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KHRUSHCHEV AT 65 (III)

As was to be expected, the unexplained 48-hour delay in the publication of the Presidium's letter to Khrushchev congratulating him on his 65th birthday has already produced widely differing interpretations in the West. The Christian Science Monitor (30 April 1959, Appendix II below) sees it as a sign that "in the higher party echelons Khrushchev's policies continue to be contested", whereas W. Kolarz (Appendix I below) argues somewhat more convincingly that "nobody but Khrushchev himself could have given the ruling that any mention of his birthday was to be suppressed - at least for 48 hours."

The Christian Science Monitor also makes the suggestion that "Khrushchev's continuation in power may depend on the success of his foreign policy", but history records no instance of a Soviet leader departing from the summit as a result of mistakes in the direction of external affairs. Since knowledge of the outside world is so limited and carefully slanted in the USSR, even among the upper strata of the Party, it is probably truer in Moscow than in most other cities that in political life internal developments take precedence over foreign affairs.

Both the Christian Science Monitor's interpretation and W. Kolarz agree that at present there is an intention in Moscow to avoid anything reminiscent of the personality cult as it applied to Stalin. Nevertheless the subsequent award of the Lenin Peace Prize to Khrushchev alone, which totally ignores the considerable achievement of Mikoyan during his trail-blazing "co-existence" tour of the United States, must be regarded as another step towards the glorification of the Party's leader, since in the past the Lenin Peace Prizes have usually been reserved for foreigners (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 3 May 1959). Unquestionably the award is incidentally intended to reflect on the Kremlin's proposals for Berlin as a contribution to peace, but this was probably a secondary motive compared with the primary aim of continuing the build-up of Khrushchev.

The latter is said by D.A. Skobeltsyn (Tass, May 1st, 1959) to have "elaborated further the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence" and to have "enriched Soviet foreign policy with new methods and ideas." Skobeltsyn does not explore the recent effects of these ideas on Nasser, for example, but concludes that in the past few years, Khrushchev has several times demonstrated his "outstanding merit as a political leader with daring and initiative.."

Thus Soviet readers are informed that the summit negotiations will be in the safest possible hands. Nothing has been said to remind the public that during the last period of preparation for an international meeting of top people in 1955, the Moscow press still had two leaders whose egos had to be inflated. Now there is one.

r.r.g.

NOT TO BE MICROFICED

THE KHRUSHCHEV CULT

CRU

20 April 1959

by Walter Kolarz

The sixty-fifth birthday of Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev provided an interesting pointer to the extent and the limits of the new Soviet personality cult. On the actual birthday neither the Soviet press nor the home service of Moscow Radio mentioned the event. Even on the following day this strange silence continued which, paradoxically enough, was in itself evidence of Khrushchev's power and influence. Nobody but Khrushchev himself could have given the ruling that any mention of his birthday was to be suppressed - at least for 48 hours. In doing so, Khrushchev wanted to reassure the public that he was not a new Stalin. He wanted to demonstrate the tremendous difference between his own sixty-fifth birthday and Stalin's seventieth. The celebration of the latter gave rise to such fantastic excesses of sycophancy that they are still clearly remembered in Russia today. For instance, "Pravda" devoted to Stalin's birthday its entire issue of 12 pages, including three columns of text contributed by Khrushchev himself. Countless presents poured into the Kremlin and were shown to the public in a special exhibition. Lists of greetings by individuals and organizations were published in the press for 22 months afterwards.

Khrushchev, on the other hand, wanted to shine on his sixty-fifth birthday by one virtue only - modesty. It seems he also wanted this modesty to be duly appreciated by everyone and so it was. The country knew of the birthday from the standard Soviet Tear-off calendar for 1959, of which as many as five million copies were published and therefore most people noticed with surprise the absence of any Khrushchev publicity in the press. Even those who failed to look at the calendar on Khrushchev's birthday were told about it after the event. Two days later they read in their newspapers the text of a congratulatory message which the presidium of the Soviet Communist Party had sent to Khrushchev. The message was quite different in character from the rather anemic and stereotyped birthday greetings which the Presidium has so far sent to its members. It contained effusive and elaborate praise of Khrushchev's "remarkable qualities" for which he had earned the "love of the people"; it paid tribute to his "seething energy", his "wealth of political experience" and "wisdom"; it called him an outstanding leader and credited him with a "creative enrichment" of the theory of Marxism-Leninism. Even more characteristic than all this for Khrushchev's present status was the fact that the Presidium members hailed him for the first time as their "elder (starshii) comrade and friend." Here was another explicit and official recognition of the senior position which Khrushchev has quietly built up for himself both in the Soviet state and the Communist party.

This process of eliminating the "collective leadership" in favor of Khrushchev's seniority took place so gradually and unobtrusively that a future historian will find it most difficult to fix any exact date for the beginning of Soviet Russia's Khrushchev era. He will only be able to note a few significant statements and events which were the main landmarks in the emergence of a new leader and a new cult surrounding his personality. Such a future historian will probably state that from the beginning of 1956 onwards Khrushchev was taking more and more of the credit for political measures and initiatives for which the Party Presidium was formally responsible. By the end of 1957, after he had ousted his rivals from the Presidium, he was already laying down the law on every issue of home and foreign policy, even on questions of literature and art from which he had originally kept aloof. And by the beginning of 1958 Soviet propaganda started to inflate his past record. In connection with the 15th anniversary of the battle of Stalingrad he was built up for the first time as a military leader and, later in the year, he was pictured as the organizer and inspirer of guerilla warfare against the Germans. Closely connected with the growth of the Khrushchev cult was the publicity given to his home village, Kalinovka. His repeated appearances in this locality were reported in the press in considerable detail and served to stress Khrushchev's closeness to the people -- a most vital ingredient of the whole Khrushchev propaganda.

As the Twenty-first Party Congress drew nearer the minor Party leaders and propagandists introduced more and more direct personal praise for Khrushchev as a theoretician, increased their stress on his alleged kinship with Lenin and played up his personal intervention in a vast number of large and small problems. One of Khrushchev's proteges, the Presidium member Mukhitdinov, even went so far as to describe his chief as "leader of the people," an ominous-sounding title, which in Soviet history was used only once before -- for Stalin. The Twenty-first Congress itself was in many ways an ovation to Khrushchev's leadership, to his accomplishments as a great Marxist-Leninist and to his versatility. To Khrushchev as to Stalin before him an infinite variety of talents and interests were now attributed. One speaker stressed the great value of Khrushchev's suggestion for introducing self-propelled combines. The well-known physicist Kurchatov spoke of the great attention and help given by Khrushchev in furthering the study of thermo-nuclear reactions. Deputy-premier Ustinov expressed indebtedness to Khrushchev for the successes of the Soviet artificial earth satellites and cosmic rockets. A kolkhoz chairman praised "dear Nikita Sergeevich for his concern over reducing alcohol consumption."

There is no doubt that the Twenty-first Party Congress elevated Khrushchev to a position no democratic statesman occupies anywhere in the world. And yet even the latest authoritative document on the Khrushchev cult -- namely the message of congratulations signed by the members of the Party Presidium -- still pales in comparison with the manifestations of the Stalin cult. Soviet propaganda had made of Stalin a demi-god, whilst Khrushchev's image is still being drawn in human dimensions. Khrushchev, with an eye

to hidden opponents in the country and false friends, may not want to bridge the still wide gap which separates the cult of his own person from the cult of Stalin. The limited publicity which he allowed for his birthday shows this very convincingly.

KHRUSHCHEV'S BIRTHDAY

Christian Science Monitor
May 2, 1959
by Paul Wohl

NOT TO BE MICROFICED

The peculiar manner in which Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev's recent 65th birthday was observed in the Soviet Union and in the rest of the "socialist commonwealth" suggests that his continuation in power may depend upon the success of his foreign policy.

The complete silence of the Soviet press (Pravda, Izvestia, Trud, etc.) and radio on the occasion of the birthday (April 17) and the strange treatment which it was given two days after Warsaw, Prague, East Berlin, Sofia and Bucharest had devoted long articles and speeches to the event indicates a great difference between Mr. Khrushchev's position and that of Stalin. It suggests, moreover, that in the higher Party echelons his policies continue to be contested.

Even more startling was the fact that none of the leading Soviet newspapers commented editorially on the congratulatory message by Mr. Khrushchev's associates.

The message, dated April 16, was published on April 19, and signed by all of Mr. Khrushchev's colleagues among the members and alternate members of the Party Presidium with the exception of Mikhail G. Pervukhin, who theoretically is still an alternate member.

Of a strictly personal character, the message was not attributed to the Presidium as a body.

The emphasis was on the premier's "farsighted, flexible, and principled foreign policy and on the vastly increased authority of the Soviet state in the international arena."

The message, which repeatedly referred to Mr. Khrushchev's services to the state, did not say, as might have been expected, that he had strengthened the Party. The text, although affectionate, clearly was a compromise, and its late publication seems to indicate that haggling went on for a considerable time.

Following the message, Pravda carried two pages of official congratulations from every member of the Communist bloc, from the Central Committees of Western European Communist Parties, from the Iranian People's Party, from President Tito, from Finnish President Kekkonen, and from various personalities and organizations. Publication of foreign messages continued through April 20, 21 and 22, and was resumed on April 24.

Soviet readers must have asked themselves where among all these well wishers were the Central Committee of the Soviet

Party, the Soviet Youth organization, the Soviet Trade Unions, or any of the many Soviet agencies, republics, cities, etc.

The intention seems to have been to avoid anything reminding of a "cult of personality". Yet there was something contrived about the complete omission of any official Soviet birthday message or editorial comment, and it seems that this cannot have escaped the readers.

Significant also were those traits of Mr. Khrushchev which the Eastern European press and radio highlighted on April 27. In addition to foreign policy, his "personal contact with the people" was stressed. There were repeated references to collective leadership - a term no longer used in the USSR - and the information that the Soviet Party Presidium holds a session "at least once weekly." Mr. Khrushchev's contribution to Marxist-Leninist theory was underlined - an important point for communists - which the message of Mr. Khrushchev's associates touched upon very lightly. Altogether, the treatment which Mr. Khrushchev's birthday received in the Soviet press was so contradictory that it seems to confirm those Western observers who do not take the Premier's leadership for granted.

A change in the Soviet leadership probably would also most likely result in a change of Soviet foreign policy. Despite the popular pressures for peace, no one can know where this would lead. Peking, the neo-Stalinists, and little-known younger party officers apparently think that they can obtain more through advocating a return to hardhitting Stalin-type dealings.

The political situation in the Soviet Union today is very different from what it was in May, 1953, when former first deputy premier Laurenti P. Beria, supported in this respect by ex-premier Georgi M. Malenkov, wanted to make substantial concessions to the West. But there are some parallels.

The British have not forgotten the dramatic Churchill appeal in the House of Commons on May 11, 1953, when he expressed the belief that in view of "some of the internal manifestations and the apparent change of mood...inside Russia...a conference on the highest level should take place..."

Beria was liquidated, but Mr. Malenkov, until his resignation as premier, favored a policy which was much more in line with Western views than Mr. Khrushchev's present demands. As late as Feb. 8, 1955, Mr. Malenkov's representative at an interparliamentary meeting in Warsaw voted for a resolution demanding the withdrawal of all occupation forces from Germany and its unification by means of free and internationally controlled elections. The text of that resolution was published in the Polish newspaper Trybuna Ludu.

Instead of the compromise which, in view of British observers, might have been possible up to the first weeks of 1955, the West is now faced with a much less favorable proposition, as well as with the evidence that "the evolution...inside Russia" of which Sir Winston spoke six years ago is not yet ended, and that future prospects of "reconciling the security of Russia with the freedom and safety of Western Europe" may be less advantageous than the one which seems to exist today.