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Introduction

A complicated situation cannot and should not be reduced to a formula. Nevertheless some formulae have a certain political significance, particularly in the language of esoteric communication which the Kremlin leaders have had to develop as an inadequate substitute for the open exchange of ideas.

In this clouded world a phrase recently used by A.I. Mikoyan, the first deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, stands out by its unusual, if not unprecedented, nature. In drinking a toast to the Cuban economic mission to Moscow on 14 November,<sup>1</sup> Mikoyan, who for decades has displayed one of the shrewdest political as well as financial flairs yet developed by a Soviet leader, said:

"When I was in Mexico, the Revolutionary Cuban Government invited me to visit Cuba. The Soviet Government, in the person of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, N.S. Khrushchev, gave its consent to my acceptance of this invitation..."

The more usual formulation, adopted by a wide variety of speakers in the last few years, smacks less of the personality cult. Normally it speaks of "the Soviet Government and N.S. Khrushchev personally (lichno)" or "The Central Committee and N.S. Khrushchev personally"<sup>2</sup> as occasion demands. But the personification of the Government by Khrushchev, coming from Mikoyan, has a more definitive ring about it. It is wholly possible that all Mikoyan intended to do was to warn writers in some of the more important Soviet journals, such as Izvestia, Party Life and History of the CPSU that his standing is so good at present that they would be wise to discontinue their spasmodic omission of the adjective "first" from his title and the deletion of his name from the lists of heroes of the Armenian

and Azerbaijani revolutions.<sup>3</sup> Be that as it may, this further step in the long, slow, inch-by-inch build-up of Khrushchev surely has a wider significance.

Since the Paris conference failed, there has been some discussion in the West of the theory that the Presidium now is moving towards a more truly "collective leadership" again, and it is sometimes argued that since Khrushchev has been so much abroad during the year, a "collective leadership" is the only variety that can have kept the wheels turning.

But as S. Bialer points out in Appendix 1 below:

"as compared with the 1953-1957 period the presidium now presents a picture of grayness. No one in it can compare to Khrushchev; the present members of it are in a good position to fight for power after Khrushchev departs, but to fight for his departure is quite different..."

However Bialer goes on to argue that the Central Committee is now growing in importance as a forum for "influencing and limiting" Khrushchev's direction of affairs. Those who accept this thesis may well be inclined to quote another unusual Soviet formulation, which was used by Radio Moscow<sup>4</sup> in a letter to some eager kolkhozniki:

"The First Secretary of the CC, CPSU, N.S. Khrushchev, on behalf of and on the instructions of the CC, CPSU, has sent a greetings message to the kolkhoz activists of the Lenin artel, Bunursky Raion, Chuvash ASSR, cordially congratulating them on their great success in raising output and the sale of produce to the state..."

This innocuous-looking text, with its built-in repudiation of the personality cult, runs counter to the trend of Mikoyan's phrase. But the tendency of the years since the 20th Party Congress suggests, regrettably, that Mikoyan's straw in the wind gives a truer orientation.

r.r.g.

<sup>3</sup>See Izvestia, 26 April 1960, Party Life, 3 May 1960, History of the CPSU, October 1960, Background Information, 24 May 1960.

<sup>4</sup>17 November 1960, 1900 hours.



The New Leader

October 24, 1960

by Seweryn Bialer

**NOT TO BE MICROFICED**

It seems profitable to outline a few general "truths" about the "eternal" power struggle in the Kremlin and to examine them in the light of the current Soviet situation.

First, the Soviet system has a tendency to generate personal dictatorship. Soviet totalitarianism, thought quite different from the South American type of personal dictatorship, nevertheless leads to concentration of power and authority in the hands of an individual.

Stalin was not an accident, a "mistake" or a deviation, but the legitimate child of the Soviet system. That does not mean that the tendency toward a concentration of power under Soviet totalitarianism must unavoidably bring about a Stalin. The degree of this concentration in the hands of an individual and the use made of that power by the individual depends on numerous and variable elements, sometimes on accidents, and even to a certain degree on the character of the individual. Also, the length of the "incubation period" in which this concentration of power takes place cannot be predicted. It is even possible to envisage a reverse process in the Soviet Union: a diffusion of power. However, as long as no change takes place in the Soviet power structure, and the dominant factors tending toward a personal dictatorship are not removed, periods of diffusion of power in the Soviet Union are transient.

Second. A struggle for influence and power goes on incessantly in the Soviet leadership. Sometimes in the background of this struggle lurk true and deep differences of views as to tactics of internal and external Soviet policy, but more often there is a naked power struggle, a clash of personal ambitions covered by the fig leaf of high-sounding programs and slogans.

Power struggle in the leadership of a nation is not characteristic of the Soviet system alone; in any modern society (and even in the "old" ones) there is a continuous struggle for power and influence. The difference between the Soviet Union and other societies is that the reward of victory and the price of defeat are absolute in the Soviet Union. As a result the methods used are also absolute, unhampered by restraints imposed by society or by the protagonists themselves.

It does not follow from this axiom that this struggle always takes the same course. Direct goals, forms and methods of the power struggle differ essentially from period to period, as much as the periods differ from each other.

The struggle within the Soviet leadership is not necessarily a contest for the absolute personal supremacy of one individual. For example, in the period beginning with Lenin's death and ending with total collectivization (1924-1937), the immediate goal of the groups fighting in the Kremlin was to gain absolute personal supremacy. The form of this struggle consisted of a peculiar fusion of open political activity inside the Communist Party and backstage machinations, secret factions and oriental intrigue. The methods employed were very diverse and included such means as mass political discussions, Party referendums, economic

and police pressure, bribery and falsification of Party elections.

The situation was quite different in the period beginning in the late '30's and ending with Stalin's death in 1953. Without doubt, the power struggle continued, but the direct goals changed. It was a struggle for Stalin's favors, not for his position; for influence and authority in carrying out his orders, not for the right to give order in his place. Sometimes it was simply a struggle for survival and not a struggle for glory.

In the last decade of this period it became increasingly a struggle for convenient positions from which to fight for Stalin's mantle when he died. The forms and methods of this struggle were very limited and consisted mainly of "palace intrigues", informing and patient waiting. Open political struggle, even on a small scale and in limited circles, was out of the question.

Third. The fight for personal supremacy in the Kremlin is for all practical purposes restricted to a very select circle. To be sure, individuals and groups of the so-called higher "Party aktiv" may and do participate but without hope that as a direct result one of them will reap the highest reward. These individuals and groups participate in their own interest, but at the same time in the interest of one of the top contenders who, in turn, hopes to reach the Soviet "throne" through his own and his supporters' efforts.

The power struggle in the Soviet Union is usually conducted along horizontal lines; that is, you can fight someone who belongs to your own stratum, but not to a higher stratum, unless there is someone of authority and renown in the higher stratum who demands support for his own struggle.

These three "truths" may seem trivial and self-evident, but they are too often forgotten when it comes to analyses of concrete Soviet situations.

It is generally accepted that the term "collective leadership" describes the fluid equilibrium of power which existed in Russia from Stalin's death up to 1957, when the so-called "anti-Party group" was removed from the Soviet leadership. Hence the thesis that "collective leadership" in the USSR has returned, or is now returning, is tantamount to saying that a fierce struggle for power of the 1953-1957 type is taking place once again.

But how do the characteristic traits of the 1953-1957 struggle compare to the present situation?

First. During 1953-1957, the power struggle was not to unsettle the existing leader. A leader who could command a decisive superiority in real and formal power did not yet exist in the first post-



Stalin years. Every contender in the struggle for leadership could therefore be eliminated from the contest with relative ease, without causing an upheaval of far-reaching effects. For example, even the top contender, Nikita Khrushchev, was eliminated as a competitor for Stalin's succession in 1955 with no greater disturbances in the Soviet affairs than caused by the elimination of Georgi Malenkov.

Second. During the 1953-1957 struggle there was a score of personalities in the top leadership who, from their experience, authority and skill could openly aspire to the supreme leadership. From every point of view they presented a real challenge to Khrushchev. Because of this, lesser personalities from the highest circle (Saburov, Dmitiri Shepilov, etc.) could be much more active in the struggle for power. Such personalities as Malenkov, Vyacheslav Molotov or Lazar Kaganovich created a rallying point for the smaller fry of the Presidium and enabled them to fight for their own aspirations and ambitions.

Third. The power struggle in the first post-Stalin years was conducted primarily in the highest echelon of Soviet leadership, chiefly in the Party Presidium. Conflict and contention on the lower levels, even in the Central Committee, were only reflections of the fierce battles in the Presidium.

The present situation in the Soviet Union is quite different, and there seems no justification for belief that a power struggle of the 1953-1957 type has returned.

First. If there really is a fight for supreme leadership, it is to unseat the recognized leader. Even the most ardent supporters of the theory that Khrushchev's power and authority are extremely limited do not deny that he is now more than merely the top contender for the dictatorship; there no longer is any comparison between his power, authority and popular image and that of his colleagues in the Presidium. To eliminate a man of Khrushchev's stature, his opponents must conduct a war against him with extreme methods - including a factional struggle - if they hope to succeed. Such a conflict would be impossible to conceal and there are no visible signs of it yet.

More likely, the struggle in the Party Presidium is now of a different character - not a struggle for the top leadership of Party and state, since this slot is now generally recognized in the Presidium as legitimately belonging to Khrushchev, but a fight to influence Kremlin policies and Khrushchev personally. The struggle seems to be for the strongest possible position in the leadership with a simultaneous recognition of the principal role played by Khrushchev.

Second. As compared with the 1953-1957 period, the Soviet presidium now presents a picture of grayness. No one in it can compare to Khrushchev; the present members of the Presidium are in a good position to fight for power after Khrushchev departs, but to fight for his departure is quite different.

Are there any signs, however, that one of the members of the Presidium is being built up through public media? Such a build-up would suggest that some take-over in the Presidium is being prepared, but the reverse is closer to reality. In the last two years, ratings of the Presidium members around Khrushchev have

changed like winners in a poker game. Why is it that the names of top contenders are seldom mentioned in articles dealing with the struggle between the Premier and his supposedly "deadly" foes? His opponents are anonymous: Someone is fighting - but who? In 1953-1957, there were no difficulties in naming those who were Khrushchev's rivals: a contest of this kind cannot remain anonymous for any length of time.

The so-called "Suslov challenge" is no less uncertain. On and off for the past three years there has been gossip about the supposed struggle for leadership between "Stalinist" Mikhail Suslov and Khrushchev. But even Boris Nicolaevsky, once one of the ardent proponents of this theory, now writes: "It is still unclear who headed this opposition (to Khrushchev)." If after three years of a supposed power struggle in the Kremlin one cannot name which Presidium members are for Khrushchev and which against, something must be fundamentally wrong with the theory.

Third. We now come to the crucial problem of eventual and possible transformations in the structure of Soviet power and authority. Here, in part, lies the secret of the "inconsistencies and shifting attitudes" in the Kremlin.

Stalin's centralized "power pyramid" was the classical example of the Soviet power structure: an absolute concentration of power in an individual at the top and no restraining counter-balance from below. The Central Committee - even the Presidium - and all Soviet bureaucratic hierarchies were reduced exclusively to the role of executive bodies.

In the first years after Stalin's death the principal changes in the power structure took place at the top, primarily in the Party Presidium. The top of the pyramid was cut off and a violent struggle erupted to occupy that top. However, the layers of the pyramid below the top still lived by the inertia, habit and fear instilled through long years of Stalinist practice. The Party leaders fought their battles primarily within the Presidium, and in the beginning only in the Presidium. The lower Party echelons, including the Central Committee, were notified of this struggle when its outcome was already a foregone conclusion, and their role was reduced to a formal rubber-stamping of the results.

Lavrenti Beria's fate, as well as Malenkov's forced resignation in January 1955, were resolved within the Presidium without even the formal "resolution" of a Central Committee meeting. Molotov's departure was settled at a Presidium meeting in the Spring of 1955. When the Central Committee plenum convened in July 1955 to approve the Presidium decision formally, the participants in the discussion of Molotov's deviation were almost exclusively members and candidate members of the Presidium. Although the dictator was dead, and a new dictator was not yet in sight, the Central Committee and the various groups of the higher "Party aktiv", in the first years after Stalin's death, did not play a role different from that during his lifetime.

The struggle between Khrushchev and the so-called "anti-Party group", which exploded in June 1957, fundamentally changed this state of affairs. All the anti-Khrushchev forces in the Presidium



joined in an alliance and obtained a decisive majority in the Presidium. Khrushchev, with his back to the wall, took a step which not one of his opponents in the previous years had dared to take - or had a chance to take; he appealed from the authority of the Presidium, which had declared itself against him, to the authority of the plenary session of the Central Committee - which formally, according to the Party statutes, was supreme, but which actually had not ever acted as a supreme body up to that time.

This step was without precedent in the last 30 years of Soviet communism. Khrushchev's gamble this time was successful and brought complete defeat to his opponents. At the same time, it created at least two side effects, the results of which we are now witnessing. First, the intervention of the Central Committee on Khrushchev's behalf indebted him to that body - for the time being at least. It forced him to arrange his relationships with the Central Committee on a basis much closer to the statutory rules. Second, it is possible that the Central Committee's decisive participation in the struggle between Khrushchev and the "anti-Party Group" has to some extent broken the inertia and insecurity of the Central Committee itself. The feasibility and the practicality of exercising pressure on the "leader", of having a say in affairs, which until then had been the sole domain of the Presidium, were visibly demonstrated for the first time.

In examining the available materials of the Central Committee plenary sessions in recent years, one can see a difference, not only compared with Stalin's time, but also compared with the period before 1957. There now seems to be considerable genuine discussion at the Central Committee plenary meetings. Many Central Committee members, while paying prescribed homage to the leader, at the same time are expressing their own views, particularly on matters concerning internal economic policy. Some portion of their views is also apparently incorporated in the Central Committee resolutions which are the end result of plenum discussions.

Khrushchev's ability to suppress any opposition which would eliminate him is considerable, but his ability to suppress expression of different points of view about particular problems is still limited. The Soviet hierarchy, and especially the Central Committee, has achieved a position where it can influence the Premier, particularly when his policies are in need of "repair." Soviet policies are still formulated without direct influence of broad public opinion, but in the last three years, and particularly when Soviet policy has received setbacks, "narrow" public opinion - namely, that of the Central Committee, - plays some role in shaping Soviet political policies. Possibly the Central Committee's growing importance explains the until now inexplicable change in agricultural policy of its December 1959 plenum. Presumably the opposition to the "kolkhoz mergers" came mainly from the non-Presidium members of the Central Committee. It is possible that the opposition pressure of the Central Committee resulted in Khrushchev's abandoning the idea, at least for the time being - and was not a fight for Presidium leadership at all.

The most important new twist is not a battle between the Presidium members for Khrushchev's scalp, but the growing importance of the Central Committee in influencing and limiting his direction of Soviet affairs. If this continues for some time then a structural change in the essential framework of Soviet leadership may possibly take place.



"...BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS"

By Seweryn Bialer  
Problems of Communism  
March-April 1960

IT WILL STILL take us along time, but whatever the circumstances, we must see to it that our specialists -- who constitute and will continue to constitute a distinct social stratum until we attain the highest degree of development of Communist society -- live better under socialism than under capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

In these words of Lenin we find the origin of the privileged caste of technical intelligentsia and executive officialdom which has long been a distinctive feature of Soviet society. Stalin extended Lenin's principle of privilege to political and administrative "specialists" as well as to experts in the art of coercion; at the same time he created a system of social stratification which, in the degree of its rigidity and class differentiation, has had no equal in contemporary industrial societies.

Among the evolutionary shifts which have taken place since Stalin's death, changes affecting this aspect of Soviet society have attracted special attention -- not wholly by chance or without reason. On the one hand, the new leadership has spared no effort to publicize the favorable features of such changes both at home and abroad; along with sputniks, they have increasingly become the trump cards of official propaganda. On the other hand, the policy moves and measures involved here have been a natural focus of outside interest since they have important effects both on the Soviet economy and on the relations of the party to the rest of the society. There is a tendency in the non-Communist world -- more conscious in some quarters, of course, than in others -- to search for signs of a democratic evolution in the Soviet system, as the most comfortable and simplest escape from the problems and dangers of perpetuated East-West competition. The policy shifts under discussion offer rich food for such hopes because they constitute, without question, significant departures from the past; it therefore becomes a crucial matter to assess them in broad perspective, to see -- in short -- whether they have affected the essential totalitarian features of the Soviet system.

Types of Change

These shifts can be divided into two groups. In the first group are those which have brought about a distinct

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works (Russian ed.), 1952, Vol. 33, p. 169.

improvement in the general living standard and working conditions of the Soviet population. Borrowing from the Marxist-Leninist lexicon, one could justifiably say that the "law of absolute pauperization" -- the concept of the inevitable growing poverty of the laboring masses under capitalism -- well describes the conditions which prevailed for the great majority of the Soviet populace during Stalin's rule; if there were occasional intervals which saw some amelioration of these conditions, still the overall living standard hovered continuously on the verge of destitution by any yardstick. By contrast, there is not the slightest doubt that a constant rise in living standards has taken place during the last seven years among a broad segment of the population. A great deal of evidence has been compiled to substantiate this trend (see, e.g., the comprehensive article by Alec Nove in the last issue of this journal<sup>2</sup>); and while there are still discrepancies between Soviet propaganda claims and actual achievements, it seems pointless to waste debate on them, since -- assuming a continuation of present policies -- the gap will narrow with time.

In the second group are shifts which actually or seemingly affect the class structure of the Soviet Union -- that is, the relative status of the different social strata. Again applying Marxist-Leninist concepts, if under Stalinism the "law of absolute pauperization" of the worker and peasant masses occasionally "let up" a little, the "law of (their) relative pauperization" operated without interruption from the late 1920's until very recently. In plainer terms, paralleling the retreat from early "revolutionary romanticism" and the growth of the bureaucracy, there was increasing isolation of the various social strata and increasing disparity between the living conditions and social privileges of the higher and lower classes (or as Flora Lewis has aptly described them, the "upper classless" and the "lower classless"). As will be shown, the changes that would bring about a genuine reversal of this trend are of quite a different caliber than those in the first group.

The issue has been raised whether Stalin -- had he lived and faced the same opportunities as Khrushchev -- would have acted to raise the living standard of the Soviet people. In this writer's view, there are no grounds for maintaining that Stalin opposed a rise in the living standard per se: to suppose that he kept it in a depressed state as an absolute goal rather than as a relative necessity (from his viewpoint) is to demonize his medieval personality and to regard his policy as completely detached from the economic and political facts of life as he saw them. A policy of raising the living standard could be characterized as "anti-Stalinist" if the price of its pursuit were a renunciation of the priority of heavy industry, a slowing down

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<sup>2</sup> A. Nove, "Social Welfare in the USSR," No. 1 (Jan.-Feb.), 1960, p. 1.



of Soviet military growth, and a decrease in the accumulation-consumption ratio of the economy. Such a policy was pursued by Imre Nagy in Hungary during 1953-54, to a certain extent by Malenkov in the USSR during the same period, and by Gomulka in Poland after 1956.<sup>3</sup>

Khrushchev's program to raise the living standard is no such "anti-Stalinist" policy. It does not reject the basic system of priorities of the Stalinist era. In point of fact, the terms "anti-" or "pro-Stalinist," or "anti-" or "pro-totalitarian," have no more relevancy to his efforts in this area than they have to Soviet successes in the exploration of space. In raising the living standard, Khrushchev has simply actualized existing potentials in the economic situation; he has not initiated social changes or ideological revisions.

The situation is different when it comes to changes in the second category. A lessening of class differentiation in Soviet society -- if it should prove to be a genuine trend and not a short-term tactical maneuver -- would constitute a basic social reform and a political phenomenon of import. The question is whether the present regime has in fact adopted such a policy -- and if so, whether it constitutes a long-range trend comparable to the effort to raise the living standard. There is no doubt that a number of developments attest to some levelling off of class differentiation, but in the author's view this tendency is limited in important respects. The economic effects are the most easily measured, and it is to these that we will first turn attention.

#### The Status of Peasants vis-à-vis Workers

Regarding the industrial workers as the basic layer of Soviet society, the economic stratification initiated under Stalin took place in two directions, both downward and upward.

The peasant became the main victim of the differentiation downward. It is something of a paradox that for long years the only "economic" privilege extended to the peasant -- that is, the only hope he had of raising his standard of living -- was the right left to him to escape from the countryside to the city. Some statistics just recently

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<sup>3</sup> The Polish example raises the question whether such an "anti-Stalinist" policy can in fact be successfully pursued in a Communist state: while Nagy's and Malenkov's aborted policies are inconclusive in this respect, Gomulka's longer experiment led to deepening economic crisis and ultimately to major revisions in his policy.

revealed give an inkling of the desperate situation which prevailed among the peasantry at the end of the Stalin era: during 1953, 13 percent of the kolkhozes in Tadzhikistan were unable to pay their farmers any cash for collective labor, while 28 percent paid only one ruble per labor day<sup>4</sup> -- this in a republic which was strongly favored by the existing agricultural price-structure (in 1950, it might be noted, Tadzhikistan and two other cotton-growing republics received 30 percent of all kolkhoz money income in the USSR, though containing only 4 percent of the collective farms<sup>5</sup>).

The disproportion between peasant and worker incomes, in Soviet writings euphemistically called "the differences between town and country," has decreased dramatically in the later years of the post-Stalin era. Between 1952-58 all told, the average payment per labor day on the collectives has about tripled, and the total sum of the collectives' payment for labor has almost quadrupled.<sup>6</sup> Nothing close to such an increase has affected industrial wages or the urban standard of living.

The present regime's policy on peasant income may be explained, in the main, as follows: In the era of "primary socialist accumulation" -- and then during the postwar reconstruction and development of industry -- agriculture was designated as the basic source of accumulation, the payer of what Stalin called the "tribute" necessary to achieve industrialization. But as Soviet industrial power grew, a more equitable distribution of the burden of accumulation between the city and the country, between industry and agriculture, became not only possible, but absolutely necessary if further progress was to be achieved. Lags in agricultural production had become a stumbling block, hindering the expansion of industry, the raising of urban living standards, and not least of all the Kremlin's expansionist plans. Forcible methods of collectivization had been sufficient to ensure the siphoning off of produce from the country to the town, but not to stimulate agricultural development. The introduction of genuine incentives into agriculture -- that is, incentives which would raise the standard of living -- became imperative.

#### A New Retreat?

The Soviet leaders have vigorously pursued this objective over a period of years. Recent evidence suggests,

<sup>4</sup> These figures were cited at the December Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee: Pravda, Dec. 24, 1959.

<sup>5</sup> See Comparisons of the United States and Soviet Economies, report of the Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress, Washington, D.C., 1960, Part I, p. 272.

<sup>6</sup> Kommunist (Moscow), No. 12, 1958, p. 25.



however, that they are now more concerned with the reverse of the problem: namely, how to slow down the pace of the process that they set in motion -- in fact, how to prevent the peasants' income from reaching the level of the workers' income. Clear indications of this concern were manifested at the December plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, where a concerted attack was launched against the present index of purchasing prices for agricultural commodities. One after another, high functionaries of the party took the stand against the current price scale. The first Secretary of the Tadzhik SSR, T. Uldzhabayev, declared that at meetings of activists and on higher party levels, "a unanimous opinion concerning the need to lower prices for cotton, fruit and other products had been expressed (applause)."<sup>7</sup> Georgia's First Secretary, V. Mzhavanadze, asserted that it was "necessary to work out new proposals for lowering the purchase price of tea, citrus fruits, bay leaves, and industrial crops."<sup>8</sup> The speeches of C. Polyansky of the RSFSR, N. Podgorny of the Ukraine, V. Akhundov of Azerbaijan and many others were keyed to the same theme.

Two future courses were suggested at the plenum. On the one hand, it was proposed that kolkhoz commodity prices be adjusted, on a step-by-step basis, to approximate more closely the prices "paid" to sovkhozi (the state farms). "It is necessary," said Mr. Polyansky (RSFSR), "to work toward a closer approach between kolkhoz and sovkhoz costs of production..." and "toward a closer approach between kolkhoz purchase prices and the contractual prices of the sovkhozi."<sup>9</sup> An indication of the differences between kolkhoz and sovkhoz delivery prices was provided by N. Belyaev, in data on Kazakhstan for 1958:<sup>10</sup>

	<u>Kolkhoz Price</u>	<u>Sovkhov Price</u>
	(in rubles per centner)	
Wool	4,213.00	1,821.00
Mutton	578.92	320.92
Beef	773.50	416.72
Sunflower Seed	138.72	60.30

If these figures are representative of the whole country, it would seem necessary to lower kolkhoz prices by some 40 to 60 percent to meet sovkhoz levels.

<sup>7</sup> Pravda, Dec. 24, 1959.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Dec. 25, 1959.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Dec. 23, 1959.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.





# Shifts in "Upward" Differentiation

Whether the process of stratification that took place upward from the working class, separating it from the "higher" layers of the society, has now been set in reverse is a much more complicated question. There is a great deal of statistical evidence available concerning the improved circumstances of the workers. But there is a very little hard data to show the effects of recent policies on the upper strata; and the higher a particular group stands in the hierarchy, the less is said about it in official sources. Moreover, the higher the group, the more its status must be measured in terms not just of money income but of a broad range of privileges -- both economic and non-economic -- which indirectly favor its welfare.

Starting, then, with the clearest evidences of change, there is no doubt that steps have been taken to lessen the fantastic ranges in earning power, and hence in living conditions, within the industrial working class. There is also not much doubt that the chasm between the workers on the one hand and the lower-level "organizational" men and technical intelligentsia on the other has been closed to some extent. The differences of economic position both within and between these groups are indicated fairly accurately by the simple dimension of nominal earnings. The basic intent of the regime in this respect is clear from the wage and salary provisions of the Seven-Year Plan: the minimum wage is to increase by some 60 to 70 percent between 1959 and 1965, compared to an average increase in all money wages of 26 percent.<sup>14</sup> Since by some estimates 20 percent or more of all workers in the main sectors of the state economy are in the minimum wage bracket, it seems safe to assume that the most glaring wage disparities -- in the broad range from unskilled workers at one end to technical specialists and middle-ranking professionals or officials at the other -- will be lessened considerably.<sup>15</sup>

Moving on up the scale, we come to the question of economic differentiation between the above-mentioned groups and the party and governmental managerial strata. It is at this level that information concerning direct monetary remuneration is most difficult to come by. There have been rumors that the salaries of some very high-ranking bureaucrats -- for example, government ministers -- have recently

<sup>14</sup> Pravda, Nov. 14, 1958.

<sup>15</sup> The 20-percent figure has been estimated to apply in the broad sectors of industry, transport, communication and construction: Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik (New York), December 1959, p. 233. and editorial.

been reduced.<sup>16</sup> But how wide or how deep the scythe has cut nobody knows; there are not even solid grounds for speculation.

This, however, is the least of the problem. For at the higher levels, excessive inequalities in nominal wages cease to be the only yardstick for measuring differences in economic status. From the medium strata of officialdom on upward economic privileges of a non-monetary character increasingly affect and determine the living standard of their recipients. These privileges are hard to measure not only because they



and their families.<sup>17</sup> In addition, party workers have access to a party-run network of medical facilities, complete with highly-trained personnel, modern methods of treatment, and scarce domestic or imported medicines not generally available to the public. A ruble in the hands of a party apparatchik has a "usable value" no less important than its nominal purchasing power: It may be spent at any of a number of stores, service shops, cafeterias and canteens which are run by the party outside the public retail trade network, and which offer a line of "deficit" or luxury goods and services rarely obtainable elsewhere. Among other economic sidelines, the party even maintains a so-called "loan-assistance fund" from which party workers can borrow money without interest, paying it back in small installments. These are only a few of the operations through which the party disperses its favors.

The privileges spoken of here do not just pertain to the few hundred officials in Khrushchev's inner circle (they are already living in a "Communist" society where everybody receives according to his needs). These privileges are enjoyed -- to a greater or lesser degree, of course -- by the entire political bureaucracy and a considerable part of the state bureaucracy. When the sum of such peripheral benefits is considered, it is clear that economic differentiation between the political or administrative official and the average citizen is much more than a matter of difference in pay.

Are these privileges now being eliminated -- or even modified? It is impossible to answer definitively. More than likely they have simply assumed a more "sophisticated" -- that is, less obvious -- character as a result of the general improvement on the "open" market and the decrease in consumer-goods shortages. The Soviet system at present and for the foreseeable future will remain a system where the conveyance of goods from the producer to the consumer is primarily determined not by simple laws of supply and demand -- i.e., by a free circulation of commodities in exchange for money -- but by planned distribution, allowing regime authorities to decide to a large degree what will be sold, where, when, and to whom. The wealth of published testimony bearing

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17. "Rest homes" are, of course, supposed to be available to all deserving Soviet workers, but some simple arithmetic raises questions about this claim. According to an official Soviet source, as of 1958 there were 836 "rest homes" in the USSR, accommodating 160,000 people for two-week vacation periods. According to the same source, the total working force in the nationalized economy and state administration in the same year totaled 54.4 million people. Extrapolating these figures, it is seen that the rest homes can accommodate only about 7 to 8 percent of the working population. The opportunities for "privilege-mongering" become clear. Source: Narodnoe Khozyaistvo SSSR v 1958 godu, Moscow, 1959, pp. 101, 666, 895.

witness to the differences in the quantity and quality of goods available in Moscow compared to the provincial cities, or again in industrial towns compared to rural areas, indicates the broad pattern established by distribution controls up to the present. Within this framework, it is clear that planning decisions have been based on both economic and political priorities -- and the shorter the supply of particular goods, the greater the influence of political considerations in their distribution.

In the absence of any indications to the contrary, it is fair to assume that these priorities continue to operate.<sup>18</sup> The indirect economic privileges described above may be "survivals from the past" but they have an incentive value among the upper strata which the regime would be loathe to sacrifice. It would be neither possible, given the inadequate level of consumer goods and services, nor politic, given the professed policy of wage equalization, for the regime to compensate for any abandonment of these privileges with some form of direct monetary return. Taking all of the above into consideration, any talk of a trend aimed at undercutting the privileged economic position of Soviet officialdom is -- to say the least -- premature.

#### The War on Permanent Privilege

There is, however, a category of policies adopted by the Soviet leadership which in a special and distinct sense has been directed against these upper strata; such policies have had as their common target the perpetuation of privileged status without regard to performance, the "bequest" of such status from one generation to another, and the companion tendency in Soviet society toward class immobility.

Thus, in the case of Khrushchev's educational reforms, for example, steps have been taken to equalize the opportunities and competition for higher education among youths from all social classes of the population, and to curb the abuses of social privilege and power whereby upper class families have often secured the enrollment of their children in the universities. These measures should help to increase upward mobility and in time to make class standing more dependent on ability, less on heredity.

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<sup>18</sup> The parallel situation in Poland is interesting in this respect. During the Polish "October" a great number of the non-monetary economic privileges of the ruling bureaucracy were abruptly liquidated. Yet in the period of "stabilization" since, Gomulka has found it necessary to restore the system of privilege to some extent -- this despite his own notably ascetic tastes (which would seem to militate against such a retreat) and despite the inevitable negative impact on public opinion.



Another step in the same direction has been the prolonged and vigorous press campaign attacking the laws of inheritance and other privileges of the so-called "golden youth" -- the sons of "good" family who for all practical purposes do not work, but instead live off their parents' incomes or inheritances left to them.

The regime's attack is directed not only against the sons but against the fathers -- that is, against the assumed privilege of "life membership" in the hierarchy. While this privilege has never, of course, been set forth as a positive right, its foundations were laid during Stalin's time. In the development of the "new class" under Stalin, upward mobility was restricted -- though for the ablest the road led to ever higher honors. On the other hand, downward mobility was even more restricted: the road of descent was limited almost exclusively to political "liquidation" and/or the grave. Assuming that a careerist steered clear of political deviations, did not antagonize superiors, and had some talent for flattery, he could attain a permanent berth among the privileged, once he was "in" with those who counted. The hero of a collection of stories recently published in the Soviet Union -- a party functionary named Prokhor -- exemplifies and perhaps immortalizes the "staying power" of the privileged group. When questioned about his professional speciality, Prokhor characterizes himself as "party activist" or "leader" (rukovoditel). He not only fails to discharge duties but positively disrupts operations in one after another of the positions he holds -- yet another place is always offered to him. Why? -- because in the files of the party committee he is a party activist, a member of the privileged group; he is not guilty of political deviations, and is generally a "nice fellow"; therefore he must be given a responsible post.<sup>19</sup>

The current leadership is clearly at war against this concept of permanent privilege. One of the weapons it has used has been to cut back the size of the party and state elite.<sup>20</sup> In this process it has relegated officials who have not shown administrative or leadership ability to jobs in direct production.

19 N. Troyepolski, Prokhor Semnadsatii i drugie (Prokhor the Seventeenth and Others), Moscow, 1955.

20 Very little information is available on the size of these cuts, though there is no doubt that some have taken place, particularly in the state bureaucracy. With regard to the party apparatus, a delegation of the Italian Communist Party, in a report on talks with Soviet party officials, quoted a high-level deputy's statement that cuts have been made and are still being made: Problemi e realita dell'URSS, Riuniti, Rome, 1958, p. 52.





how Khrushchev has been able to carry through his "reforms" without greater and more effective opposition on the part of the upper strata. It should be kept in mind that freedom from fear and terror is a very fresh sensation for these people. Khrushchev has demonstrated on more than one occasion that he can be ruthless in the face of resistance, and the choice between accepting his reforms and inviting even a partial retreat towards coercive methods of "persuasion" had probably not been difficult to make. To use an old adage, the elite probably recognizes that it cannot eat its cake and have it too.

### Evolutionary Trends

Adjusting our focus once again to the whole society, it can be shown that a very curious and seemingly contradictory process is taking place in the Soviet Union. On the one hand, the structure and functions of the primary productive and administrative units of the economy have been influenced, to an increasing degree, by factors of rationality; both the managers and the workers, at their respective levels of responsibility, have been allowed to exercise far more initiative than was the case under Stalin. On the other hand, the control of the central authority -- its ability to render and to enforce basic policies -- has not been diminished, but in fact has increased in certain important respects. In short, the meristic character of the Soviet system of govern-

The process that is set in motion can best be demonstrated by drawing a contrast. In a parliamentary democracy basic policies are determined by the opinion of the majority. In the parliamentary body itself, there must be a so-called "working majority" if the business of state is to be accomplished; in the absence of such a majority over any period of time, policy determinations remain in a state of suspension and the parliamentary system itself is threatened. (The crisis in the Fourth French Republic before de Gaulle's accession is a good example of this situation.)

It has been supposed by some that the top policy-making bodies in the Soviet system -- the Presidium and the Central Committee of the party -- similarly operated on the basis of a "working majority" during the period of so-called "collective leadership." In point of fact, the concept of "collective leadership," invoked after Stalin's death and finally dropped in the summer of 1957, was adopted precisely because of the lack of such a majority. It is sufficient to recall the countless shifting alliances and conflicts among the Soviet leaders to realize the ridiculousness of supposing that any real "working majority" could have existed (e.g., Khrushchev, Malenkov and others vs. Beria in 1953; Khrushchev, Molotov, Bulganin and others vs. Malenkov in 1954; Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Shepilov and others vs. Molotov in 1955; Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, Shepilov, Bulganin vs. Khrushchev, Mikoyan and Zhukov in 1956-57; Khrushchev and others vs. Zhukov in 1957 -- enough instances, one would hope, to prove the point). The concept of collective leadership endured as long as there was a relative equilibrium of power within the Soviet leadership, preventing the formation of a working majority. The process of elimination necessary before such a "working" majority could be formed left -- in the end -- a "majority of one."

Khrushchev's rise demonstrates that the present Soviet system is not much different from its predecessor in so far as the inexorable tendency toward a concentration of power is concerned. The power he now commands does not, of course, approach the degree or scope of the power wielded by Stalin in the prime of his dictatorship, and possibly it never will attain that level. In this sense it might be claimed that the Soviet system is "less totalitarian" than in the past. There are, however, other factors to be considered which preclude such a judgment.

#### Shifts in the Power Pattern

Let us turn, then, to a consideration of the means and channels by which regime policies are put into effect. For it is in this area that the writer finds basis for claiming that the monistic character of Soviet totalitarianism -- far from "fading away" -- has become intensified.



It falls, of course, to the Soviet bureaucratic hierarchy to communicate the policies and decisions of the leadership down to the operational level, to organize their implementation, and to oversee and ensure their fulfillment. This broad hierarchy can be divided, in terms of function, into four main groups: The political bureaucracy (the party apparatus); the bureaucracy of coercion (the police and the legal system); the military bureaucracy (the permanent professional army); and administrative and managerial bureaucracy (the state apparatus).

It can be shown that the boundaries between these groups, in terms of their functions and power, have never before been so sharply drawn -- or differentiated -- as they are now. In Stalin's time there was a kind of dualism -- or quadruplism, if one will -- apparent in the respective jurisdictions and relative power of these groups. It was manifested above all in the peculiar, fluctuating equilibrium of power that existed between the political bureaucracy and the coercive apparatus. Neither of these groups established clear superiority or control over the other;<sup>21</sup> on the other hand, both were more powerful than the remaining two bureaucracies. Yet the latter groups, though in a subordinate position, were able to create their own highly-centralized organizations, with certain internal features that restricted or counteracted outside interference.

In the seven years since Stalin's death, the position of the political apparatus has been enhanced to a point where it is both absolutely and relatively the most powerful element in the bureaucratic hierarchy. This has been accomplished both by curtailing the power of the other groups and by increasing the prerogatives and functions of the party apparatchiki.

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<sup>21</sup> In the Stalin era, the ubiquitous police apparatus had rights of inspection and control in all spheres of the society. It interfered with the work of the other apparatuses in a number of ways -- not only in security matters but in the implementation of the political line, cadre, policy, etc. It was only in relation to the party apparatus (and to some extent the military apparatus) that certain limitations were in force.

The party apparatus, for its part, had no reciprocal power to control or inspect the operations of the police apparatus. Only in matters of political indoctrination and propaganda did the party have a right to impose its decisions upon the police. And even this right was more formal than real, since party committees in the police apparatus were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Security itself -- unlike their counterparts in, say, the military apparatus, which were responsible in the last instance to the party's Central Committee.

It would not take much persuasion to convince anyone that the role and the power of the coercive bureaucracy has been radically decreased, eliminating it as a challenge to the party: It is similarly clear that since the purge of Zhukov, the relative power and independence of the military bureaucracy has declined vis-à-vis the political apparatus. The area in which the author's assertions may be questioned concerns the present influence of the administrative and managerial bureaucracy as compared to the party. The fact that administrators and managers have been allowed a great deal more initiative in conducting their work has led some to assume that their specific gravity in the Soviet power mechanism has increased as well. A comparison of the changing structure and functions of the state and political bureaucracies shows that this assumption is unwarranted.

#### Emergence of the "Supreme" Party

In the first place, the party apparatus has remained highly centralized. To the extent that personnel cuts have taken place (see footnote 20), they have mainly affected the lowest levels of the party. By contrast, the state apparatus has been substantially decentralized, especially in the economic field, and many of its central ministries and agencies have been abolished.

With the dissolution of a large part of the central state apparatus, the party bureaucracy has assumed much greater responsibility at higher levels for the functions of communicating regime decisions downward and overseeing their execution. At the same time, its role in the direct organization of production has greatly increased at the intermediate level of operations, as a result of the creation of the sovnarkhozy (the regions constituting the basic economic and administrative units in Khrushchev's decentralization scheme). Perhaps most dramatic has been the increase of its power at the oblast (district) level, where the long-standing problem of dual authority between the local party and government organs has generally been resolved in favor of the former. The one real blow to local party strength in the rural areas, the liquidation of the machine-tractor stations, is being compensated in part by granting the party organizations in the kolkhozi more power to influence production decisions.

In another and quite different area -- the conduct of Soviet relations with the international Communist movement and with other regimes in the Soviet empire -- the party apparatus has again assumed a much larger role than it played in the past, frequently acting as the direct channel for contacts which in Stalin's time were handled by state officials and diplomatic representatives.



It would seem that the record speaks for itself. The party bureaucracy is at present the only remaining apparatus which is centralized in its organization, which operates at all levels of the society, and which "specializes" in every sphere of societal activity. In its functions of communicating, controlling and to an ever greater degree directly organizing the tasks set forth by the leadership, it influences the operations of the other bureaucratic apparatuses, but it is not in turn subject to any outside interference. It is subordinate only to the top leadership and to its own hierarchical line of authority. The individual member of the apparatus has, of course, a clearly-defined and limited area of operation, but the apparatus as a whole is under no such limitations. In short, it has assumed an exclusive, ubiquitous, and all-pervasive role in the society.

It is this narrow group, then -- narrow in relation both to the size of the entire party, and to the size of other groups within the Communist bureaucracy -- which has come to constitute the new ruling stratum in the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> While its ranks include a number of "experts" with specialized functions and authority, the role of the apparatus as a whole is perhaps best expressed in the functions and powers of the hierarchy of party "first" secretaries. The activity of the party secretary is restricted only by the territorial limits of his jurisdiction and by the decisions of the next secretary up the line; he may exercise his authority in any sphere, imposing his will on the economic administration, the educational system, the local governmental apparatus, etc. He is, in effect, the one representative of the Communist bureaucracy within "his" area whose scope of professional interests and right of interference are virtually absolute and all-embracing. In this sense he personifies the omnipotence of the party apparatus within the society at large.

It may be argued that the role of the managerial bureaucracy is to an extent parasitical, as compared to its counterpart in a free economic system; yet once the "means of production" are nationalized, once a state economy is established, the managerial apparatus can at least be defended as economically necessary and socially justifiable. This justification is lacking in the case of the political bureaucracy; its raison d'être is solely to perpetuate the supremacy of the party.

### The Nature of the New "Democracy"

Perhaps no one has better defined the character of "democracy" in the Soviet Union than the American economist

<sup>22</sup> According to the author's calculations (based on various factors which cannot be presented here for lack of space), the party apparatus in the Soviet Union is composed of about 200,000 officials -- that is, some 3 percent of the party membership and only a fraction of a percent of the total population.

David Granick, in his book The Red Executive:

The essence of Soviet "democracy" is the activity of large numbers of people in interpreting to their local scene the decisions made higher in the organization, ...taking part in carrying out these decisions, ...supervising their execution by others, and finally... trying to mobilize support for these decisions among the general Soviet public. In short, democracy consists of participation in everything except basic decision-making.<sup>23</sup>

This, in simplest terms, expresses the barrier which continues to divide and distinguish the rulers from the ruled in Soviet society. The party leadership has been willing -- as industrial development made it possible -- to share the ruling group's position of economic privilege with other strata of the population, to extend the "fruits of the revolution" on an ever greater scale to an ever greater number of people. But more closely and jealously than ever, it guards the ruling group's position of political privilege -- that is, its monopoly of power and final authority over the basic decisions which determine the direction and character of the society. A number of non-party specialists and even some outstanding workers in certain occupations (e.g. mining), may enjoy a living standard close to that of the ruling group; in fact, the highest-paid managerial personnel and specialists may be "better off" than the preponderant majority of the political apparatus. But here any equality of status ends. The economic privileges granted at any level represent payment for services rendered on order of the political rulers; and at any level they are incentives aimed at binding the recipients to the party regime. In the last analysis, even the highest-ranking specialists -- as long as they are only specialists and not members of the political bureaucracy -- have no more right than the lowliest citizens to affect or participate in the basic policy-making function.

The same barrier applies to the so-called "freedom of initiative" in Soviet life. Any "initiative to make decisions" has remained tightly within the grasp of the party apparatus; what has been granted -- and in fact widely encouraged in the regime's own interest -- is the "initiative to implement decisions." One could not wish a more succinct definition of this difference than that offered in a Soviet pedagogical textbook: "Initiative is an independent search for the best way to fulfill a command."

#### Progress -- Toward What?

The fierce struggle for power within the Kremlin, and the final victorious emergence of Khrushchev, was the

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<sup>23</sup> D. Granick, The Red Executive, Doubleday and Co., New York, 1960, p. 196.



inevitable product -- the "other side of the coin," so to speak -- of the myth of collective leadership. Similarly, the concentration and "universalization" of the power of the political bureaucracy is "the other side of the coin" of Khrushchev's decentralization and democratization reforms. If, as a result of these reforms, the political regime is less preoccupied with petty interference in the lives of its citizens and in the day-to-day determinations necessary in their work, then it is more preoccupied than ever with the basic decisions by which its policies are implemented, with the control of fundamental managerial activities. The lessening of terror -- the most fearful and brutal characteristic of Soviet totalitarianism in Stalin's era -- and the downgrading of the role of the apparatus which stood behind it, has gone hand in hand with the extension of political control and the elevation of the party apparatus to a unique position of authority. To interpret this process as a diminution of totalitarianism is an utter fallacy.

A Polish writer, back in the days of the October upheaval of 1956, posed the pointed question: "If a cannibal eats with a fork and knife, does it mean progress?" By dictionary definition, progress means "moving forward, developing to a higher stage, gradual betterment." Does the Kremlin's adoption of more civilized means to accomplish its ends mean "gradual betterment"? From the point of view of the average Soviet citizen, it probably does. Perhaps it does from the leadership's point of view, too: the notion of "progress," after all, is highly subjective in character. In addition, any concept of "progress," as applied to a whole society, embraces various fields of human and social activity, some complementary, some bearing no relation to each other.

It is important to keep in mind that "progress" -- or for that matter, "regress" -- is not the same as "change." In the Soviet Union changes are taking place in all spheres of the national life; if these constitute progress in some respects, they do not necessarily mean progress in others. There is no doubt that certain changes have initiated a progressive betterment in the living conditions and standards of Soviet society at every level. But changes which would diminish -- rather than merely reorganize -- the totalitarian features of the Soviet system are yet to come.

While the future is never entirely predictable, it seems improbable that a genuine retreat from totalitarianism will come about through reform from above, so long as those in control -- men who took part in building Stalin's empire and who are well-schooled in the ways of the "old master" -- remain at the helm of Soviet society. To quote another Polish writer's remark at the time of the revolution: "Woe to us, so long as the principle remains in force that only the people who damaged the machine are entitled to repair it."