frustrated, concern with the problems of human existence and the individuality of men and women. This point about the apparent total acceptance of the Zhdanov Edict is worth remembering. From 1946 to 1953 there was scarcely a surface flicker in all the arts (only Prokofiev and Shostakovich among the musicians put up a sharp resistance to the Zhdanov line: they were supposed to produce the sort of music that the moronic blonds of the New Soviet Society could sing in unison in the fields) to show that the artists were unhappy in their work. Then suddenly the pent-up feeling broke loose. We do not know who among the higher leadership first realized that the intellectual life of the country was on the verge of total paralysis and gave the word which, passed on by the Writers' Union, made it possible for the writers to throw off their masks. We do know that the depth and violence of the

ferment thus revealed shocked and surprised the leadership, so that in less than a year it was struggling to put the lid back or, rather, partly back.

The intellectual ferment, which was exposed to full view from the late summer of 1953 until the early summer of 1957, manifested itself in two distinct waves. The first, which began with Olga Berggoltz, was concerned with the substitution of human beings for automata and human conflicts and dilemmas for the mindless opposition of Soviet heroism and bourgeois villainy.

It manifested itself above all in poems and plays, these requiring less time to write than novels. The second was concerned with social and, within limits, political criticism. In other words, in the late summer of 1953 the writers began to demand that they should be allowed to write about life in human terms. They tore into this forbidden field so recklessly that it required a very sharp effort on the part of the Party leadership in the spring of 1954 to bring them up before they were quite out of control. Then, in the late summer of 1956, after the de-Stalinization, they began to tackle serious social criticism, which sometimes became scarcely veiled political criticism. And this time it needed the personal and very determined intervention of Khrushchev himself to bring them to heel.

Olga Berggoltz was soon followed by others. The poet Alexander Tvardovsky, then editor of the important literary periodical *Novy Mir* (which was later to publish Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* and to reject Pasternak's *Dr Zhivago*), published a long narrative poem which was a confession of the past failure of himself and his colleagues to meet their responsibilities towards humanity and truth. Vera Inber of Leningrad declared roundly that nobody read Soviet poetry and that nobody ever would read it so long as it was always about 'the same old dam, the same old steam-shovel'. The critic Tarasenko started glorifying the pursuit of truth for its own sake. The poet Paustovsky begged all Soviet writers everywhere to search their hearts and turn over a new leaf.

Then, at the October Congress of the dramatists' section of the Union of Writers, under the Chairmanship of the old Stalinist, Fadeyev, and with the then Minister of Culture on the platform, the assembled playwrights had their turn. They were

led by the most gifted of them all, Simonov, who had in the past shown himself to be the most accomplished time-server of them all; and it could only be concluded from this that the concerted effort by the writers of the Soviet Union to cleanse their own stables had received the blessing of the highest in the land. For Simonov, who had led the pack in the days when the Zhdanovites were savaging any artist who showed the slightest flicker of originality, who had been particularly vicious towards a group of critics, mostly Jews ('cosmopolitans' they were labelled in those days: 'the struggle against cosmopolitanism', was a euphemism for active anti-semitism) – Simonov who had been especially violent in condemning all those who had ever suggested that the Soviet drama was not all that it might be, now came out with the formal declaration that the Soviet drama 'had been in a state of backwardness for a number of years', and went on to flay his colleagues for allowing this to happen. . . . Others, more honest, spoke from the heart. Soviet audiences, said the dramatist Mikhalkov, have been 'taught to see on the stage that which departs from the truth of life, from the real difficulties, misfortunes, joys, and sorrows of living Soviet people'. He went so far as to conclude that 'the divergence of dramatic literature and reality is almost compulsory'. Another distinguished playwright, who died, deeply mourned, in 1958, Lavrenev, was more specific. Taking up the cry originally uttered by Olga Berggoltz, he attacked all those plays which dealt with plans instead of conflicts, with stereotypes instead of people. There were plays, he said, which could only be understood if the ordinary spectator had with him a technical manual of the industry under discussion. There was one well-known play, he went on, in which the characters quite literally spoke extracts taken directly from a text-book on the oil industry.

At this meeting more hard things were said about the Soviet drama than any Western critic had cared to say. The attack was total and sweeping. The revelation of the extent to which the playwrights of the Soviet Union had for so long been able to conceal their real feelings from the Kremlin and the world at large, was startling and disturbing. This is a lesson not to be forgotten.

Simultaneously with this meeting, another notorious figure,

Ilya Ehrenburg, for long a lost soul, came out with a declaration of faith in the October number of *Zhamya*, which seemed to sum up the first phase of the intellectual Thaw; he himself was then just finishing a novel which was to be called *The Thaw*:

> An author is not a piece of machinery registering events. An author writes a book, not because he knows how to write, not because he is a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and may be asked why he has published nothing for so long. An author does not write a book because he has to earn a living. An author writes a book because he finds it necessary to tell people something of himself, because he is pregnant with his book, because he has seen people, things, and emotions that he cannot help describing. . . .
>
> That is why I cannot understand some critics when they blame such-and-such a writer: he has not written a novel about the Volga-Don canal, about the textile industry, or about the struggle for peace. But would it not be better to reproach another author, who has written a book, although he felt no spiritual compulsion to do so and could have quietly left it unwritten? . . .
>
> In pre-revolutionary times an author's life was not an easy one, and in Chekhov's letters there is mention of how the editors of a newspaper or magazine would order a story from him. But even the most impudent of editors refrained from suggesting to Chekhov the subject of his story. Can one imagine Tolstoy being given an instruction to write *Anna Karenina* or Gorki being ordered to write *Mother*?

This was the first climax of the battle for human truth in the arts. Authority seemed to smile on it. Authority, it was clear, realized that Soviet literature was dying on its feet and that if it wanted a vital literature it would have to allow the writers – and the painters and the musicians – some rope. At the time it was believed by many Western observers that Authority was setting a trap: those who took the bait and threw off their masks could then easily be identified and picked off at leisure as 'enemies of the people'. There was some excuse for this belief. In certain circumstances Soviet Authority is perfectly capable of acting in this sort of way. But on this particular occasion the belief was based on a complete misapprehension of the prevailing mood in the Soviet Union. And even when Authority took the first steps to reassert itself, there was scarcely a Soviet intellectual who believed that the old Terror was on the way back. They regarded the counter-attack, when it came, as an inevitable stage in the 'readjustment'. They knew, they had known all along, that there had never been any question of Authority's abdication – a possibility in which Western observers for a short time permitted themselves to believe; but they also knew in their bones that Authority had definitely laid down the weapon of Terror: the Western mistake was to regard Soviet Authority and Police Terror as inseparable, or even synonymous.

Authority was, and is, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as expressed in the Party leadership. Even at the height of the autumn Thaw the Party never suggested for one moment that it had surrendered the final word. A high Party functionary sat on the platform at the meeting of the rebellious dramatists. The old Stalinist veteran, Fadeyev, Secretary of the Writers' Union (later to take his own life), paid full tribute to the authority of the Party in all things, even as he demanded the rehabilitation of writers, long banned, who had been killed or driven to suicide by the Party. And when the Party decided that the time had come to reassert its supremacy for all to see it struck vigorously enough.

In December 1953 *Novy Mir* (from Stalin's death until now the chosen arena for the great readjustment, which is essentially a conflict between the convenience of the autocracy and the needs of life) published an article by V. Pomerantsev called 'Sincerity in Literature'. In this article the movement initiated by Olga Berggoltz was carried to its logical conclusion. The first and only test of a work of art, Pomerantsev said in effect, is its personal integrity. This was the crux, and here the Party could fight on safe ground – and *must* fight, unless its pretensions were to go for nothing and its authority to crumble away. In January 1954 it stood and gave battle: Pomerantsev, declared an inspired article in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (the organ of the Union of Writers, all-powerful, which Pomerantsev had directly attacked), 'claims that the degree of sincerity – that is, the directness of things, must be the first test. No, the first test for the Marxist has been and will continue to be the evaluation of the ideological-artistic quality of the work. Thus, under close scrutiny, the basis of the article is seen to be false.'

This was an important directive. It told the artists of the

Soviet Union that they could be as human and personal as they liked, even that preoccupation with ordinary human values and conflicts would be encouraged – provided only that in the last resort the validity of the Leninist exegesis was not questioned. Thus Copernicus five centuries earlier could make as many fascinating discoveries as he liked, exploring new and totally unsuspected worlds – provided only that he did not demonstrate that the earth was not the centre of the universe.

There is, in fact, no reason to believe that the Party was deeply interested one way or the other in the preoccupation of the artist with individual human beings: it wanted a flourishing literature, and it was prepared to admit that literature without human beings was dead – so long as no human longing was allowed to conflict with the Party dictates. What it was actively interested in was much more immediate. Perceiving, if only dimly, the preposterous dreariness of the New Soviet Man, the Party, nevertheless, still thought of Soviet art in terms of positive tasks. In a country so full of corruption, apathy, and cynicism as the Soviet Union then was, it was clearly nonsensical to pretend that every Soviet citizen was a sort of Tarzan of the conveyor belt. Further, it was high time that something was done to reduce the amount of corruption, etc. Here, surely, was a task for the writers: they were always complaining that they were never allowed to show the seamy side of life in the Soviet Union, that they had to pretend that all things were perfect – or would be but for rotten bourgeois agents gnawing away at the massive foundations of the State – well, let them see what they could do! Who better could denounce and show up the persistent evils which refused to be stamped out – 'survivals of the past', 'relics of the capitalist mentality'? There had been famous Russian satirists in the past; Gogol, Saltykov-Shchedrin – let there be more! It was Malenkov who first publicly invited the Soviet writers to turn themselves into satirists and fierce critics of contemporary evils. He got more than he bargained for.

His idea was quite simple. Soviet society, over large areas, had become rotten. If the Soviet Union were to flourish the cankers had to be cut out. But how to call attention to these cankers without publicly admitting the shortcomings of the Soviet

system? This should not be so difficult. Look at religion, for example: people still went on going to church, often, even, quite young couples insisted on being married in church, sometimes members of the *Komsomol*, because the old superstitions, 'survivals from the past' died hard. It had been assumed by Lenin that given a totally changed social environment the past would simply fall away: there would be no more envy; no more crime; no more superstition. Lenin, it now had to be admitted, had underestimated the tenacity of ancient habits of thought and feeling. Furthermore, he had not reckoned with the persistence with which the encircling capitalist powers would strive to keep alive in the breasts of Soviet citizens the old false values. Hence the persistence of outmoded attitudes, which must be shown up for what they are. The writers were invited to try their hands – and they responded. But not in the right way.

Four dramatists, Gorodetsky, Marienhov, Virta, and Zorin all wrote plays with commendable promptitude which showed Soviet life in something like its true colours for the first time in decades. Gorodetsky attacked the Party careerists; Marienhov wrote seriously and sympathetically about one of the then most disturbing features of Soviet life – the multiplication of the Soviet Teddy Boy, or *stilyaga*; Zorin, in *The Guests*, wrote about the degeneration of revolutionary idealism. The leadership should have been pleased; but it was not. Gorodetsky's mistake was to make of his corrupt Party functionary a typical Soviet product, and not a shocking and exceptional example, to be cast down by the solid hosts of the righteous; Marienhov's mistake was to discover what made his 'gangster' characters tick, and how they had come to be what they were. Both Gorodetsky and Marienhov were pilloried. But the treatment they received was gentle compared with the full-scale offensive mounted against Zorin, who, more specifically than the others, had attributed the vices of his chief character, Peter Kirpichev, to the development – or at least to the widespread distortion – of the Soviet system itself. Through the second half of May and the first half of June 1954 the unfortunate Zorin was blasted by an incessant barrage of newspaper attacks and public speeches. His play when first put on had been incautiously praised by Simonov, who had to do a rapid about turn. For very soon it

was plain that the Party leadership had chosen this play to make a special example.

It is easy to see why. The mainspring of the play is the conflict between the veteran revolutionary fighter, old Kirpichev, who has suffered much for his ideals, and his son Peter, one of the new élite, a Party careerist with all the privileges, motor-cars, and country villas which now go with high official position in the Soviet Union. 'The country has become stronger,' says old Kirpichev, 'and the people have become richer. But alongside the toilers and the willing horses there have appeared, imperceptibly, yet now in great numbers, such people as you: white-collar aristocrats, greedy and conceited, far from the people.'

Zorin would have got away with it if old Kirpichev had not been so sweeping in his attack, and if he had talked about the 'white collar aristocrats' as pernicious survivals of the past, not as new products of the system. He would have been let off with a sharp reprimand if he had not tried to diagnose the evil and identify it as being bound up with the lust for power. 'I simply worked side by side with the great toilers of our lands,' old Kirpichev exclaims. 'I worked. And I did not know the taste of power. But you have known its taste since childhood; and it has poisoned you.'

This was too much. It also gave Authority the opportunity for which it had obviously been looking to come down very heavily indeed on those who, with their new freedom, were coming perilously close to questioning the very foundations of Soviet Power – *Sovietskaya Vlast* – all-seeing, all-benevolent, an almost sacred invocation. Thus *Sovietskaya Kultura* could protest:

> Only a person totally ignorant of the facts of life and intentionally closing his eyes to what goes on every day in front of us all could talk such pernicious nonsense. Where is the person who does not know that the aim and content of the whole activity of the Soviet organs – ministries, departments, and the rest – is daily concern for the vitally important interests of the working people, and that the very word 'power' has become here, because of this, something lustrous, gladdening, the embodiment of the finest hopes and aspirations of every Soviet man and woman, and that our people regard their popular power with unshakable trust and warm, filial love?

This, it will be remembered, was almost exactly a year after the death of Stalin, and two years before Khrushchev made his 'secret' speech, which went at some length into the true nature of that power which was supposed to be regarded with unshakable trust and warm filial love.

It should not be thought that there had ever been perfect unanimity in the higher leadership about the amount of rope the artists – and everybody else – should be allowed in the effort to foster a new and desperately needed intellectual vitality. Even at the meeting of the dramatists referred to above there had been dissenting voices at the wholesale denunciation of the poverty of the Soviet theatre since Zhdanov. And the reactionaries were no doubt pleased when men like Zorin went too far and had to be checked. For the reactionaries now had their chance. By the summer of 1954 all five major literary reviews had been heavily censured, and the editors of three of them dismissed. All through that summer the battle was to rage round a new symbol, Ehrenburg's novel *The Thaw*, conceived and written in the Thaw's first flood, and eagerly sought after when it appeared. Simonov, who had cheerfully changed front, led the attack. But, instead of sitting down submissively beneath the Party verdict, Ehrenburg had the temerity to answer back. And it was not until October 1954, on the eve of the All Union Congress of Soviet Writers, that the Union's organ, the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, gave the final verdict against Ehrenburg. And that, for the time being, was that. The first fine careless rapture, the dawn chorus, which had started with the lonely voice of Olga Berggoltz, was exhausted. It looked as though reaction had triumphed.

Or so most Western onlookers decided. But they did not look closely enough.

What was the position? The Government had actively encouraged the writers and artists to deal in human beings and to attack abuses. The writers themselves had blown the gaff on the grim secrets of their immediate past and stigmatized Stalinist literature as empty and worthless – and not only the writers: musicians and painters too. Individual writers had taken Authority at its word and boldly experimented, but all the while recognizing the existence of Authority: none had questioned the

first premises of the Party and the system. Some had come too close to doing this. These were rebuked. Authority was hard put to it to say exactly what it wanted from the writers; but it knew very well what it did *not* want. The reactionaries rushed in and proceeded to settle old scores. For a time a hush descended over the artistic scene while the writers had second thoughts and began to sort themselves out. This hush, which lasted from the Writers' Congress in October 1954, which reaffirmed the supremacy of the Party, until the release of Khrushchev's 'secret' speech in the spring of 1956, was regarded by the outside world as a clear sign of a reversion to Stalinism. It was nothing of the kind. Nobody was seriously hurt. Individuals went on experimenting, but less noisily, and sought to discover the formula which would give them the maximum amount of freedom compatible with respect for the infallibility of the Party. This took some time. But there was never any thought in the minds even of those who had been made examples of, that a Stalinist reaction had set in. They were being harassed more than some had allowed themselves to hope. But there was no sense of total frustration; and there was no fear. Writers long silent were beginning to publish again. The forgotten dead were being rehabilitated. It was simply a question of steadying up, not being carried away, and trying, by experiment, to work out a new compromise with the Party leadership.

To be personal again: when I visited the Soviet Union towards the end of 1955, after a long exclusion, I was deeply struck by the unquestioning confidence of writers and painters and musicians that the Thaw was still going on, and would go on. There were individuals who resisted it, for reasons of conviction, or, more often, convenience: these latter were the deadbeats of the Soviet arts, men (and women too) without principles or talents who had made a good thing out of the Zhdanov line and knew very well that they were incapable of anything else. Others, including highly respected and gifted figures, made no bones about the necessity for 'putting bits in' (or leaving bits out!) to please the political masters. But none were afraid; and some of those who had been hit hardest were busy writing new books and plays. In a word, the atmosphere on the eve of the de-Stalinization was, after all the ups and downs of the past

three years, entirely different from anything even dreamt of since the war: it was an atmosphere of hope and purpose.

Then came the long-awaited 20th Party Congress, beginning with Mikoyan's sharp questioning of Stalin, ending, in secret session, with the Khrushchev denunciation of the 'cult of personality'. And now the dam was down. Already the writers had their formula for dealing with human complexities and social evils: they could make human beings as complex as they liked, provided only that the strong, positive character was exalted above the weak, the questioning, the sceptical; and they could attack all social ills, short of attributing them to the System, provided only that these evils were presented as the exception rather than the rule. Now they took up their new cue. The towering political chieftain who had dominated all their lives was publicly shown to have had feet of clay; offices and functions which they had been taught to revere were exposed as corrupt and time-serving in essence; the good and the idealistic among their past comrades were now presented as innocent victims of the great leader's wrath and perfidy.

It took some time to digest all this: the sense of shock, even among the most cynical, was deep – in the young and ardent it was shattering, and in Tiflis and elsewhere Georgian students rioted in protest against Khrushchev's treachery to the memory of their national idol. The first action, as we know, was outside Russia's borders, above all in Poland and in Hungary. There, where Stalin had always been seen as the great and alien oppressor, never as the monumental father-figure, wonderful even in his cruelty, there was no traumatic shock to absorb, there were no painful adaptations to be made. There was only joy and overpowering excitement. We know what happened among the writers of Poland and Hungary: they, more than any other group, took the lead in the great, the unthinkable rebellion against the might of Soviet Russia, which came to its climax in the limited but successful Polish stand in September 1956 and the unlimited and catastrophic Hungarian uprising in October.

No such dramatic movement could be expected in the Soviet Union. In Poland and in Hungary Communist rule had been imposed in the shadow of Soviet arms, an alien creed forced upon proud, angry, and fiercely independent peoples by an alien

power. In the Soviet Union there existed an organic connexion between the people, no matter how bitterly they might curse their masters, and the régime. Among the more responsibly minded there was never any question of overthrowing the system as such. The system was all they knew: they had grown into it, and it had grown out of them. The older peasants, the poorest classes of workers, might shake their fists inarticulately at the men in the Kremlin and dream of their downfall; but most Russians thought otherwise. There was much that was wrong, terribly wrong, with the Soviet Union; but this was not an inevitable product of the system as such. On the contrary, the system was in theory noble and fine, infinitely nobler and finer than the degraded systems of the bourgeois world: if there were fearful discrepancies between the theory and the practice, as indeed everyone had experienced in his own life, then it must be due to the perverting of the system by the men who ran it. Not only by patently wicked men, like the late police chief, Beria, and his agents, but also by men who were not actively wicked, but who had allowed themselves to be corrupted by power and blinded by flattery and adulation, and driven by ambition. Here was one of them, Nikita Khrushchev, now getting up to declare circumstantially that this was so, that he and all his colleagues had grievously sinned, that Stalin at the height of his glory had become utterly corrupted and forced them all to sin – some more than others; some, Khrushchev prominent among them, less. . . .

Of course, intelligent Russians, writers among them, knew it was not as simple as that. The older ones at least knew very well that Stalin's most terrible crimes had been directed against the common people of the Soviet Union, above all the peasants; whereas Khrushchev confined his remarks to Stalin's crimes against the Party. But it was something. And the implication was clear. The higher leadership, or at least a most important part of it (for Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and others never publicly associated themselves with Khrushchev's diatribe), was formally acknowledging that there was something rotten in the state of the Soviet Union. If Stalin had been rotten in his later years, then how many others besides? If Stalin's chief failing had been the way in which he had magnified his own

personality in a country where the collective should be all – then every Party office, every Ministry, every industrial trust, was teeming with petty Stalins, lording it over the rest. The sign had been given for the Soviet people, the writers above all, to share in the task of setting the Soviet house in order.

2

The first to respond to the new sign were the younger writers; and the main arena for their activity was once more the monthly literary review *Novy Mir*, which, after the battering it had received from the reactionaries in 1954, bobbed up again as though nothing had happened. This magazine published a number of gifted and significant stories and poems in the first half of 1956: notably a remarkable story by a young writer, Granin, a bitter exposure of life as lived on a collective farm by another young writer, Ovechkin, and some poems by Boris Pasternak and, still more striking, by a young Ukrainian poet, Yevtushenko.

The new ferment spread. In October of the de-Stalinization year, as though in memory of the lost hopes of the revolution, Yevtushenko, this time writing in the magazine *Oktyabr*, published a bitter set of verses, a distillation of brooding revolt, which was closer to the wild Polish spirit, then raging in Warsaw, than anything imaginable in Russia:

> Certainly there have been changes; but behind the speeches
> Some murky game is being played.
> We talk and talk about things we didn't mention yesterday;
> We say nothing about the things we did ourselves.

But the climacteric event was the publication in three instalments (in *Novy Mir* again) of a long novel by a virtually unknown writer called Vladimir Dudintsev: *Not by Bread Alone*.

This novel is by now so well known in England that it is not necessary to describe it. It is not by any means a great novel. There are a number of Soviet writers incomparably superior in gifts to Dudintsev. But it reflected absolutely the needs of the moment. Everywhere people had been talking, through all the

spring and summer of 1956. Khrushchev's speech, though never published, had been read aloud to every Party organization: very few individuals had it in black and white, but there was not a *Komsomol* in the Soviet Union who had not heard it word for word before the spring was out. At first they were dazed – the young, brought up to regard Stalin as an untouchable demi-god, above all. Then they began to murmur. There was something rotten in the state of the Soviet Union: that rottenness cannot be swept away by a single speech. But how to diagnose it carefully and exactly? Dudintsev came with an answer. It was a beautifully simple one: you just stand every official assumption on its head – and there is the real state of life in our country today.

The way Dudintsev did this was also simplicity itself. His hero, the lonely inventor Lopatkin, is victimized by the corrupt and philistine factory director, Drozdov, whose name has now passed into the language. The novel is the story of the struggle. There have been plenty of novels in the Soviet Union dealing with the same sort of subject; but Dudintsev treated it with a difference. Lopatkin is his hero, an idealist; Drozdov is his villain, a careerist and a philistine. What the conventional pattern demanded was that the factory workers should rally round Lopatkin, surrounding him with communal love and respect, and that, in the end, the local Party Secretary would be aroused and come to his rescue, the watch-dog of the Party rising up in terrible wrath to smite Drozdov to the ground. But nothing like that happens. Instead, as the result of elaborate and vicious intrigues involving practically the whole of the Establishment of the factory town, Lopatkin is arrested and sent to a Labour Camp. Drozdov prospers. In due course, when life gets better, Lopatkin is released, and his invention is taken up. The lonely individualist is asked to take his own place in the Establishment; but he refuses. He distrusts and despises the Establishment. He knows he will be fighting it all his life. He knows that there is no place in the established order for a man of real conviction and ideas. The book closes on this note of continued struggle – and with Drozdov still prospering. It is as complete an indictment of the new Soviet bourgeois, the privileged classes, the careerism and the climbing and the graft, the unscrupulousness of the place-holders, as it is possible to imagine. It is also a deliberate glorification of the individual engaged in single-handed conflict with the embattled forces of society. For the first time in decades the seeds of goodness are shown to lie in the individual heart, as opposed to the collective.

By the time the third instalment had been published, *Not by Bread Alone* had become a flaming symbol – or the catalyst which released the suspended forces of revolt. It was not revolt against the Party as such: one of the remarkable things about the book is that the Party is scarcely mentioned, either for good or ill. It was revolt against the established society. Drozdov was the philistine and scheming industrialist; but he was aided in his manoeuvres to suppress Lopatkin by many others, representing all the faces of official Soviet society: by Shutkov, the smooth, evasive bureaucrat; by Azdiev, a sort of Lysenko type, the bogus scientist who can only survive by suppressing all real talent. All this was the truth, and in this truth lay the rottenness of the State. Khrushchev could not wash away the rottenness in a single speech: he himself had been a part of it, still was. There had to be deep surgery.

Soviet youth may have read more into *Not by Bread Alone* than Dudintsev ever dreamed of. It is possible. Certainly Dudintsev said they had, denying that he had intended any radical criticism of the system – though such denial does not really make sense. Be that as it may, the movement that Dudintsev had touched off was bigger by far than its author. And it spread.

It began with the young writers and the students of Moscow. It spread to the provinces. It became the centre of the first publicly expressed revolt since Stalin had made himself master of the Soviet Union. There were meetings and impassioned discussions. 'Tell me your attitude to this book, and I will tell you what you are!' one Moscow student declaimed. And another: 'Our literature has been the literature of a great lie. At last it is becoming the literature of great truths!'

Authority was alarmed. All over Russia students at universities and technical colleges were launching wall-newspapers and duplicated manifestos expressing and demanding revolt – not against the Soviet system itself but against the corruption,

the philistinism, and the dreary and oppressive conventions of the Establishment. When the mood spread to the factories, when in the Naval barracks at Kronstadt and Vladivostok wall-newspapers started to appear and official agitators began to be heckled at factory meetings, the situation was clearly serious. In December of 1956 Molotov took over the supervision of ideological discipline, and Khrushchev himself, his fortunes at that time at their lowest because of the dangerous consequences of his policies in Budapest and Warsaw – and now in Moscow – addressed the students of Moscow University, told them in no uncertain terms to behave, had some 200 of them expelled, and brought the rest to order by telling them that in future there would be fewer places for the privileged, that, instead, he proposed to bring in students straight from the Army and the factory bench.

The students fell silent: to talk to them now, or most of them, it would be impossible to guess that they had ever exploded. But the spirit behind them had spread to their seniors. Dudintsev was heavily and repeatedly attacked, and, in effect, he recanted. But others, slower to make up their minds and act, had now decided that the time had come to make a stand. All through the first part of the 1956–7 winter the magazines were publishing inflammatory stuff. Even in December, the month of Khrushchev's warning to the students, the month when *Pravda* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* carried the first broadsides against what was called 'demagogy' – the new smear-word for all those who had the courage to get up and say that things were far from perfect – even at this moment Simonov felt sure enough of the general movement to come out in *Novy Mir*, which he was now editing, with a remarkable declaration that echoed the cries of the young. Stalin, he said, had made the mistake of confusing servility with patriotism. We, the writers and artists, he said, have failed also, because we have dealt in half-truths. We celebrated the successes of our country, but we kept silent about the fearful price we paid for them. 'Not a word was ever said about the fact that these successes took place against a background of self-sacrifice and the gravest material privation.' He elaborated on the theme of oppression, of the many colleagues who had been 'unjustly accused'. He concluded: 'There is no need to

open old wounds by dwelling on individual responsibilities for mistakes committed in the post-war period. What is needed is a collective discussion of past mistakes and delusions . . . and it should start immediately.'

Presumably Simonov actually wrote his declaration and had it set up in type before the Party decided that a counter-attack was necessary – or else he misjudged the situation entirely. Either way, it was a revealing incident. For Simonov to misjudge the situation, it must have been very fluid indeed. If in fact the situation changed between the writing of the article and the publication of the December *Novy Mir*, it could mean only that Authority was itself divided, and that one faction had shown itself ready to let criticism run very far indeed.

When the counter-attack came it was unambiguous. It was also an appeal for Party unity and the patriotic spirit in face of international intrigues. It was, in effect, the first outcry against 'Revisionism', although that word was not used.

Thus *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, on 15 December, writing under the immediate impact of the Hungarian uprising:

> Today when . . . the slanderers from the camp of international reaction are trying to calumniate our revolutionary traditions, to juggle with facts, your place, Writer, is in the firing line. Today your anger and your hatred must resound from the pages of our newspapers and magazines; your flaming words, filled with profound understanding of the class character of social phenomena.

And the first issue of *Partinaya zhizn* for 1957 was even more explicit:

> It is necessary to recognize clearly that the peaceful co-existence of countries with different economic systems does not mean ideological disarmament. Under conditions of economic competition between the socialist and capitalist systems, the ideological war between them will not die down but will be intensified.

What was required was the closing of the ranks, with the intelligentsia in the vanguard. The Soviet leadership had been shaken to the core by the events in Hungary and in Poland; and now the mood which inspired these events was spreading to

Russia itself. It had to be checked. There was no time now for discussion about various nuances of self-expression. The system was in danger, and the artists had to rally round, obedient servants of the Party. But the artists did not rally round. In effect, they sulked. Whether this was because they knew that at this moment the Party hierarchy was itself deeply divided – as indeed it was: Khrushchev was approaching his critical hour, which was to come a few months later with his struggle to the death with the 'anti-Party group' – we do not know. All we know is that the best of them refused to be impressed into unquestioning service, and this passive refusal developed into the extraordinary movement which came to be known as the Deed of Silence. This was not a conspiracy, but a spontaneous movement. Early in 1957, when Authority thought it had incipient revolt sufficiently under control, it sought to confirm this control by calling together the Moscow writers to make confession of their own mistakes and condemn the mistakes of their colleagues. As was expected, the majority obeyed and did what was required of them; but as was not expected at all, a number of distinguished figures simply did not turn up; and among those who did turn up were some who refused to speak at all and some whose confessions and self-criticism was perfunctory and evasive in the extreme. It was an unprecedented event; but Authority did nothing for nearly three months – merely keeping up its hectoring attack through the official Press. This, too, perhaps, was because of the deep division between Stalin's heirs. The students were cowed; the writers could be left until the leaders had sorted themselves out and could present a united front. And the writers, the boldest among them, kept at it – until, in April, the boldest of them all, Yevtushenko, was expelled from the *Komsomol*. He hit back hard, and, more remarkable still, was allowed to publish his counter-attack in *Novy Mir*:

> How terrible never to learn,
> To claim the right to sit in judgement,
> To charge pure-hearted youth, rebellious,
> With impure designs.
> There is no virtue in the zealotry of suspicion.
> Blind judges do not serve the people.
> It is worse by far to mistake in haste
> A friend for an enemy than an enemy for a friend.

Nothing one would say could be more direct than that. It was a challenge to Authority which had to be taken very seriously indeed. And in the following month, in May 1957, Khrushchev appeared in person to take it up. Characteristically, he chose as his chief ally among the intellectuals not a Party member (after all, Yevtushenko had been a Party member, and most of those involved in the Deed of Silence were Party members of long standing), but a non-Party member called Sobolev, a gifted writer who had started his career as a Tsarist cavalry officer and still had something of the cavalry officer's mentality: a burning patriot, though not a Communist, he had a genuine horror of indiscipline; a man of quite broad views, he thought there was a time and a place for everything, and that open defiance of Authority in the face of the Enemy was taking things too far. The Enemy, of course, was the West. It was from the West that the Soviet young had been getting their brash ideas and with them infecting their elders, who ought to know better. So that when he came out with a major speech at a meeting of the Writers' Union in May, attacking the Deed of Silence, he made a stronger effect than any Party hack could have made:

'We all know that in music a silent bar may express more thought and feeling than the melody itself. Your silence is dangerous!'

It is impossible to tell just what Sobolev had in mind. Was he uttering a threat or a warning? Was he telling his colleagues that their silence was endangering the unity of the country and must cease – or that those who were silent were running into danger themselves? Probably a mixture of both. For very soon afterwards Khrushchev, who had already found the time to make two long addresses to the writers without having much visible effect, intervened in earnest.

On Sunday 19 May, the writers of Moscow were invited to a garden party at Khrushchev's own villa outside Moscow. And there, among spring flowers and green trees, he at last told them in so many words that there was such a thing as force, and that if the writers refused to toe the line, it would be used. Much of

his speech was concerned with reasserting, quite patiently, the need for Party supremacy over the arts. But at one point he let the iron hand show. He referred to Hungary. He said most of the troubles in Hungary could have been avoided but for the agitation of a clique of writers in Budapest, 'tools of international reaction'. He said, further, that the Hungarian Government could have averted much suffering if it had had the sense to shoot a few of these writers and thus nip trouble in the bud. He concluded by remarking that should a similar occasion arise in the Soviet Union, he, Khrushchev, would not hesitate to take such action. 'My hand would not tremble.'

These words, which were omitted from the published report of the speech, shocked his audience to the heart. It was the first time since Stalin that the idea of a return to terroristic methods had crossed their minds. Their blood was chilled. The threat seemed all the more brutal because it was primarily and specifically directed at a woman, a very distinguished poet, Margaret Aliger, who had been under heavy attack in the Party press for some months, and had steadfastly stood her ground. Khrushchev went on:

> I have no desire to conceal that in matters concerning Party-mindedness in literature, the position of non-Party writer Comrade Sobolev is much closer to mine, as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, than that of Party member Comrade Aliger, who has taken up a false position and maintains an incorrect attitude towards criticism and error.

Margaret Aliger fainted away when she heard those words, and had to be carried out. It was believed afterwards in Moscow that she afterwards went to Shepilov, then very close to Khrushchev, who comforted her and encouraged her, telling her that Khrushchev's bark was always worse than his bite; and when Shepilov was suddenly disgraced, along with Malenkov and the 'anti-Party group', this incident was said to be Khrushchev's revenge on an unfaithful protégé.

Be that as it may, the Government had finally asserted itself. There was nothing astonishing in this: what was astonishing was that it had allowed the rebels to go so far. What was even more astonishing was that rebellion, even after Khrushchev's

reference to shooting, persisted on quite a wide front for another four months. Margaret Aliger herself did not publish the 'confession' so urgently demanded of her until October; and even then it was so phrased that no one can tell whether it was written satirically or in genuine self-abasement.

There was a curious postscript to all this. In August, the month when Khrushchev's garden-party speech was first published in an expurgated text, Ilya Ehrenburg, of whom very little had been heard since the row over his own novel, *The Thaw* (this had never been officially suppressed: it was printed, but in a very small edition), went farther than he had ever gone before. In *Inostrannaya Literatura* he published an extraordinary tirade against tyranny, disguised as an essay on Stendhal. With many quotations from Stendhal, and with many unmistakable allusions to the state of the Soviet Union, he made a headlong attack on authoritarian government everywhere and in all circumstances.

> What counts is not the personality of the tyrant, but the essence of tyranny. A tyrant may be intelligent or stupid, good or evil – but whatever the case, he is both all-powerful and powerless. He is frightened of conspiracies; he is flattered; he is deceived. The prisons fill; the cowardly hypocrites whisper; and the silence becomes so complete that the heart almost stops beating. . . .
>
> Even if the king is a saint, his government destroys art – not because it bans the subject of a painting, but because it crushes the souls of artists. . . . Even though the Ministers be the most honourable men in the world, toadyism, flattery, and obsequiousness will still grow and flourish. . . .
>
> The fault lies with the society which demands hypocrisy, punishes truth, and stifles large feelings in the name of a host of conventions.

Ehrenburg is still alive, still a free man, still active.

If I have seemed to dwell at too great length and in too small detail on the story of the Soviet writers during the past six years it is only because this story, it seems to me, illustrates most clearly and compactly certain truths about the recent development of Soviet society as a whole which are not widely known, and which, even where they are known, are often misunderstood.

It also provides the background against which we should see

the case of Boris Pasternak and his great novel, *Dr Zhivago*, which had so tremendous and, I believe, misleading an impact on the Western world, which knew little or nothing of the background.

Pasternak, by common consent the greatest Soviet poet, who enjoyed remarkable popularity until the end of the twenties, refused to compromise with the régime when, in 1932, it demanded total submission from the writers. He published nothing for nearly ten years. But when war came he broke his silence with some poems about the war. In 1946 he fell silent again in protest against the Zhdanov line. But in 1954 *Novy Mir* published ten new poems, which, it later turned out, had been written for *Dr Zhivago*.

It will be remembered that it was during the spring of 1954 that the first counter-attack was being mounted against the writers of the Thaw by the Party press. Pasternak came in for his share of this action. One of his newly published poems, *The Wedding Party*, ended with these stanzas:

> And life itself is only an instant,
> Only the dissolving
> Of ourselves in all others
> As though in gift to them;
> Only a wedding, bursting
> In through the windows from the street,
> Only a song, a dream,
> A grey-blue pigeon.

Pravda picked up these lines and went for them with a sledge-hammer:

> Life is only an instant, only a dream, only a grey pigeon in frantic pursuit of a dream, of an apparition which has appeared but momentarily and which merges into everything and everyone, into the clouds, into the air – such is the content of B. Pasternak's poem. Subjectivist art has always tried to prove that life is 'but an instant', 'but a dream'; and that it is therefore senseless to strive to improve it, to waste energy on the struggle for a better future for one's homeland, for mankind.

That little outburst summed up very exactly the mood of

Authority engaged in trying to stamp out the questioning spirit, replacing 'pessimism' by 'optimism'. Given *Pravda*'s premises, namely that material progress in accordance with Marxist-Leninist 'laws' is the sole end of life in a material universe, it is understandable. Pasternak certainly cannot have been in the least surprised. And he went on writing his novel.

It was not until July 1956 that he submitted it to the editorial board of *Novy Mir* for publication in serial form. The poet Tvardovsky, who had been dismissed from the editorship in 1954, had been brought back: this fact alone is a commentary on the confused state of affairs. Pasternak at that time believed that *Dr Zhivago* would in fact be published: he would not have thought up this belief for himself; he must have had assurances to that effect from some of his colleagues. It will be remembered that at this time the ferment released by Khrushchev's attack on Stalin had not yet developed. Three months were to pass before the Polish and Hungarian revolts. Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, though being set up, had not yet begun to appear.

Perhaps we shall never be sure of the precise chronology of what followed. We know that in September 1956, when Pasternak still expected *Dr Zhivago* to be published in the Soviet Union, he gave a typescript copy to the Italian publisher, Signor Feltrinelli, of Milan, not a bourgeois agent, but a fellow-traveller, if not a Communist, saying that he would like him to publish it in an Italian translation. This translation appeared in November 1957, but not without the strongest representations being made to Signor Feltrinelli by A. A. Surkov, Fadeyev's successor as Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, who flew to Italy to talk Signor Feltrinelli round. Telegrams were produced, purporting to have been signed by Pasternak, asking Signor Feltrinelli to let him have the typescript back so that he could revise it. When all this failed, Surkov made some rather ugly threats. *Dr Zhivago* appeared in Italy in November 1957, in Britain in September 1958. It was hailed universally as a masterpiece, and in October 1958 the Swedish Academy decided to award Pasternak the Nobel prize for literature. Pasternak accepted the prize, then, under extreme pressure from Authority, having been expelled from the Union of Writers and called a traitor by the Secretary of the *Komsomol* (Semichastny, a

nonentity who secured immortality by a single speech of a foulness rarely surpassed by the late A. A. Vyshinsky), resigned it.

What had been going on in Moscow between July 1956, when *Dr Zhivago* was formally submitted to *Novy Mir* and October 1958, when the Party finally took action?

On 25 October 1958, the Soviet Government took the unprecedented step of publishing to the world what purported to be the letter of the editorial board of *Novy Mir* rejecting *Dr Zhivago*. The letter was dated September 1956. Whether this letter, as published, was really sent to Pasternak in September 1956, or whether it was written up afterwards for publication to the world, is not important. What is important is the light it throws on the Soviet mentality and on the official attitude towards certain kinds of heresy. Because of this, and because most readers of this book will be familiar with *Dr Zhivago* itself, I print this letter in its entirety in a special appendix. It seems to me one of the most valuable and illuminating documents to have come out of the Soviet Union for a great many years. Taken together with *Dr Zhivago* it speaks volumes and also throws much light on the whole story I have outlined in this chapter.

It is not the story as commonly understood in the West. Under Stalin in his last years the least breath of dissent was immediately punished. Pasternak himself only survived because he kept quiet and, it is believed, came under very exalted protection, confining himself to his great translations. Others were less lucky. Under Stalin's successors there have already been two great waves of self-assertion on the part of the writers; and the man who wrote a novel in the deepest sense anti-revolutionary and had the temerity to publish it abroad was, although sharply criticized, allowed to live unmolested until the Swedish Academy's award (taken as an act of provocation), and Pasternak's acceptance of it, gave his enemies their chance.

There is not the least doubt that the award of the Nobel Prize was seen in Moscow as a deliberate provocation. Pasternak was, and is, a spiritual exile who has deliberately detached himself from what the Soviet Government and most articulate Soviet citizens regard as the main current of their history. In *Dr Zhivago* he questioned the validity of that current – of all Soviet

action since 1917. He went unpunished. There are other good Soviet novelists. There is at least one of genius, who, although himself deeply frustrated by Authority, managed to come to some sort of terms with the régime: Sholokhov, author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Had Sholokhov been awarded the Nobel Prize Russia would have rejoiced. But even many of Pasternak's warmest admirers and sympathizers, decent Soviet patriots, regarded it as an affront when the Swedish Academy conferred the highest honour on the man who, rightly or wrongly, had been condemned by articulate Soviet society. Thus it was that for the first time since the death of Stalin decent and honourable men and women (though, not, thank goodness, all) joined with the reactionaries, the time-servers, and the lunatic fringe in the resolution which expelled Pasternak from their Union: they found themselves in the humiliating position of appearing to support Semichastny in his obscene denunciation of one of their noblest colleagues.

It was a strange and sad incident. Whether Semichastny spoke as he did with Khrushchev's support, we do not know. All we know is that he told Pasternak publicly that he was free to go and receive his filthy prize – and he need not come back. . . . Whereupon Pasternak wrote to Khrushchev personally saying that for him exile would be death. He would renounce the prize. He asked only to be allowed to live on and be useful to his country and, in due course, die there. This appeal was never publicly answered. But at once the public agitation against Pasternak ceased. There is a popular belief in Moscow that the whole agitation was conducted without Khrushchev's knowledge, that when it came to a climax Khrushchev sent for the ringleaders to ask them what it was all about: some could not answer because they had not read *Dr Zhivago*. Whereupon Khrushchev rated them and read the book himself, afterwards saying that the Writers' Union had made fools of themselves: the book should have been published in a small edition and allowed to sink out of sight. Whether this is a true story or not hardly matters: what is important is that Authority saw fit to put it about. Khrushchev was determined not to be associated personally with an act that had outraged the Western world and deeply disturbed the best of the Soviet intelligentsia.

We know that in an emergency, when it feels its authority seriously threatened, the post-Stalin Soviet Government will show itself quite ruthless in the clumsy Russian manner. It shot down the workers of East Germany and Hungary; it threatened the Poles with warships and tanks and artillery until it understood that it would have had a war on its hands had it given the order to fire; Khrushchev himself said he would not hesitate to shoot if the Moscow writers continued to give trouble (but this part of his garden-party oration was not printed, and in fact he did not shoot); it ordered, or sanctioned, the execution of Imre Nagy. Further, time and time again, the reasonable, reasoning language adopted by Khrushchev and his followers is suddenly shattered by spurts of the old, familiar, gutter language, chilling in its ferocity – a style inherited not from Stalin but from Lenin, the all-wise and benevolent. Thus, when Marshal Zhukov was put down – which may or may not have been a reasonable and necessary act – he had to be calumniated by his subordinates, notably the ineffable opportunist, Marshal Koniev, in language which turned the stomach. Thus not only Malenkov (an active and unprincipled adversary) was accused in the language of the gutter, but also Molotov, for all his faults an upright and venerated figure. Thus the time-servers of the Central Committee turn on Bulganin like a herd of pig-dogs. Thus the operation against Pasternak, which could have been concluded with perfect dignity and at least a show of reason, has to be brought down to cesspool level, not by some wearisome hack in the Writers' Union, but by the man entrusted by Khrushchev himself to lead the eighteen-million strong *Komsomol* to self-sacrificial glory; thus, all day and every day, the Communist Propaganda Department, now under one of the most unprepossessing of the survivors of the purges, keeps up an incessant stream of deliberately lying invective against the West in every sphere of activity.

To us these coarse and vicious manifestations appear incompatible with any real change of direction in either home or foreign policy. To the Soviet citizen, who knows in his own life that there has in fact been a change of direction, they appear as evidence of the persistence of the bad old ways in too many bad old people; and they are sceptical indeed about the capacity of

the leaders, of Khrushchev himself, to stop the rot quickly. But they do not doubt for a moment that the tide has turned, that the Terror has gone for ever, and that slowly, all too slowly, but still surely, and in the teeth of bitter resistance from the entrenched 'reactionaries', their country is moving into better days. It seems to me that this short history of the battle of the intellectuals, which is continuing, bears this assumption out.

3

Khrushchev's great hope, the Soviet Union's great hope, lies in the young – those under thirty-five. The best of these, and there are many who are very good by any standards, inhabit a world of their own which has every appearance of being utterly removed from the world of their elders. The success or failure of Khrushchev as a reforming statesman will depend in the end on whether he can win their confidence, establishing a direct link between himself and the young generations, by-passing in effect what I have called the lost generation, who are largely regarded by the best of the young with perfect and unquestioning contempt.

Every country has its Blimps and deadheads, its stuffed shirts, its squares; but in no country are they as thick on the ground as they are in the Soviet Union; and in no country do they contrast so sharply with the new entry, who might come from a different country and, indeed, in a certain sense, do. In a dozen professions in which Party control is particularly rigid – in the Foreign Service, in the Law, in journalism, in economics, in radio, in the higher civil service with its many branches, in the armed forces, in the university faculties, you will meet well-turned-out young men in their thirties, usually Party members, relaxed and easy in manner, often with a pleasantly ironical approach to life, and very much in touch with realities of every kind – understanding, moreover, a great deal more about the realities of life outside the Soviet Union than they usually allow to be known, and no less of the gulf between Kremlin pretensions and Kremlin practice. These confident and unfrightened young men are springing up like grass. Only five years ago they were very few and far between in the professions and the public

services (though plentiful in science and industry), and when they existed they managed to camouflage themselves pretty well. Now they are everywhere, and they do not hide what they are.

The other day an English friend accustomed in Stalin's time to dealing with Soviet officialdom, which when it was not false was beastly and when it was beastly was often false too, met two or three of this new kind and contemplated them with wonder: 'Where on earth do they come from?' he exclaimed; 'and how can they bear it?'

They come from schools and universities and technical colleges. Their fathers are often self-respecting peasant or artisan revolutionaries who, because they did not rise in the Party and become prominent, managed to keep their heads (I speak literally) and survive without becoming corrupted, but not without bitter disillusionment. Many, of course, are orphans, whose fathers were liquidated in the thirties, when they were quite young. Many were simply the clever children of honest non-Party peasants or artisans, who did well at school and got scholarships to universities. Nearly all were picked out for their cleverness in their early twenties and found themselves in Stalin's last years members of an élite class which, under the grinding impact of the Stalin system, found a wonderful release in creating for themselves a sort of elegance, mental and physical, which had to be hidden from the world like the badge of a secret society. They were non-political in the sense that for them politics could be nothing but a particularly nauseating racket which they did not propose to join. They were political only in the sense that, regarding the processes of what they thought of as capitalism with a deep, instinctive loathing, they still believed that, when all was said and done, and in spite of rampant and appalling evils, the general idea *behind* the Soviet system – if only its particular applications could be done away with – had a nobility which other ideas quite manifestly lacked. Their acceptance of the fact that there was no conceivable way in which the particular applications *could* be done away with rendered them sterile – until Stalin died. Then, positively encouraged by the new Government, and sought out by the leadership desperately anxious, if only for prestige reasons, to make

Soviet officialdom more presentable, they began to come into their own.

As to how they bear it – meaning the system as such and the Neanderthal manners of so many of their seniors – it seems to me that the question hardly arises. Some may take to drink through frustration; but most do not. No doubt among themselves they seethe with furious discontent. But I question whether their feelings differ in kind from the feelings commonly experienced by the up-and-coming and clever starting to work to the top in any grossly expanded Western organization, from an old-fashioned textile firm to a Government department which is lagging behind the times. The Soviet Party bosses, because of their ingrained sycophancy and corruption, are more often contemptible where their opposite numbers in the West are less contemptible than absurd; but the Soviet young have had corruption and sycophancy under their eyes from the cradle, and, although they may, and often do, detest it, it does not seem extraordinary but rather a deplorable fact of life to be coped with when necessary but otherwise ignored. The spiritual strain is, I imagine, not very severe.

The really interesting and important question is not where do they come from, or how can they bear it, but where will they go?

It is fascinating to speculate if, at some formal interview, one sits round a table with the different generations. The head man, it may be an important newspaper editor, will be in his fifties, bleakly pompous and totally void, the orthodoxy, the slogans and catchwords, which saved his life during the terrible years, now the sum total of his being. His young assistants, easy and assured, with more brains in their little fingers than he has in his whole body, are doing their best not to show their chief up (or are they?); but they do show him up with every word they say, expressing with every intonation knowledge and understanding which he lacks. They are poker-faced and restrained, but they make him look a clod and a dolt, and an impure clod at that. Yet he is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, one of the select two hundred. And as a sort of connecting file between these so different generations there is a senior assistant in his forties, very quiet and very wary – not loutishly assertive like his boss, not relaxed like his juniors. He

is no less intelligent than they, you soon realize, although he says little. He is far closer in spirit to them. Born ten years later he would have been one of them; born ten years sooner he would never have survived. But, even so, he was born too soon. You discover, as you had already guessed, that he is a walking casualty, having spent years in one of the camps of the Far North. He is all right now; but he is never relaxed and never will be. And he is bitter. Because he is a Russian and a Russian patriot his instinct is to focus his bitterness on you, the foreigner, frivolous, irresponsible, inimical, and tainted: had there been no foreigners to scheme against the Revolution and the Russian people, living in venal comfort while Russians starved for an ideal, things would have turned out differently; his own life would not have been ruined; his father would not have been shot; his old mother would not have starved to death in the siege of Leningrad. So he envies you as a foreigner; and he hates you. He hates himself, too. At forty-five he is finished. And you find yourself wondering what will have happened to his juniors by the time they are forty-five.

How hopeless it is to generalize about whole generations! And yet it is inevitable. Of all the brilliant and presentable young men now occupying positions of responsibility in the Soviet Union, and adorning them, only a fraction would be found when put to the test to have real strength of character – much the same fraction as would be found in their opposite numbers in any other country. And yet the tell-tale surface manners are important. I think at this moment of one extremely well-known Soviet personage, another ornament of the Central Committee, whom I have watched bullying his own staff like a bad head-waiter bullying a bus boy; and I have seen that man white with fear and tense so that he trembled, positively grovelling, again like a bad head-waiter, in the presence of a senior member of his Government. But his subordinates did not join him in this exhibition; and they were not struck dead.

I have been talking of the cream of the younger men beginning to rise in what are called the liberal professions and the State and Party service. Until the last decade young men of comparable ability would not have dreamt of this sort of career: they would have gone automatically into science, into

engineering, into industry, meeting the great challenges of their day, helping to open up the country and its resources, and leaving 'public' life to the third-raters. This happens in all new countries. How much more so in a country like Stalin's Russia where the best were systematically killed off.

But what of the rest? Not everybody in the Soviet Union is a scientist, or an engineer, or a promising young professional, or official, or army officer. These, if all continues to go well, have the future before them and, while taking colour from the régime, will nevertheless, as their seniors disappear, increasingly modify it in their own interests and perhaps without much conscious thought. But the hinterland stretches far and deep. It embraces, among other things, the peasants in their millions. And these, Khrushchev notwithstanding, are still at odds with the brave new life of the bigger towns. They starve no longer; but they are still, *en masse*, as slovenly and inefficient (the Great Russians, not the Ukrainians, who are of different fibre) as any peasants in the world, ridden with superstition, inveterate drinkers of poteen, using every religious holiday in the old calendar to get drunk and neglect their animals and fields:

Overcoming Religious Survivals in the USSR is the title of a recent official pamphlet published in Moscow. Here is an extract to illuminate a side of Russia which Intourist does not show:

> And what a tremendous material loss is caused by these religious holidays, of which there are hundreds in the year. There are the 'big' holidays, like Easter and Christmas, and there are the holidays of the local patron saints.
>
> All too often, no sooner have they [the villagers] finished celebrating a 'big' holiday than along comes a 'Yegor's Day', which has to be celebrated too, and then the day of some other patron 'saint'. And then, before you know where you are, it is the saint's day of some other village. You have to rush over to join in. . . . And thus the celebrations are dragged out over a fortnight at a time, interfering with the fulfilment of the work plan and undermining labour discipline.
>
> Religious holidays do particularly great harm to agriculture. In the heat of the field-work season the harvest is not gathered in at the proper time because of absenteeism on account of these holidays. The *kolkhozes* and the State suffer heavy losses. . . .

Thus, for example, in the Rameshkov district of the Kalinin Region alone about seventy local saints' days are celebrated every year.

Again, in the (New Life) *kolkhoz* in the Serezhin district of the Veliki Luki Region, field-work comes to a complete standstill because of these religious holidays. In the harvest period alone the *kolkhozniks* celebrate no fewer than seven religious holidays. In this way the *kolkhoz* has suffered a loss of no less than 100,000 roubles.

In the Toropets district of the same Region, 'Yegor's Day' is celebrated. . . . The *kolkhozniks* and their brigadier 'bless' cows, pigs, and sheep. The next day they get drunk. The best time for sowing is missed.

These are not carefully husbanded examples. Over recent years the Soviet Press has carried hundreds of accounts of what goes on when the peasants, released from the subsistence existence of the Stalin era, kick over the traces and use their traditional feast days in the traditional way as an excuse for prolonged drinking bouts – cattle go hungry and unmilked, hens go off lay, the harvest blackens in the fields, and the grain is spilled, as one and all, from farm manager and Party members downwards, join in the orgies which give some sort of colour to their lives.*

And the towns? The provincial towns are still drab and melancholy places, though even as I write they are awakening from their long years of neglect. Too often there is nothing to do for workers existing in overcrowded tenements but play chess or dominoes or get drunk. Many get drunk. The drive against drunkenness initiated by Khrushchev, himself until lately a very heavy drinker, is not being carried out just for appearances sake. With higher wages coinciding with a steep post-war fall in the price of vodka, with, until a year or two ago, very little to be bought in the shops, heavy drinking had rapidly become a national disgrace; and you had only to watch the drinkers in the vodka shops to see at once that most of it was done not for conviviality but for oblivion: to escape from the drabness and bleakness of the life ordained by Stalin with the ceaseless,

* See the author's *Russia Without Stalin* for descriptions of Soviet peasant life and attitudes.

meaningless nagging from the lowest-grade Party activists with their interminable parroted lectures on a political theory which they did not understand, about which they cared nothing, and which, in any case, even if understood, was irrelevant.

This same revolt which produced drunkenness on a nation-wide scale, impairing health, morale, and production, also gave birth to the hooligans among the working class, the *stilyagi* among the better-off, the so-called jet-set among the children of the highly privileged.

Several times on a recent visit to Moscow I was taken to task by eminently respectable young Russians, of the kind I have already tried to describe, for writing so much about the *stilyagi* and the jazz craze. Actually I had not written a great deal: I had merely been the first to report these manifestations to the Western world. And they certainly called for reporting – though not for dwelling upon at such loving length as they have been since. The *stilyagi* are the bright young things in revolt against their whole environment who have focused all their inarticulate desires on jive and flashy clothes. In the West their opposite numbers, who come from a lower class, are called Teddy Boys and Teddy Girls. And the clothes the *stilyagi* wear correspond with great exactitude to the zoot suits of rebellious young Americans and the 'Edwardian' dress of rebellious young Englishmen. So do their haircuts. So do their customs. *Stilyagi* may also be 'hooligans', because the word 'hooliganism' in Russia covers every offence from throwing bottles at the referee at a football-match, or mildly breaking up a respectable dance, to robbery with violence. But, as a rule, the *stilyagi* are not hooligans at all. They are intent above all things on copying certain extreme Western manners picked up from Western films and Western illustrated magazines, passed eagerly from hand to hand, and smuggled records of Western jazz – which are then re-recorded on any material that comes to hand – often old X-ray plates obtained by 'speculators' from hospitals, and sold at enormous prices. They are barbarically elegant and highly self-conscious, and they call each other by Western nicknames and refer to Gorky Street as Broadway. They exist, and they are a real problem – though it seemed to me on my last visit to Russia, early in 1959, a diminishing one. And I sometimes felt

like telling my superior young friends in Moscow that they themselves, in their new smugness, were closer to the *stilyagi* than they knew: they happen to have brains and ability and a new chance to use them; the *stilyagi* have not. But in their own new elegance and their sometimes demonstrative rejection of the manners and methods of their seniors they are no less in revolt.

The jet-set are what one would expect: the sons and daughters of the very rich and the very privileged, who have no intention of working, believe in nothing at all (not even in revolt), and do their best to turn their fathers' Sochi villas into imitations of Palm Beach. They dress in imported European clothes; they drink themselves silly; they philander and fornicate; they gamble and they dance. Regarding the mass of the people as cattle and the intelligentsia as prigs and bores, they live almost entirely to themselves, in and out of each other's houses, and are thus rarely seen. They are not in the least interesting and they are not very much of a problem, except to their own families. Whether as their number increases they will become a problem of any magnitude is anybody's guess.

The real problems are elsewhere. The first and most obvious is the 'hooligan' problem. 'Hooliganism', as I have said, covers a multitude of sins. After the war, for example, it stood mainly for an appalling wave of robbery with violence, senseless beatings up, and rape – which made it undesirable for any ordinary citizen, particularly a woman, to be out at night, except in the very centre of Moscow or Leningrad or Kiev: the offenders then were chiefly demobilized soldiers and deserters. There was another wave of this sort of 'hooliganism' – mostly in the provincial towns – as a direct consequence of the amnesties after Stalin's death. But the problem today, evidently diminishing fast in the bigger cities, but still very acute in the provinces, is mainly a problem of juvenile delinquency. It is difficult to assess it because the term is so loosely used. But, broadly speaking, it appears to stem from the same causes, greatly magnified in the Soviet Union, and with special Soviet additions, as juvenile delinquency in Britain or America. Broken homes, lack of parental discipline and care, orphaning on a very big scale as a result of the war, atrocious housing conditions (one family to a room is still the rule in the cities), a sense of frustration and

futility. The situation is made worse in the Soviet Union by the lack of amenities in the way of cinemas and dance-halls – though the Government is striving hard to make television cheap and plentiful; the tradition of drunkenness and the cheapness of vodka; the lack of incentives to save – because, until recently, there was next to nothing to buy if you did save; the universal drabness of life, underlined by the dreary, meaningless, and (literally) maddening ramming home of Party slogans, Party clichés, and the rest.

For the past five years the Party has been conducting an all-out war on 'hooliganism'; but its strategy has been non-existent and its tactics uninspired. The ordinary constabulary, the Militia, are a poor lot, frightened by these violent young men, and only too ready to look the other way. The political police would not dream of mixing themselves up with common crime. Until a year or two ago the law was virtually useless: 'hooligans' could only be charged under articles of the judicial code which carried crushing sentences of imprisonment, out of all proportion to the actual crimes – with the result that they were not charged at all. Now the Code has been amended to make the punishment fit the crime, and the fact that the Soviet Government has at last officially recognized that common crime does and will persist under the régime (it was supposed to wither away automatically) is in itself of extreme importance.

But although delinquents are now being treated as such, this does not solve the problem posed by them; and the Government knows it. It appears to be setting great store on education in manners. It is trying to turn the *Komsomol* official into something between a Sunday-school teacher and Emily Post. It is seeking to enlist well-intentioned *Komsomols* and *Komsomolkas* into voluntary brigades to assist the police. But, even with the evidence under its eyes, it still seems to find it difficult to realize that the *Komsomol*, the Communist League of Youth, is no longer an élite and dedicated body, but, with its nineteen million members between the age of sixteen and twenty-eight, a cross-section of the whole of Soviet youth, including the lawless and the dissident.

Further, on a longer-term view, the Government seems to think that with increased prosperity, with more bread and more

circuses – with, it would say, an improved socialist environment – the young will give less trouble. This may be true in some cases; but we have only to look at our own working-class young, better paid, better fed, better looked after, and with more bread and more circuses than have ever existed in the history of the world, to know that material prosperity has little to do with the matter. What is lacking, in the Soviet Union, as in the 'capitalist' West, is a sense of direction, of place, of belonging.

And this leads us straight into the heart of the biggest problem of all, which the Soviet Government, from my own observation, has not even begun to notice.

I mean the problem of the decent and the well-intentioned young of, precisely, *Komsomol* age. The Party does not think of these as a problem because it lacks imagination and because they are so well-behaved. But if I were Khrushchev I should be worrying about them a good deal.

In so far as it is possible to discover at all what is going on in the minds of Russians about their own domestic affairs, I should say that on the whole, and with reservations, the up and coming young men in their thirties of whom I spoke at the beginning of this chapter are on Khrushchev's side. As far as they are concerned, he is the man who is breaking up the ice-jam and giving them their chance. But their juniors, and there are more of these, are another matter.

The main thing about the very young in the Soviet Union is that they are taking for granted certain material improvements which still fill their elders with delight – though with less delight than one might expect: memories are short, and the appetite grows with feeding. The Russians are the most patient people in the world when there is nothing to hope for; but once hope enters the room they become very impatient indeed. Few are particularly grateful to Khrushchev, or to anyone else, for the remarkable improvement in their living standards. The majority is inclined to say: if it can happen now it could have happened before; in any case it is not happening fast enough. And look at the prices in the shops! Ten years ago they would have given their eyes to see in the shops what can now be seen every day. Now they grumble because all these undreamt-of things are so dear that they cannot all be bought simultaneously. It is all very understandable and human; but it is a little hard on Khrushchev.

The very young are more exigent still. To be twenty-one in Russia today means that you were fifteen when Stalin died, eighteen when you were told by Khrushchev that Stalin, far from being a demi-god, as you had been brought up all your life to believe, was fallible in the extreme. When the war ended you were six; and by 1950, when you were twelve, the country was through the worst. Because in Russia the children have the best of everything (the Russians are kinder to children than we are, on the whole), you will have no conception of the hardness of past times. Now, at twenty-one, you are well-fed, well-dressed, well-educated, in some ways well-entertained – and all this you take for granted.

It is an interesting situation, and a difficult one for Khrushchev, who does not in the least take the recent improvement in living conditions for granted, and who perhaps finds it impossible to think himself into the minds of countless youngsters, whole generations, who are crying out in effect not 'See how far we have come!' but rather, 'Where do we go from here? And quickly!' In a speech at Kiev in April 1959, Khrushchev permitted himself one of those revealing asides which help to build up a picture of the immediate past in the Soviet Union so much at variance with the official claims of only three or four years ago:

> It is pleasant now to pass through a village. It used to be different. It used to be as though Mamai [one of the Tartar invaders who laid waste to Muscovy] and his horde had only just passed through. Not only were there no new buildings of any kind, but even the old ones were rotting and dilapidated. For most collective farms at that time simply could not afford to build.

The older peasants knew very well what Khrushchev was talking about; and, if they did not share his pride, they at least shared his enjoyment in the new building he went on to describe: life in most villages is still fairly stringent, but, compared with four or five years ago, it has been wonderfully transformed. The young take the transformation for granted, and want more, and quickly.

The young are also interested in problems other than ways and means of achieving material progress. Not much in the countryside just yet, but very much in the towns. And everywhere I went on my last visit in 1959 I found, or was told of, variations of a deep disquiet among all the more intelligent youngsters in their late teens and early twenties 'Very well! We know that things were bad and now are better. We know that when it comes to material achievement the Government is on the right lines and the country is on the move. We know that it is only a matter of time before we catch up with America – look at the rate we are going! And we have helped! Some of us, and many of our friends, responded to the Government's call. We went, nearly half a million of us, to do our stint with the sowing and the harvest in the Virgin lands. Another half million of us have gone off to Siberia to help open up new country and build new towns and industries. It is all very fine, and we realize the necessity. But what next? You cannot live by bread alone. We have lots of bread now, and much of it of very good quality. You cannot live by machines alone. We have such machines, and in such quantity, as were never imagined in the history of the world. We have, moreover, the sputniks. But who can live by them?'

And so on . . . A young Communist, loyal but puzzled, twenty-six, standing at a crisis in his life and wondering whether to go on from the *Komsomol* to join the Party, had been talking about the sputniks with a certain pride: 'How odd,' he said, 'to think of them up there now! At this moment, endlessly circling – little bits of the Soviet Union cruising through infinity. I wonder where they are at just this moment? I wonder what they're *doing* up there in space!'

'Seeking God!' I murmured, a little wearily.

That, of course, was a great joke. Sputniks in search of God! He must remember to tell his friends that one.

Then suddenly he broke off and exclaimed: 'But you're being sarcastic. It may be a good joke; but who really knows? I sometimes wonder if instead of sending up sputniks we should not be seeking more down here.'

No, he was not in the least a potential Christian convert. He didn't have to explain that to me. What he was asking himself

was whether Khrushchev in his enthusiasm for practical achievements had ever stopped to wonder what these achievements were for. Because sometimes he seemed to believe in material progress simply for its own sake. And that, if it should be true, really wasn't good enough; was it? 'We want,' he went on, 'a man who can make us *believe*.'

I seemed to have heard that one before. The Russians, the Communists (as though they were the same thing), we are repeatedly told in the West, at least have a faith: what we have to do is to offer and make real a counter-faith to Communism. Otherwise how can we help going under? And now, in Moscow, 'We want a man who can make us *believe*.'

I was not, I should make it clear, in the least surprised by this. There was nothing new in it. The only thing new was that on this and other occasions young Russians were prepared to say this sort of thing to strangers. Anybody who knows the Soviet Union at all has known for years that the Communist idea has long ceased to be an active faith. What the young have believed in is their own country and its great future; and now that the great future is almost the present they are beginning to ask if this is enough.

CHAPTER 5

What is it All About?

THERE are long reaches on the lower Volga where to a man standing on the left bank, the Eastern bank, the main stream is invisible. Indeed, there seems to be no main stream at all. There is a labyrinth of channels and backwaters connecting in a more or less indeterminate manner great areas of virtually stagnant water, merging into swamp-land. At times in these channels the current, what there is of it, appears to be flowing backwards. Nevertheless, even although the main stream seems to be quite swallowed up, there is a general sense of steady and relentless movement, immense and ponderous, in one direction. And from time to time a steamer goes by, or a tug pulling a string of barges, riding high above the reeds and dreaming waters, and indicating clearly enough the location of the great channel, and its direction.

From the right bank, the western bank, which, as with all Russian rivers flowing north or south, is raised up, the picture is quite different. Here one stands above the great stream itself, a highway, clear-cut and tremendous, its eastern margin shimmering away into an indeterminate horizon where water mingles with the land.

Sometimes inside Russia, looking out over the vast land, I have felt like the man on the left bank of the river. I knew there was a stream, somewhere out in the middle distance, but the human tangle of cross-currents, contradictory interests, ideological prejudices, all enclosed, as it were, in the prison of Russia's own past, made it very hard to see, to define. In these pages I have tried to suggest some of this complication, and, at the same time, to indicate the general direction of the current without formally defining it: to make it felt.

Often in the past I have been criticized for refusing to put the official Marxist-Leninist ideology into the forefront of Soviet society and life. I should take more notice of this ideology if anyone could tell me what it is – other than an impressive

doctrinal rag-bag full of bits and pieces of ideas and feelings (above all, feelings), some of them constructive and good, others plain bad, others simply silly. There are bits and pieces of Marx's teachings about economics, of Hegel's dialectic, of Pavlov and his conditioned reflexes, of Lenin's ideas about capitalist imperialism and, more immediately, how to get power and keep it. And so on and so on. Stalin made interesting contributions, some of which were in flat contradiction to anything thought of by Lenin: e.g. his rejection of egalitarianism and his casuistical definitions of self-determination among nations and the nature of just and unjust wars. Khrushchev makes a new contribution every week: some sort of magic Leninist gloss is forthcoming to justify whatever sudden shift in whatever direction this consummate politician happens to think up from one day to the next. People who expect one to take the resultant body of doctrine seriously expect too much.

I am not in the least suggesting that Soviet official thinking is totally devoid of ideological bias and direction; it is not. But I have yet to see it demonstrated that Marxist-Leninism in the Soviet Union today means anything more than a general conviction that the State comes before the individual, that unbridled free enterprise based on the exploitation of multitudes by private and irresponsible individuals is a bad thing and vulgar into the bargain, that the Western peoples engaged in cut-throat competition and relying in the past too much on the exploitation of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and so on, are heading for economic catastrophe, that the Soviet system (defined for the moment as the transitional stage between Socialism and Communism) will prove stronger, and that it is the duty and the glory of the Soviet Union to hasten with all means in its power the collapse of the Western system and the consolidation of her own. What the Soviet system actually is I have tried to suggest in previous chapters. It is one way, it seems to me to have been an unnecessarily painful, brutal, and wasteful way, of propelling an extremely backward agrarian country into the middle of the industrial twentieth century. The way was developed by Russians for Russians, and it is possible to argue that it suited Russians. But it certainly suits nobody else. Khrushchev must now be convinced that it suits neither the Poles, for example,

nor the Yugoslavs – though, naturally, it has points of interest for all countries trying to industrialize themselves in quick time, or even to cope with the problems of running a highly developed, increasingly centralized industrial mass society. I suspect that as time goes on the Russians will have more valuable things to suggest on these lines – and few of them will have any discernible connexion with Karl Marx.

Lenin, in October 1917, gave the *coup de grâce* to a shattered society which, six months earlier, had (without Lenin's help) thrown over the Tsarist autocracy and tried to save itself by setting up a constitutional government, improvised in the heat and exhaustion of war, which would gradually bring the country into line with contemporary needs. Lenin's task was to destroy all vestiges of the past and write on a clean slate.

Stalin, in 1924, set himself the task of preserving the brand new Soviet Union and turning it into a going concern fit to stand up against the most powerful industrialized countries of the West which, he believed, were waiting their opportunity to fall upon his country and dismember it. In 1945 he set himself the new task of making his country invulnerable to attack and, at the same time, weakening by all possible means the unity of the West, as well as the strength of individual powers. In his first great task he just succeeded, at an appalling cost. In his second task he largely failed. He went about it to begin with as though no such thing as nuclear fission existed, surrounded himself with military liabilities instead of a firm glacis by his brutal behaviour to the satellites, and united the West for a time as never before, strengthening the individual Western powers in the process.

The task of Stalin's successor seems to me perfectly clear. The Soviet Union is potentially an incomparable power (unless we believe that China can outdistance her). It has the resources, the land, the people, and the brains. Khrushchev knows this; and he evidently sees himself as the man whose destiny it is to push and guide his country into the fulfilment of its immense potentiality. If all goes well the end of the current Seven-year Plan should see the Soviet Union on the threshold of this consummation. Khrushchev will then be seventy, if he lives. And already he is thinking in terms of a second Seven-year Plan, for completion in 1972, which is to carry the country into a realm of material prosperity so far unrivalled by any nation in the history of the world.

What could be a more magnificent task? Lenin the Liberator and the Founder; Stalin the Consolidator and the Defender; Khrushchev the Builder of the earthly paradise?

I have said enough, I hope, to indicate that by the time this stage is reached (indeed, even during the course of this current Plan) more problems will have arisen that were never dreamed of by Lenin or Marx – or Stalin; and that some of the problems already touched on will have become acute. Paradoxically, as the Soviet Union moves into smoother and kinder waters and begins to relax a little, her story becomes each moment more interesting and more exciting. Other nations have achieved high productivity and prosperity almost by accident: having achieved it, they hardly know what to do with it. If the present Soviet plans are fulfilled, the Russians, at least in the eyes of the Government, will have achieved prosperity as a result of deliberate planning. Will they, any more than we, know what to do with it when they have got it? This, of course, is the question that is troubling the very young, as discussed in an earlier chapter.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union is not alone in the world; and in its relations with the outside world it is even more a prisoner of its own past – and the past of Tsarist Russia too – than it is in its domestic arrangements. For when it comes to home affairs it is quite in the Russian, and the Soviet, tradition to change direction violently, to lay an axe to past policies: the people can take it. But when it comes to foreign policy, where the Government of the day has to manoeuvre under the eyes of all the world it is not so easy for it to eat its words, especially when those words have always been so unnecessarily positive and circumstantial; nor is it easy to cut through the tangle produced by past misdeeds in the international arena – as Stalin's successors found most bitterly in 1956 in Hungary and Poland. A Khrushchev can open the prisons of a Stalin and nurse the survivors of those unjustly accused back to life. He can quietly drop planting maize where maize will not grow. He can even, although with difficulty and pain, encourage men with brains and vision to use their brains and follow their vision. He can experiment with all

manner of devices to make the machinery of distribution as efficient as the machinery of production. But when it comes to dealing with the hopeless mess that Stalin made of the Soviet Union's relations with her neighbours and the world in general he, or any other conceivable Soviet leader, has little real freedom of action. Here matters are not under his absolute control: the simple *ukase* is not enough.

Lenin put Russia at loggerheads with the world by the simple act of announcing that his goal was nothing less than world revolution through violence on what he chose to call (and all too few pointed out his error) Marxist lines. He said, in a word, that the Bolsheviks, who in no time at all became identified with the Government of Russia, proposed to use all means in their power to cast down all other established governments. The said established governments, and the people who supported them out of conviction or *faute de mieux*, had every reason to view this challenge with annoyance. Stalin, realizing that the first task was to make the Soviet Union, the first Bolshevik state, strong, withdrew for a time from the active fomentation of revolution abroad and devoted himself to consolidating the régime at home. But in so doing he made the name of the Bolsheviks, correctly, a by-word for brutality and cynicism. When the time came for the Soviet Union to look outwards again he was clearly interested above all else in strategic gains to safeguard the frontiers of the Soviet Union. But to camouflage his naked *Realpolitik* he revived the world revolutionary idea; and there was no call for any Soviet citizen to be surprised when foreigners took him at his word. It is possible, though I think improbable, that in the period of flux and chaos after the war Stalin may really have believed for a moment that world revolution, *with Moscow at its head*, was on the cards (certainly some foolish Soviet Communists believed this). But he cannot have believed it for long. By 1948 he had discovered that all the might of the Soviet Union could not even hold down the Yugoslavs. By 1949 it was clear that even though there might be a so-called Communist revolution in every country in the world the Soviet Union would have to divide the leadership with China. . . . And who, pray, would run a Communist United States of America? Little men in uniform from Omsk?

Stalin's approach to international affairs was distinguished by a certain crassness; but the West matched his crassness with its silliness. How can we ever have allowed ourselves to be persuaded, even for a moment, that the pretensions of the Moscow Government, whether Moscow itself believed in them or not, had any basis in reality? Why, instead of panicking, did no Western statesman sit down and work out the fantastic implications of a world run from the Kremlin and show that the very idea was absurd? There may be revolutions still. There may be revolutions all over the place. America herself may go Communist – to continue using this almost meaningless word. But a Communist America will not be run from Moscow.

There is only one people in the world which, given the latest weapons, could by sheer weight of numbers swamp the world if, later on, they so desired. I mean the Chinese. And the Soviet Union of course is acutely conscious of China, with her closely packed 600 millions, increasing at the rate of 20 million a year – and right up against the Soviet Union's so loosely packed 200 millions increasing at the rate of 3·5 million a year, and striving in vain to fill up the vast empty spaces of the Soviet Far East.

Khrushchev knows all this. But he, too, is caught up in his own past. He cannot suddenly turn round, even if he so desires and exclaim 'Peccavi! Let us go back to 1939.' The *status quo* is the occupational incubus of all successful politicians, as we know to our cost (think of Cyprus; think of the Middle East); and no matter how preposterous and, in the long run, hopeless, the Russian position may be in at least some of the satellites, the ungovernable instinct of any Soviet statesman must be to hang on to that dire inheritance, come what may. This in itself would be enough to account for Khrushchev's resurrection of the Berlin crisis. Add to this the attribution of exaggerated importance to certain American military fire-eaters. Add to this a very natural suspicion of West German intentions. Add to this the stubborn, perhaps inexpugnable relics of a Leninist interpretation of world events. Add all these together and it is easy enough to see why Khrushchev might be expected to go on being difficult.

Even this is not the whole sum. Most Russian statesmen and diplomats are deeply affected by the antique Russian tradition,

a product of history and environment, of, when in doubt, pushing outwards along the line of least resistance to infinity – until continued progress becomes manifestly dangerous.

There is also the question of China. Whether Leninism is a live faith or not in the Soviet Union, it is a received convention, perverted as it may be. And it is one of those familiar ironies of history that just at the time when a Soviet Government shows every sign of moving away from the revolutionary spirit, contenting itself with paying due lip-service to the ideas of the great Founder, the largest people on earth must needs suddenly wake up and bring the whole sad issue once more to the boil. How difficult, how impossible, for Khrushchev to admit that Mao Tse-tung is a better Bolshevik than he. . . .

It is possible, though doubtful, that Khrushchev himself would be prepared to do just this if he were an absolute autocrat filling a power vacuum. But, as I have tried to indicate, he is very far from that. He has constantly to watch his step. Stalin could do what he liked. He made by sheer force of personality the office of First Secretary of the Party, regarded as comparatively unimportant when Lenin gave it to him, the most important in the land and the repository of all power. He imposed himself on the country, and killed and killed until there was nobody to stand against him. Khrushchev's position is very different. In the last analysis he has reached his present position by consent. He eliminated Malenkov and Molotov by consent. He did not impose himself on his colleagues; he persuaded his colleagues to raise him up. Their reasons for doing this were as various as the men themselves: some were good and some were bad. But one thing we may be sure of, and that is that their support was not given to Khrushchev in return for nothing; and among those who have so far supported him in general are certainly some who dissent sharply from at least some of his ideas. Further, Khrushchev has not liquidated (with the possible exception of Malenkov) those who struggled against him. Nor can he liquidate them without producing a new situation inside the Soviet Union which would make nonsense of all his professed ideas.

So he finds himself in a difficult position. He has to give his people peace – a state which they demand with all their being,

and for good reason. He has to go on liberalizing within bounds if he is to get the people on his side so that the Soviet Union can be finally pulled out of the Stalinist rut. And, at the same time, he has to convince all those sceptical of his pretensions and his reforms that he is not selling the pass.

It is against this background that we should see his insistent demands for a new Summit meeting. And this background also helps to explain the immense importance he attaches to his exchanges with the President of the United States.

APPENDIX

Dr Zhivago *and the* Novy Mir *Letter*

IN October 1958, when the uproar about *Dr Zhivago* was loudest, and when Pasternak himself was being bullied into rejecting the Nobel Prize, the authorities in Moscow decided that they must do something to justify their attitude. What they did was to publish a long and interesting document, said to be a letter sent to Pasternak two years earlier by the then editorial board of *Novy Mir*. In it were set out the reasons for *Novy Mir*'s rejection of *Dr Zhivago*. It is the custom in the Soviet Union for important novels to be serialized, without abridgement, in one or other of the big literary reviews before appearing in book form.

This letter is printed in full for the light it throws on the mentality of Pasternak's colleagues and of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Whether the letter, as printed, was actually written and sent to Pasternak in 1956, or whether it was concocted as an afterthought, is neither here nor there. What matters is that the signatories clearly regarded it as a good and proper letter.

And, indeed, it is far more reasonable in tone and subtle in attack than the usual published criticism of work which Soviet officialdom has decided to condemn. Here are very few of the usual clichés and stereotyped passages of vicious invective. Reading the letter, one has the impression that one is overhearing the sort of argument that, normally, goes on in private, behind closed doors.

In the main, the letter speaks for itself, and all readers of *Dr Zhivago* will be able to follow the argument. Unlike the general run of official polemics in the Soviet Union, it requires no interpretation for the benefit of those unfamiliar with Communist jargon and double-talk. The English reader may very well be surprised by the way in which many aspects of the novel offensive to the orthodox Communist have been completely ignored. A great point is made about Pasternak's generalization of the revolutionary chaos in 1917 and his failure to distinguish

between the February Revolution, when the Tsar was forced to abdicate as a result of a popular explosion (in which Lenin, then in Switzerland, had no part), and the October Revolution, when the Bolshevik minority overthrew the Provisional Government and imposed their own dictatorship. But the writers of the letter do not concern themselves very much with matters of this kind. They concentrate their attack on Zhivago as hero.

In this attack the English reader familiar with the novel will find a fair amount of distortion and false emphasis. But this seems to me inevitable and unimportant. What is truly interesting and revealing is the attitude of Pasternak's colleagues to novel-writing as such. In brief, the editorial board of *Novy Mir* is clearly unable to think of a novel without a hero in the most elementary sense of the word. Zhivago is the leading character, therefore, by definition, he is intended as the hero. Therefore Pasternak must approve whole-heartedly of everything Zhivago says and does. . . . So the whole criticism, while reasonable and subtle up to a point, and moderately presented, misses the target absolutely. And the writers of the letter, some of whom are themselves distinguished novelists, clearly think they have scored a bull. If this is shown by nothing else, it is shown conclusively by the fact that they have chosen to quote in full a key passage from the novel (Part 4 of Chapter Eleven: 'The Forest Brotherhood' here given in the translation by Max Hayward, and Manya Harari, and printed by permission of Collins) to prove their point – namely that Zhivago is no hero: as if Pasternak thought otherwise.

If the main attack had been along the lines that Zhivago was 'anti-hero' and that this was a bad thing to be condemned it would be understandable, if, one might think, wrong-headed. But what I myself find most disturbing in this letter is not the attack as such, but the total failure to see what Pasternak was trying to do on the part of men trying their level best to be reasonable and moderate. Far more than to the orthodox viciousness of the hatchet men of Soviet literature this letter testifies to the existence of a gulf between the human and the Soviet way of looking at things that will be far more difficult to bridge than the political differences, which obsess us all today.

TO THE EDITORS OF LITERATURNAYA GAZETA

The editors of *Novy Mir* magazine ask you to publish in your paper the letter which the members of *Novy Mir* Editorial Board sent in September 1956 to B. L. Pasternak about the manuscript of his novel *Doctor Zhivago*.

This letter, rejecting the manuscript, was, of course, not intended for publication. It was addressed to the author of the novel when there were still hopes that he would draw the necessary conclusions from the criticism contained in the letter, and it was not thought that Pasternak would adopt a course calculated to bring discredit on the lofty name of a Soviet writer.

However, circumstances have decidedly changed. Far from heeding the criticism of his novel, Pasternak thought it proper to hand over his manuscript to foreign publishers. In so doing, Pasternak flouted the elementary notions of the honour and conscience of a Soviet writer.

Published abroad, this book of Pasternak's, which is a libel on the October Revolution, on the people who made it and on socialist construction in the Soviet Union, was taken up by the bourgeois press and seized upon by international reaction as a new weapon for their arsenal.

Now, as we have learned, Pasternak has been awarded a Nobel Prize. It is perfectly clear that this award is in no way based on an impartial assessment of the literary merits of Pasternak's work itself, but is linked with the anti-Soviet clamour raised around *Doctor Zhivago*. It is an act of pure politics hostile to our country and directed towards the fomentation of the cold war.

Those are the reasons why we now believe it necessary to make public this letter of the old *Novy Mir* Editorial Board to B. Pasternak. It explains convincingly enough why Pasternak's novel could have no place in a Soviet magazine, although, naturally, it does not express to the full the disgust and contempt we, like all Soviet writers, feel over Pasternak's present shameful, anti-patriotic position.

The letter is being published simultaneously in the November issue of *Novy Mir*.

A. T. TVARDOVSKY, Editor-in-Chief, *Novy Mir*
The Editorial Board: Y. N. GERASIMOV B. G. ZAKS
S. N. GOLUBOV B. A. LAVRENEV
A. G. DEMENTYEV V. V. OVECHKIN
24 October 1958 (Deputy Editor-in-Chief) K. A. FEDIN

LETTER TO BORIS PASTERNAK FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF NOVY MIR

Boris Leonidovich,

We have read the manuscript of your novel *Doctor Zhivago*, which you submitted to our magazine, and we should like to tell you, with all frankness, what we thought after reading it. We were both alarmed and distressed.

We realize, of course, that if it were merely a matter of likes and dislikes, a matter of personal tastes or of sharp, perhaps, but purely literary divergencies, an aesthetic altercation might very well hold little interest for you. You might agree, or you might disagree and say: 'The magazine rejects the manuscript, so much the worse for the magazine: the artist retains his private opinion of its aesthetic merits.'

In this case, however, the situation is much more complex than that. The thing that disturbs us about your novel is something that neither the editors nor the author can alter by cuts or revision. We mean the spirit of the novel, its general tenor, the author's view on life, the real one or, at any rate, the one gathered by the reader. This is what we consider it our duty to discuss with you as men whom you may listen to or not, but whose collective opinion you have no reason to regard as biased, so that it would be reasonable, at least, to hear it out.

The spirit of your novel is that of non-acceptance of the socialist revolution. The general tenor of your novel is that the October Revolution, the Civil War, and the social transformations involved brought the people nothing but suffering, and destroyed the Russian intelligentsia, physically or morally. The burden of the author's views on the past of our country and, above all, the first decade after the October Revolution (for it is with the end of this decade – barring the epilogue – that the novel closes) is that the October Revolution was a mistake, that the participation in it of sympathizers from among the intelligentsia was an irreparable calamity, and that all that happened afterwards was evil.

To those who had earlier read your 'Year 1905', 'Lieutenant Schmidt', 'Second Birth', 'Waves', and 'Early Trains' – poetry which we, at any rate, thought imbued with a different spirit, a different tenor – your novel was a distressing experience.

It would not be a mistake, we think, to say that you regard the story of Doctor Zhivago's life and death as a story of the life and death of Russian intelligentsia, a story of its road to the revolution and

through the revolution, and of its death as a result of the revolution.

There is in the novel an easily discernible watershed which, overriding your own arbitrary division of the work into two parts, lies somewhere between the first third of the novel and the rest. This watershed – the year 1917 – is a divide between the expected and the accomplished. Before it, your heroes expected something different from what actually occurred, and beyond it came what they had not expected and did not want and which, as you depict it, leads them to physical or moral death.

The first third of your novel, covering a period of twenty years before the revolution, does not itself contain a clearly expressed non-acceptance of the coming revolution but, to our mind, the roots of this non-acceptance are already there. Later, when you begin to describe the accomplished revolution, your views develop into a system that is more orderly, more forthright in its non-acceptance of the revolution. In the first third of the novel they are still as contradictory. On the one hand, you admit – in a general, abstract way – that the world of bourgeois property and bourgeois inequality is unjust, and you not only reject it as an ideal, but actually regard it as unacceptable to the mankind of the future. But once you turn from general declarations to a description of life, to actual people, these people – both the masters of unjust, bourgeois life and their intellectual lackeys, helping to preserve the iniquity you admit in general – turn out to be, with extremely rare exceptions such as, for instance, the blackguard Komarovsky, the nicest, the kindest, the subtlest of spirits, who do good, who seek, who suffer, and who are actually incapable of hurting a fly.

This whole world of pre-revolutionary, bourgeois Russia, which you disclaim in general, turns out to be quite acceptable to you when you get down to a specific description of it. More, it turns out to be poignantly dear to your author's heart. The only unacceptable thing about it is some general iniquity of exploitation and inequality which, however, remains behind the scenes while everything that actually happens in your novel turns out, in the final analysis, to be most idyllic: capitalists donate to the revolution and live honestly; intellectuals enjoy a complete freedom of thought and are intellectually independent of the bureaucratic machine of the Tsarist régime; poor girls find rich and disinterested protectors; while sons of workmen and concierges find no difficulty in getting an education.

On balance, the characters in your novel live well and justly. Some of them want to live better and more justly – this, indeed, is as much as your main heroes have to do with the expectation of the revolution. The novel gives no real picture of the country or the people. Nor, consequently, does it explain why revolution became inevitable in Russia, or reveal a measure of the intolerable suffering and social injustice that had led the people to it.

Most of the characters whom the author has lovingly invested with a part of his spirit are people who have grown accustomed to living in an atmosphere of talk about the revolution, which, however, has not become a necessity for any one of them. They like to talk about it in one way or another, but they can also do very well without it, and there was nothing in their life before the revolution that was either intolerable or merely poisoned their life, if no more than spiritually. And there are no other people in the novel (if we are to confine ourselves to characters who enjoy the author's sympathy and who are drawn up with anything like a similar measure of penetration and detail).

As for the people suffering in the abstract behind the scenes, their suffering appears in the first third of the novel as something of an unknown quantity, something that is supposed to be; and the author's real attitude to this unknown quantity becomes clear only after the revolution is accomplished and the people begin to act.

The first third of the novel is, first and foremost, a chronicle of several gifted individuals, living a many-sided intellectual life and self-centred on the problems of their own spiritual existence. One of these gifted individuals, Nikolai Nikolayevich, says at the very beginning of the novel that 'the herd instinct is the refuge of mediocrity, whether it is loyalty to Solovyev, or Kant, or Marx. The truth is sought after only by isolated individuals, and they break with those who do not love it enough. Is there anything on earth that deserves our loyalty? Such things are very few.'

This passage occurs in the context of Nikolai Nikolayevich's god-seeking. But beginning with the second third of the novel it is gradually transformed into an epitome of the author's attitude to the people and to the revolutionary movement.

And then comes, or rather explodes, the revolution. It explodes in the faces of your heroes unexpectedly because – for all their talk – they did not expect it, and when it comes the revolution and its workings plunge them into amazement. In speaking of how the revolution enters your novel, it is even hard to distinguish between the February and the October revolutions. In your novel it all comes out as pretty much of the same thing, as 1917 in general. At first, the changes were not too sharp and did not disrupt too noticeably the life of your 'truth-seeking individuals', your heroes; but, later, the changes went farther and cut deeper, more painfully. Their life became increasingly dependent on the tremendous, unprecedented

things happening in the country, and this dependence, as it increased, infuriated them and made them regret what had happened.

Theoretically, it is difficult to imagine a novel set to a large extent in 1917, which does not, in one way or another, offer a definite appraisal of the social difference between the February and the October revolutions. And yet, this is precisely what happens in your novel!

It is hard to imagine that first the February Revolution and then the October Revolution, which divided so many people into different camps, should not identify the attitudes of the heroes of a novel set in that period. It is hard to believe that people leading an intellectual life and occupying a certain position in society should not identify in one way or another their attitude at that time to such events as the overthrow of autocracy, the advent to power of Kerensky, the July days, Kornilov's revolt, the October uprising, the seizure of power by the Soviets and the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly.

And yet, the characters in your novel do not openly state their views of any of these events, they do not give any straightforward estimate of the events by which the country lived at the period. One might, of course, say that the author simply did not care to call things by their proper names, that he did not care to give a straightforward estimate of the events either himself or through his characters, and there may be some truth in the explanation. But we think that the whole truth lies much deeper than this partial explanation.

The truth, to our mind, is that your 'truth-seeking individuals' become increasingly furious with the mounting revolution not because they do not accept some of its specific forms such as the October uprising or the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, but because of the various private discomforts to which they personally are doomed by it.

Faced with an actual revolution which took the place of their talk about a revolution and in which they were mere by-standers, these 'truth-seeking individuals', whom the author originally presented as men of ideas, or, rather, men living in a world of ideas, turn out to be, almost to a man, people who are far from having any desire to uphold any idea, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, let alone sacrifice their lives for it.

They continue, to all appearances, to lead a spiritual life, but their attitude to the revolution, and above all their actions, become increasingly contingent on the measure of personal discomforts brought about by the revolution such as hunger, cold, overcrowding, disruption of the cosy, well-fed pre-war existence they had become accustomed to. It is hard to name outright another work in which heroes with pretensions to higher spiritual values have, in the years

of the greatest events, shown such concern for and talked so much about food, potatoes, firewood, and other comforts and discomforts of life as in your novel.

Your heroes, and above all Doctor Zhivago himself, spend the years of the revolution and civil war in search of relative well-being and tranquillity, and this amid the vicissitudes of struggle, amid general devastation and ruin. They are not cowards, physically. You go out of your way, as author, to stress this.

But, at the same time, their only goal is to preserve their own life, and this is what guides them in all their main actions. It is the knowledge that their life is not secure in the conditions of the revolution and Civil War that leads them to growing resentment against all that happens. They are not property-grabbers, gourmets, or sybarites. They need all this not for its own sake but merely as a means of continuing, in safety, their spiritual lives.

What lives? Why, the ones they led in the past, for nothing new enters their spiritual lives and nothing changes them. They regard the possibility of continuing them, without outside interference, as the greatest blessing not only for themselves, but for all mankind, and since the revolution steadfastly requires them to act, to say 'for' or 'against', they turn, in self-defence, from a feeling of alienation from the revolution to a feeling of active hostility to it.

In those grim years, which called for various sacrifices not only on the part of those who had accomplished the revolution but also on the part of its enemies, those who had fought it, arms in hand, the 'truth-seeking individuals' turned out to be merely 'highly gifted' philistines and, indeed, it is difficult to imagine how, say, the Zhivago family would subsequently have looked upon the revolution had they not found themselves for various reasons in the winter of 1918 in a Moscow flat so crowded and so hungry as the novel has it. However, life in Moscow was indeed cold, hungry, and difficult, and the 'truth-seeking individual' becomes a food-grabbing intellectual, who wants to continue his existence so much that he forgets that he is a doctor and conceals his calling in the years of national suffering, privations, and epidemics.

'There are no peoples, only individuals in that new mode of existence and that new form of communion conceived by the heart and known as the kingdom of God,' Doctor Zhivago remarks on one of the pages of the novel, as yet without reference to his future existence during the Civil War. Subsequently, however, it turns out that there is a deep meaning to this remark with reference to himself. It becomes clear in these hard years of Civil War that he does not admit of such a thing as a nation. He recognizes only himself an

individual, whose interests and suffering he holds above everything else, an individual who in no way feels himself a part of a nation, who feels no responsibility to the people.

When he finds himself surrounded by terrible nation-wide suffering, Doctor Zhivago forgets everything but his own 'I' and, as an appendix to it, people related to this 'I', directly or indirectly. This 'I', as embodied in himself and his dear ones, is not only the sole thing worth bothering about but, indeed, the only thing of value in the whole universe. It embraces all the past and the future, and if it were to die, everything would die with it.

It is no accident that Larissa Fyodorovna, in complete consonance with Zhivago's thoughts, tells him in the midst of the Civil War: 'You and I are like the first people, Adam and Eve, who had nothing to cover themselves with at the beginning of the world. We are just as naked and homeless at its end. You and I are the last memory of all the incalculable greatness achieved in the world in all the thousands of years lying between them and us, and in memory of these vanished wonders we breathe and love, and cry, and hold on to each other, and cling on to each other.'

A new page opens in the history of mankind, the October Revolution stirs hundreds of millions of people throughout the world into motion for decades to come but, it appears, the only thing of value left, the only memory of the 'incalculable great' past of mankind is Doctor Zhivago and the woman sharing his life: Doesn't it seem to you that there is in this almost pathological individualism the naïve megalomania of people who cannot and do not want to see anything around them and who therefore attach a comically exaggerated importance to their own persons?

You say in your novel through Doctor Zhivago that 'it is the end of man, his condemnation to conform to type'. This is the reverse side of your pretence as author that your 'truth-seeking individuals' are superior people who cannot be fitted into the definition of a type, people who are above it.

It is difficult to agree with this, however. We should not want to waive the right to identify both Doctor Zhivago and other characters kindred to him in spirit as phenomena sufficiently typical of revolution, civil war, and subsequent periods as well. We least of all want to say that such people did not exist and that the story of Doctor Zhivago is far from being typical.

As we see it, Doctor Zhivago precisely personifies a definite type of a Russian intellectual of that period, a man who loved the people and knew how to talk about their sufferings, but who could not cure these sufferings either in the literal or figurative sense of the word. It is

the type of a man swollen with a sense of his own importance, of his own value, a man far removed from the people and ready to betray them in time of difficulty, to divorce himself from both their sufferings and their cause. It is the type of 'highly intellectual' philistine, tame when left alone, quick to bristle up when touched, and ever ready, in thought and deed, to be unfair to those who offer what he takes to be the smallest, real or imaginary, slight on his own person.

There have been such people, and not few of them, and our point of dispute with you is not whether they have existed or not, but whether they have earned the unqualified apologia of your novel, whether they are the cream of Russian intelligentsia, as you seek to prove by every artifice of your talent, or whether they are its disease. The appearance of this disease in the period of confusion and reaction between the first and second Russian revolutions is easily explained, but is there any point in presenting these people, with their philistine inaction in the hour of crisis, with their cowardice in social life, and their constant evasion of a definite answer to the question 'whose side are you on?', as superior beings who allegedly have the right to pass objective judgement on the surrounding world and, above all, the revolution and the people.

It is through these people and, above all, Doctor Zhivago, that you seek to pass judgement on all that happened in our country beginning with the October Revolution, and it can be said without exaggeration that no character has so much of the author's sympathy as Doctor Zhivago and those who share his views: their dialogues in most cases read like monologues.

It can be added that nothing in the novel has as much talent and care lavished on it as your description of the thoughts and moods of these people, and that characters holding different views exist in the novel only quantitatively, as a 'herd', to quote your expression. They are voiceless and have no ability either to reason or to refute anything at the trial of the revolution in your novel where both the judge and the prosecutor are, in effect, united in one person, Doctor Zhivago. The author has provided him with several assistants who echo his diatribes with small variations, but there is no one at the trial to defend what Zhivago condemns.

Meanwhile, as his personal discomforts and privations caused by the revolution increase, Doctor Zhivago becomes increasingly virulent and intransigent in his condemnation. It would not be amiss, we think, to trace this lop-sided process – not for the sake of a profusion of quotations, but to enable you to see all this together, at one glance. It may be that you yourself have not realized what

you wrote, lost as it was in the ramifications of a huge novel. We should like to believe this.

At one point in the story Doctor Zhivago goes to Yuriatin and has an argument with Kostoyedov, who tells him that he doesn't know anything and doesn't want to know anything. 'So I don't,' Kostoyedov says. 'What of it? For God's sake, why should I know everything and stand up for everything? History does not bother with me, and forces on me all it wants; let me, too, ignore the facts. You say: "words are inconsistent with reality." But is there any reality in Russia today? I think that it has been so bullied that it has gone into hiding.'

There is another bit of reasoning dating back to the same period (1917 or 1918, it is hard to tell from the novel), to the same trip to Yuriatin. This time the speaker is not Yury Andreyevich himself, but his father-in-law, Alexander Alexandrovich, with whom he lived in complete agreement throughout the Civil War and whose utterances are so similar that punctuation alone makes it possible to determine what is said by Zhivago and what is said by Alexander Alexandrovich.

> 'All right, I understand what you mean. I like the way you put the question. You found exactly the right words. Now, here is what I'll tell you. Remember the night you brought a handbill with the first decrees, in winter, in a blizzard? Remember their utter finality? The directness was positively overpowering. But such things live in original purity only in the minds of their creators, and then only the day they are proclaimed. The very next day they are turned upside down and inside out by the jesuitry of politics. What can I say to you? This philosophy is alien to me. This power is against us. I was not asked for my consent to this breaking up. But I was trusted, and my actions, even if forced, are binding on me.'

Thus spoke Alexander Alexandrovich when Zhivago wondered what would be the most suitable forms for their outward behaviour so that they need not blush for each other. The closing words about forced actions were said in general, to no purpose, for neither Zhivago nor Alexander Alexandrovich had done anything particular for the revolution. It merely happened that they found themselves in Moscow under the Bolsheviks, served, and received a ration for it, and when the ration proved insufficient, they left in search of a better place. Equally to no purpose are the words about duty, for the rest of the novel shows that neither Alexander Alexandrovich nor Zhivago has the least trace of a sense of duty to the revolution

or to the people. What is there left? An assertion that they had been deceived, that they had, one night, liked the directness of the first Soviet decrees and that later, when that directness was translated into action and affected their existence, they felt the power to be against them. The line of reasoning can be explained. What cannot be explained is why the plaintiff should be passed off as a judge.

But, there is a definite philosophy behind the revolution which brought Doctor Zhivago discomforts and privations. The revolution does wrong to Doctor Zhivago. Therefore, he argues, the philosophy behind it is also wrong, and it should be declared insolvent.

'Marxism and Science?' Doctor Zhivago asks at the beginning of the second volume. 'To discuss that with a stranger is imprudent, to say the least. All the same ... Marxism is too poor a master of itself to be a science. A science is balanced. Marxism and objectivity? I don't know of any teaching that is more isolated in itself and more divorced from reality than Marxism.'

Already this philippic against Marxism has more than a twitch of annoyance, which makes itself fully felt later, when Zhivago meets Larissa Fyodorovna in Yuriatin (in 1919, judging by certain hints).

'You have changed,' she said. 'You used to speak more calmly about the revolution. You were less harsh about it.'

> 'The point is, Larissa Fyodorovna, that there is a limit to everything, and something ought to have been done during this time. It turns out, however, that the turmoil of changes and shifts is the sole native element of the guiding spirits of the revolution and they'd give anything to tackle something on a world-wide scale. This construction of new worlds and transition periods is an end in itself to them. This is all they know and all they can do. And do you know whence all the bustle of those eternal preparations? From a lack of definite abilities, from ungiftedness. A man is born to live, not to prepare to live, and life as such, the phenomenon of life, the gift of life are so breathtakingly serious! Why then substitute for it a childish harlequinade of adolescent fantasies, these Chekhovian children's flights to America?'

Thus, as early as 1919, Zhivago considered that the revolution ought to have done something, and it hadn't. What it ought to have done, we do not know. Judging by his egocentric views on what is good and what is bad, it ought to have enabled him at least to return to the normal and comfortable life he had led before the revolution. But the revolution had not done this for him and he was angry with it and passed judgement on it and its leaders: they are not gifted, they have learned nothing and are capable of nothing.

As for the civil war, he regards it as an immature contrivance, as something on a par with the flight of children to America in a Chekhov story. The humour is rather cheap, but the malice, to do him justice, is not trifling.

Zhivago sees the old life broken up and transformed around him in a brutal, costly, difficult process, the expediency of which can only be gauged from the standpoint of national interests, from the standpoint of a man who puts the nation above everything else. And this is precisely what Zhivago lacks. His position is diametrically opposite to this. He judges the people and their work by the yardstick of his own physical and spiritual well-being, and it is only natural that he should, in conditions of civil war, return more and more frequently to the thought that what he had left behind was better than the world he now had to live in. Since personal well-being is the principal criterion of all there is in this world, he has no need for the undertaken transformation of life, and he'd rather return to the past than see the transformation go on.

Talking to Liberius Avercievich, the commander of a guerilla detachment, Zhivago said:

> 'To begin with, ideas about general self-perfection, as they have come to be understood since October, do not enthuse me. Secondly, all this is still far from realization, and the mere talk about it has had to be paid for with such a sea of blood that the end, perhaps, does not justify the means. Thirdly, and this is the main thing, when I hear people talking about transforming life, I lose all self-control, I am driven to despair.'

Having said this, Zhivago reverts to the theme on a later occasion:

> 'Transforming life! It can only be spoken of by those who do not know life, even if they have seen much of it, those who have not felt its spirit, its soul. To them, existence is a lump of coarse material which has not been ennobled by their touch and which requires fashioning. But life never has been a material, a substance. If you want to know, life is the principle of self-renewal, constantly refashioning and transfiguring itself; it is far above your or my theories about it.'

Thus, there is no need to transform life, and the theories which inspire this transformation are bone-headed!

Behind the fine words about the self-renewing and self-transforming substance of life is the brute cry: don't touch me! Give me back what I had, for it is all to me, and I couldn't care less about the rest. A page later Zhivago states this with complete frankness.

> 'I'll admit that you are Russia's liberators, her shining lights, that she would have perished without you, swamped by abject poverty and ignorance. None the less, I have no use for you and I don't care if you die. I don't like you, and you can all go to hell.'

It is hard to imagine a more zoological apostasy than this: it may be that what you are doing for Russia is good and useful, but I couldn't care less!

Later, upon leaving the guerilla detachment into which he had been impressed because there was no one there to look after the wounded and where he had shot at the Whites he sympathized with and tended wounded Reds he loathed, Doctor Zhivago returns to Yuriatin and sees new decrees posted up in the town occupied by the Reds. And he recalls what his father-in-law said about the first decrees of the revolution when they were travelling from Moscow.

> 'What are these?' he asks, looking at the decrees. 'Are they here from last year, or the year before? Once in his life he had expressed admiration for the bluntness of their language and forthrightness of thought. Must he now pay for this rash admiration by never again seeing anything in life but these crazy outcries and demands that had not changed for years, and became increasingly lifeless, difficult of understanding and impracticable? Could it be that he had enslaved himself for ever by a moment of too ready a response?'

Zhivago is so depressed by the realization that revolution is winning that he is ready to curse himself – no, not for actions for the sake of the revolution, for there are no such actions to his credit, but merely for his momentary admiration for the first decrees of Soviet Power.

Such is the philosophy of the hero of your novel, a character that can no more be removed from it than the soul can be removed from a body. Such are his thoughts about the revolution. Such is his tone of a prosecutor. Such is the measure of his hatred of the revolution.

One could quote other places in the novel repeating the same thought in different ways at different periods, but it really would be superfluous: the general trend of Doctor Zhivago's trial of the revolution is clear as it is.

This trial can safely be called iniquitous, and the viciousness of Zhivago's conclusions about the revolution is intensified by his feeling of powerlessness to oppose it.

Pyschologically, Doctor Zhivago is a split personality. His hatred of the revolution is enough for two Denikins, but, since he regards his 'I' as the most valuable thing in the world, he does not want to jeopardize its security by indulging in any overtly counter-revolutionary actions, so that he remains physically between the two camps, though ideologically he has long since aligned himself with the other side. Chapter four of the second book of your novel is especially indicative of this.

We have already mentioned it in passing but we now deem it necessary to consider it in detail in order to show the gulf between our attitude to Doctor Zhivago as you show him in your novel, and your own attitude to him. It is not a long chapter, so let us read it together in full.

According to the Red Cross International Convention, army medical personnel must not take part in the military operations of the belligerents. But on one occasion Yury was forced to break this rule. He was in the field when an engagement started and had to share the fate of the combatants.

The front line, where he was caught by enemy fire, was on the edge of a forest. He threw himself down on the ground next to the unit's telephonist. The forest was at their back, in front of them was a field, and across this open, undefended space the Whites were attacking.

The Whites were now close enough for Yury to see their faces. They were boys, recent volunteers from the civilian population of the capitals, and older men mobilized from the reserve. The tone was set by the youngsters, first-year students from the universities and top-form schoolboys.

None of them was known to Yury, yet many of them looked familiar. Some reminded him of his school friends and he wondered if they were their younger brothers; others he felt he had noticed in a theatre crowd or in the street in years gone by. Their expressive faces attracted him – they seemed to be his own people, his own kind.

Their response to duty, as they understood it, filled them with an ecstatic bravery, unnecessary and provocative. Advancing in widely scattered formation and excelling the parade ground smartness of the Guards, they walked defiantly upright, neither running nor throwing themselves on the ground, although the terrain was irregular enough to give them cover. The bullets of the partisans mowed them down.

In the middle of the wide, bare field there was a dead tree, blasted by lightning, charred by fire, or scorched and splintered in the course of some earlier battles. Each of the advancing volunteers glanced at it, fighting the temptation to stop behind it for shelter and a surer aim, then, casting the thought aside, walked on.

The partisans had a limited supply of cartridges and were under orders, confirmed by a regional agreement, not to engage superior forces and to fire only at short range.

Yury had no rifle; he lay on the grass watching the course of the engagement. All his sympathies were on the side of these heroic children who were meeting death. With all his heart he wished them success. They belonged to families who were probably akin to him in spirit, in education, moral discipline, and values.

It occurred to him to run out into the field and give himself up, and so get his release. But it was too dangerous.

While he was running with his arms above his head he could be shot down from both sides, struck in the breast and in the back, by the partisans in punishment for his treason and by the Whites through a misunderstanding of his motives. He knew this kind of situation, he had been in it before, he had considered all the possibilities of such escape plans and had discarded them as futile. So, resigning himself to his divided feelings, he lay on his belly on the grass, his face towards the clearing, and watched, unarmed, the fortunes of the battle.

But to look on inactively while this mortal struggle raged all round was impossible, it was beyond human endurance. It was not a question of loyalty to the side which held him captive or of defending his own life, but of submitting to the order of events, to the laws governing what was happening before his eyes. To remain outside it was against the rules. You had to do what everyone was doing. A battle was going on. He and his comrades were being shot at. He had to shoot back.

So, while the telephonist at his side jerked convulsively and then lay still, he crawled over to him, took his cartridge belt and rifle and, going back to his place, emptied the gun, shot after shot.

But as pity prevented him from aiming at the young men whom he admired and with whom he sympathized, and simply to shoot into the air would be too silly, he fired at the blasted tree, choosing those moments when there was no one between his sights and his target. He followed his old technique.

Setting the sights and gradually improving his aim as he pressed the trigger slowly and not all the way down, as if not in fact intending to release the bullet, so that in the end the shot went off of itself and as it were unexpectedly, he fired with the precision of old habit at the dead wood of the lower branches, lopping them off and scattering them round the tree.

But alas! however carefully he tried to avoid hitting anyone, every now and then some young man would move into his line of fire at the crucial moment. Two of them he wounded and one who fell near the tree seemed to have lost his life.

At last the White command, convinced of the uselessness of the attack, ordered a retreat.

The partisans were few. Part of their main force was on a march and others had engaged a larger enemy detachment some way off. Not to show their weakness, they refrained from pursuing the retreating Whites.

Yury's assistant, Angelar, joined him in the clearing with two orderlies carrying stretchers. Telling him to attend to the wounded, Yury bent over the telephonist in the vague hope that he might still be breathing and could be revived. But when he undid his shirt and felt his heart, he found that it had stopped.

An amulet hung by a cord from the dead man's neck. Yury took it off. It contained a sheet of paper, worn and rotted at the folds, sewn into a piece of cloth.

Written on the paper, which almost fell apart in Yury's fingers when he unfolded it, were excerpts from the ninetieth Psalm with such changes in the wording as often creep into popular prayers through much repetition, making them deviate increasingly from the original text. The Church Slavonic was transcribed in Russian letters.

The words of the psalm, 'to live in the help of the Most High', had become the title, 'Live Help'. The verse 'Nothing shalt thou have to fear from the arrow that flies by daylight' was changed into the encouragement: 'Fear not the arrow of flying fight.' Where the psalm says, 'He acknowledges my name,' the paper said, 'Late my name,' and 'In affliction I am at his side, to bring him . . .' had turned into 'Soon into the night with him'.

The text was believed to be miraculous and a protection against bullets. It was worn as a talisman by soldiers in the last imperialist war. Decades later prisoners were to sew it into their clothes and mutter its words in jail when they were summoned at night for interrogation.

Leaving the telephonist, Yury went out into the field to the

young White Guardsman whom he had killed. The boy's handsome face bore the marks of innocence and all-forgiving suffering. 'Why did I kill him?' thought Yury.

He undid the boy's coat and opened it. Some careful hand – probably his mother's – had embroidered his name and surname, Seryozha Rantsevich, in cursive letters on the lining. From the opening of Seryozha's shirt there slipped out and hung on a chain a cross, a locket and some other small flat gold case, rather like a snuffbox, dented as if a nail had been driven into it. A paper fell out. Yury unfolded it and could not believe his eyes. It was the same ninetieth Psalm but this time printed in its full and genuine Slavonic text.

At this moment Seryozha stirred and groaned. He was alive.

It turned out afterwards that he had only fainted as the result of a slight internal injury. The bullet had been stopped by his mother's amulet and this had saved him. – But what was to be done with this unconscious man now?

It was a time when savagery was at its height. Prisoners did not reach headquarters alive and enemy wounded were knifed in the field.

Given the fluid state of the partisan force, with its high turnover of deserters to and from the enemy, it was possible, if the strictest secrecy were kept, to pass Rantsevich off as a recently enlisted ally.

Yury took off the clothes of the dead telephonist and, with the help of Angelar, in whom he confided, exchanged them for those of the boy.

He and Angelar nursed Seryozha back to health. When he was quite well they released him, although he did not conceal from them that he meant to go back to Kolchak's army and continue fighting the Reds.

After reading the whole novel we again and again returned in thought to this chapter, for it provides a key to many things. We do not think there is any sense in arguing that the chapter is written from the position of the author's full sympathy for Doctor Zhivago and his unqualified justification of his hero's thoughts and actions.

But what are those thoughts and actions? What do you sympathize with and what do you justify as an author?

A physician mobilized against his will is forced to live among the partisans. Doctor Zhivago, according to your words, had to violate the Red Cross international convention and take part in combat action. The people who are attacking the partisans, including the

doctor, are beautiful, attractive, and heroic in his eyes. His sympathy is totally on their side. They are kindred to him in spirit, in moral fibre and he wishes them success sincerely, that is, it would be no exaggeration to say that he is on their side spiritually. What then prevents him from gaining delivery, as you put it, from passing over to their side bodily as well? Only the mortal danger involved. Nothing more.

Evidently quite sincerely, you think this reason quite sufficient not only to explain but even to justify the double-dealing of your hero. You called it more elegantly: 'the duality of emotions'. But really the duality of emotions is a rather weak term for a man who is in the defence line with those whom he hates firing at those whom he loves, solely to save his own hide.

And the subsequent events – the doctor's shooting at the charred tree, though he is unwilling to aim at anybody, and picking off three men one after another, who, according to your roundabout expression, moved into his line of fire at the crucial moment – smack of Jesuitry, that same Jesuitry of which Doctor Zhivago is ready to accuse anyone so often and without rhyme or reason. Here your Doctor Zhivago reminds one of that hypocritical monk who during the fast transforms meat into fish with the sign of the cross – with the difference that the stakes here are not meat or fish but human blood and human lives.

Thus, within a narrow span of time, your hero traverses a tortuous way to repeated treachery: he sympathises with the Whites and reaches the point of wishing to run over to them, but once he has made up his mind, he begins shooting, at random at first, but finally at those Whites with whom he sympathizes. Then he feels pity not for the Whites but for the Red telephonist killed by the Whites. Then he sympathizes with the young White guardsman he has killed and asks himself: 'What did I kill him for?' And when it transpires that the White guardsman is not killed, but merely stunned, he hides him, passes him for a partisan and lets him go, himself staying with the Reds and aware that the man will rejoin the Kolchakites and will fight the Reds.

This is how your Doctor Zhivago acts, arousing a feeling of downright revulsion in any spiritually healthy man by this triple if not quadruple betrayal, or simply in a subjectively honest man who once in his life placed his conscience above his safety – even if the difference of political opinion be discarded.

Yet you are using all the power of talent you possess to justify Zhivago in this scene emotionally, and thereby are coming in the last analysis, to the apology of betrayal.

What leads you to this apology? In our opinion, the same individualism hyperbolized to unbelievable proportions. The personality of Zhivago is the supreme value in your eyes. Doctor Zhivago's spiritual wealth is the highest stage of spiritual perfection, and for the sake of preserving this highest spiritual attainment and his life as a vessel containing this value – for the sake of this, everything may be tresspassed.

But what is, after all, the content of this supreme spiritual value of Doctor Zhivago, and what is his spiritual individualism protected by him at such a terrible price.

The content of his individualism is the self-glorification of his psychic essence, brought to the length of its identification with the mission of a religious prophet.

Zhivago is a poet, not just a physician. To convince the reader of the real significance of his poetry for mankind, as he understands it, you finish the novel with the collection of poetry written by your hero. You sacrifice the best portion of your personal poetic gift for the sake of your hero, to glorify him in the eyes of the reader and at the same time to identify him with yourself as closely as possible.

The cup of Doctor Zhivago's suffering is drunk to the dregs, and here are his notes – the behest for the future. What do we find in it? Besides the verses already published, the poems about Golgotha have a special meaning for understanding the philosophy of the novel. This is an undisguised echo of the spiritual languishing of the hero, portrayed in the main body of the novel. The parallel is specific to a degree and the key to it is handed to the reader with almost physical tangibility.

In the poem that concludes the novel, Zhivago tells about the prayer in the Gethsemane garden. Christ's words to the apostles contain these words:

> The Lord esteemed you worthy
> Of living in my day . . .

Is this not a repetition of the words the Doctor already said referring to his 'friends', those intellectuals who acted not as he did: 'The only thing that is alive and bright in you is that you lived in the same time as I did and knew me'?

Zhivago's entire life-story is consistently likened to the Gospel story of the Passion and the poetic prophesy of the Doctor ends with Christ's words.

> Like rafts down the river, like a convoy of barges
> The centuries will float to me, out of the darkness.

This winds up the novel. Its hero repeating Golgotha as it were, foretells the future recognition of what he has done on Earth, for the sake of redemption, with his last Christ-like words.

Did not the Golgotha of Zhivago consist in that the Doctor-poet, prophesying his 'second advent' and last judgement, in life scorned the man of reality, raising himself to a pedestal inaccessible to a mortal? Did not the vocation of this intellectual Messiah consist in that he killed, betrayed, hated man, falsely sympathizing with him for the sake of saving his own 'spirit' and raising himself to the level of self-idolization?

As a matter of fact, the Doctor by no means fulfils his claim to the role of a Messiah, since he distorts, not repeats the prophet of the Gospels deified by him: there is not a jot of Christianity in the gloomy road of Doctor Zhivago, for least of all he cared for mankind and most of all for himself.

Thus, under cover of superficial sophistication and morality, a character arises of an essentially immoral man who refuses to do his duty by the people and who is interested only in his own rights, including the alleged privilege of a superman to betray with impunity.

Having steered safely between the Scylla and Charybdis of the Civil War, your Doctor Zhivago dies at the end of the twenties, after losing touch with his near and dear, entering a rather dubious matrimonial alliance, and degenerating a great deal. A short time before his death, in his conversation with Dudorov and Gordon (they, by your grace, personify the old intelligentsia who began to co-operate with Soviet power), he rewards this intelligentisa with a vicious spit.

To what lengths you go in attesting the ill-starred interlocutors of your Zhivago and disparaging them because they had not taken up the stand of a superman, but went with the revolutionary people through all trials and tribulations!

They 'lack sufficient expressions', they 'have no gift of speech', they 'repeat the same over and over again to make up for their poor vocabulary'. They are punished with the 'affliction of mediocre taste which is worse than the affliction of tastelessness', they are distinguished for their 'inability to think freely and control the conversation at their will'; they are 'seduced by the stereotypes of their reasonings'; they 'assume the imitation of their pocket-book feelings for the universal'; they are 'hypocrites' and 'bondmen who idolize their bonds', and so on and so forth.

Listening to what they have to say, your Doctor Zhivago, who, as you put it, 'could not stand the political mysticism of the Soviet intelligentsia', which was its highest achievement or, as it would be said then, 'the spiritual ceiling of the epoch', arrogantly thinks about his friends who joined the service of Soviet power: 'yes, my friends, how hopelessly banal are you and the circle you represent, and the brilliance and art of your own names and celebrities. The only thing alive and bright in you is that you lived at the same time as I, and knew me.'

We advise you carefully to re-read these words written in your novel. The fact that they are ludicrously arrogant is only half of the trouble. But surely you feel that they are mean, apart from being arrogant! The truth is rarely a fellow-traveller of bitterness, and this is probably why it is so rare in the pages where your Doctor Zhivago is finishing his life, and in the pages of the epilogue that follows, written, in our opinion, in a very embittered state of mind and with a very hasty hand, so hasty, indeed, from bitterness that these pages are included only with difficulty in the domain of art.

You are not strange to symbols; and the death, or rather the dying, of Doctor Zhivago at the end of the twenties, it seems to us, symbolizes the death of the Russian intelligentsia ruined by the Revolution. Yes, we must agree that the climate of the Revolution is pernicious for that Doctor Zhivago portrayed by you in your novel. And our argument with you is not about this, as we have mentioned, but about something quite different.

Doctor Zhivago, in your opinion, is the acme of the Russian intelligentsia's spirit.

In our opinion, he is its slough.

In your opinion, that Russian intelligentsia, whose ways parted with those of Doctor Zhivago and who began to serve the people, has deviated from its true destination, spiritually destroyed itself, and created nothing valuable.

In our opinion, it is precisely on this path that it has found its true destination and continued to serve the people, and has done precisely what the best part of the Russian intelligentsia did for the people in pre-Revolutionary times as it prepared the Revolution – then as now infinitely alien to that conscious divorce from the interests of the people, that ideological sectarianism, represented by your Doctor Zhivago.

We have only to add several forceful words to what has been said above concerning the way the people and the years of the Revolution are described in your novel. This portrayal, which is presented more often than not through the perception of Doctor Zhivago, is highly characteristic of the anti-popular spirit of your novel and is in profound contradiction with the whole tradition of Russian literature which, never ingratiating with the common

people, was able to see their beauty, power, and spiritual wealth. The people portrayed in your novel are either kindly pilgrims who cling to Doctor Zhivago and his friends, or half beasts who personify the elements of the Revolution, or, rather (according to your conception) the revolt, the mutiny.

We shall cite several quotations to bear out what we have said, this time, without comments and choosing them at random, which probably would be more convincing.

> At the beginning of the Revolution when there was a danger, as in 1905, that this time the Revolution would again be a short-lived event in the history of the enlightened few, without touching or taking root in the lower strata, no attempt was spared to agitate people, revolutionize them, stir them, muddle them up, and lash them into fury.
>
> In the first days, men like the soldier Panfil Palykh, who needed no encouragement to hate intellectuals, officers, and gentry with a rabid hatred, seemed to be rare finds to the elated left-wing intellectuals and were highly esteemed. Their total lack of humanity seemed to be a miracle of class consciousness, their barbarism an example of proletarian firmness and revolutionary instinct. This was what Panfil was famous for. He was in the best books of the partisan chieftains and Party leaders.
>
> Chairs were placed for the welcome guests and they were occupied by three or four workers, the old participants of the first revolution, the morose, hardly recognizable Tiversin and his constant yes-man old Antipov. Canonized and included among the divine hierarchy, at whose feet the Revolution placed its burnt offerings, they sat bolt upright, silent severe idols, whose political conceit had eaten away everything alive and human in them.
>
> This time justified the old adage: *homo homini lupus est.* A traveller veered off at the sight of a traveller. A passer-by killed, a passer-by not to be killed. There were cases of cannibalism. The human laws of civilization were no longer effective. The animal laws were in force. Men dreamed the pre-historic dreams of cave-dwellers.

Many more similar quotations may be cited but those mentioned above are sufficiently typical and give an idea of the people in your novel, or at least that section of it which actively participated in the Revolution. This is what your heroes are angry about and you share this feeling with them.

So far we have not touched on the artistic aspect of your novel. Referring to it, it should be noted that the impressions of some pages do not add to the general picture and exist in isolation. The general line of the story is disrupted and even, at times, disintegrated.

There are quite a few first-rate pages, especially where you describe Russian nature with great realism and poetic power.

There are many clearly inferior pages, lifeless and didactically dry. They are especially abundant in the second half of the novel.

Yet we would not like to dwell on this aspect, since, as we have mentioned at the beginning of the letter, the essence of our argument with you has nothing to do with aesthetic wranglings. You have written a political novel-sermon, par excellence. You have conceived it as a work to be placed unreservedly and sincerely at the service of certain political aims, and this, which is the main thing for you, has naturally focused our attention also.

However painful it is to us, we have to call a spade a spade in this letter. It seems to us that your novel is profoundly unjust, historically prejudiced in the description of the Revolution, the Civil War, and the post-revolutionary years, that it is profoundly anti-democratic and alien to any conception of the interests of the people. All this, taken as a whole, stems from your standpoint as a man who tries in his novel to prove that, far from having any positive significance in the history of our people and mankind, the October Socialist Revolution brought nothing but evil and hardships.

As people whose standpoint is diametrically opposite yours, we, naturally, believe that the publication of your novel in the columns of the magazine *Novy Mir* is out of the question.

As for the bitterness with which the novel is written – and not your ideological position as such – we, recalling that you have works to your record in which a great deal differs from what you have recently said, want to remind you in the words of your heroine, addressed to Doctor Zhivago: 'You have changed, you know. You used to judge the revolution more calmly and less harshly.'

But then the main thing is not bitterness, of course, because, after all is said and done, it is merely a concomittant of the ideas long rejected, untenable, and doomed to perdition. If you are able to think about it seriously, please do so. In spite of everything, we wish it very much.

Enclosed is the manuscript of your novel *Doctor Zhivago.*

	B. AGAPOV	K. SIMONOV
	B. LAVRENYOV	A. KRIVITSKY
September 1956	K. FEDIN	

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TWO OTHER
PENGUIN SPECIALS

—

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WAYLAND YOUNG

S181

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—

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