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KHRUSHCHEV - STRONG ON POLITICS. WEAK ON MATHEMATICS

The bland reference made by N.S. Khrushchev at a reception in Bucharest¹ to Bulganin's blunder in 1957 recalls some facts which shed light on the present state of the Presidium.

Khrushchev told his communist audience that in June 1957, during the crisis concerned with the anti-Party group, Bulganin had said at a meeting of the Presidium "we are seven and you are four." Khrushchev observed that though "two plus two equals four" was mathematically correct, the same certainly could not be applied to politics, where "things are different."

He has thus confirmed a historical fact which was first widely suspected in the West after the publication of the New History of the CPSU² in the summer of 1959. At that time, Background Information (8 June 1959, "Khrushchev and the Presidium IX) pointed out that:

"Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Kirichenko and Suslov found themselves in a temporary minority in the Presidium against the opposition led by Malenkov-Molotov-Kaganovich, the core of the anti-Party group, who were joined on this occasion by Saburov, Pervukhin, Bulganin and Voroshilov."

In reporting the Bucharest reception, the London Times adds that Khrushchev had spoken

"of communists being bound by faith in the victory of their system in spite of opposition which might arise within the Communist Party. He revealed for the first time what had generally been assumed - that in the summer of 1957 he won his political victory, after being defeated in the Presidium, by calling a central committee meeting. That he spoke of this to a wide audience could be an indication of the strength of his present position."

Another such indication is the now certain fact that Suslov,³ the man who for years has been built up by rumor, speculation and fragments of shaky evidence as the probable

¹ London Times, June 27th, 1960.

² State Political Publishing House, Moscow, 1959, p. 655.

³ Appointed full member of Presidium, July 1955.

leader of an alleged anti-Khrushchev faction within the present Presidium, sided with his purported antagonist during those critical days. It has been noted previously (Background Information, 31 May 1958 "Khrushchev and Company") that Suslov "has in fact worked together with Khrushchev in the Central Committee Secretariat for a longer continuous period (since 1949) than any of the...newcomers to the Presidium-Secretariat who personify Khrushchev's control of the Party-State."

Moreover the fact that Khrushchev feels confident enough to leave Moscow so frequently and for such long periods - to the Black Sea on holiday with Suslov and Voroshilov, to Bucharest on an ideological fence-mending operation, to Austria on an eight-day coexistence drive, and soon to Cuba (perhaps next month?) to pour some more high-octane fuel on Castro's anti-American flames - is proof enough that he himself is neither haunted by the spectre of Suslov nor by the menace of Malinovsky.

A further indication of his present power is the magnitude of his achievement in Bucharest, where during and since his visit party after party have obediently toed the Khrushchev line. At the Hofburg in Vienna on July 2nd 1960, the Soviet leader seemed to be revising the Soviet position on atomic war when he said (Tass, July 3rd):

"If we start a war to settle disputes between states, ...we shall destroy our Noah's ark - the earth. Tens of millions of people will be wiped out and the health of millions upon millions will be undermined because radioactive fallout infects the organism of people and those affected will no longer be of full value but disabled ones. One must understand all this well and live in peace."

These remarks are a far cry from the official Soviet policy on nuclear war, which proclaims that though both sides would suffer serious casualties, losses in the capitalist world would be far greater than in the Communist bloc, and the end result would be the victory of communism (e.g., Colonel I. Baz, Voyenny Vestnik, June 1958). Possibly Khrushchev may now be making his more gloomy predictions for purely propaganda purposes - his new statement was made to the Austro-Soviet Friendship Society - but it seems more probable that this is what he believes, partly because at the time he was speaking ex tempore and so fast that even Troyanovsky was almost unable to keep pace with him, and partly because the new position is entirely rational. Khrushchev, as the most pragmatic Communist leader who has yet emerged (see Appendix below, p. 2), usually has a wholly rational basis for his actions. The statement had strong anti-Chinese overtones, since it is the Chinese who have been charging that it is cowardly to fear a nuclear war, but the important fact to note is that as in Bucharest, so in Vienna too it is Khrushchev who is making the running. No other Soviet leader has yet begun to criticize

the Chinese, and when Mikoyan in Oslo was invited to do so at his concluding press conference⁴ he skillfully evaded the issue.

Khrushchev's confidence in himself, judged by his statements in Austria, is as great as ever. His confidence in his handpicked Central Committee, should it ever again be needed, has not yet been shaken.

r.r.g.

Appendix:

Khrushchev: Personality and Policy,
Nato Letter , June 1960
by Louis Fischer

p. 1

⁴Pravda, 1 July 1960.

Nato LetterJune 1960

by Louis Fischer

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It was reported recently that when Chairman Nikita S. Khrushchev visited New York he told Governor Nelson Rockefeller of his intention, before the Bolshevik Revolution, to emigrate to America. He would have been a big success. He might have become Mayor of Chicago, president of General Motors, boss of the Teamsters trade union, or head of a giant advertising firm, for he is the world's best advertiser.

Khrushchev has vigor and humor, a quick mind, an excellent memory, a faith in himself, and a knowledge of human weaknesses. He is temperamental. 'I have a somewhat restless character and I am a blunt man,' he said on 25 September 1959. He enjoys verbal ju-jitsu and often downs his opponent. He likes to meddle and criticize. On his busy trip to America he went out of his way to visit the model corn farm of Mr. Roswell Garst in Iowa. Reporting about it to Muscovites on 28 September 1959, he said, 'I found some shortcomings. The corn is planted too densely, and I, of course, called his attention to this, friendly like.' He did not reveal Mr. Garst's reply. At President Eisenhower's Gettysburg farm, Khrushchev discovered that 'It is not a rich farm and the soil there is not too good,' and he so informed Eisenhower. Yet for years, this voluble, opinionated, ebullient man with a low boiling point swallowed Stalin's humiliating insults, exercised restraint, and respecting the rules of the totalitarian game, did not answer back, for that would have meant a bullet in the back of the neck. He bided his time and took revenge on the image of Stalin. He broke the idol and clambered over the pieces to the pinnacle of the Soviet pyramid. Some would say that Khrushchev is today the most powerful politician on earth - a remarkable achievement for a poor coal-miner's son who began his 'professional' career as a shepherd boy and later became a locksmith and worked in the Donetz coal mines. He did not learn to read and write until he reached the age of twenty, during the first year of the First World War. In 1918, he joined the Russian Communist Party. After seven years in the ranks, he was appointed a party organizer and commenced his climb to leadership.

A 'Public Relations Counsel'

Everything Khrushchev is and has he owes the Soviet regime, and he naturally glorifies it. Just so, millions of Americans who rose from poverty to power or from slums to wealth praise the American system unstintingly. None of Khrushchev's predecessors at the Soviet summit, neither Lenin, nor Stalin, nor Malenkov, ever described the country's achievements with such gusto. There is, to be sure, more to describe, and Khrushchev makes the most of it. But one imagines that he would have done a better job than the earlier leaders even with the more limited material at their disposal, for he is the born propagandist. In America his kind are called 'public

relations consels.' They sell automobiles, cigarettes, plastic girdles, and company virtues. Khrushchev sells socialism and he could give pointers to Madison Avenue in the craft which he has raised to an art. His qualifications for the task are multiple: a conviction that what was good for Nikita is good for the world; a closed mind to the wares of the competitor; and a lusty pleasure in competition. Also, his concepts are simple and primitive and he expresses them endlessly with unflagging zest as though he had never before heard them. This, as any TV viewer or radio listener, or newspaper reader can testify, is the first law of advertising.

Khrushchev is the practical businessman in politics. We do not know how much Marxist theory he has mastered. But he certainly read the 1848 Marx and Engels Communist Manifesto, and from it he borrowed the rhythm method of history. 'Feudalism existed and was succeeded by capitalism', he said at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. '...As Marx, Engels and Lenin proved, communism will succeed capitalism. We believe in this....' Adherents of a religious sect occasionally parade in city streets carrying signs with the legend, 'Repent, the end of the world is near.' Figuratively, Khrushchev wanders from country to country with a placard reading, 'Beware, the end of capitalism is near.' Lenin made that prophecy long ago. Imperialism, he asserted, is the last dying stage of capitalism. Holland lost their East Indies empire, England lost most of her empire. Both nations flourish. Their systems may not be the capitalism Lenin and Marx knew. But neither is it communism. Khrushchev's rhythm method assumes the death of the old and the birth of something totally different. Recent events show that the old can, by changing, get a new lease on life.

Capitalists to Coexist with Undertakers

Facts, however, have no chance against faith, and Khrushchev says, 'We believe in this'. He believes the Communists will 'bury Capitalism.' Meanwhile the capitalists are to coexist peacefully and somnolently with their impatient undertakers. Khrushchev's certainty that the rhythm of history will make communism the heir of capitalism rests on the thesis that communism is more enlightened, progressive and creative. In a letter dated 3 December 1957, and addressed to C. Rajagopalachari, a venerable leader of independent India, Khrushchev mentioned 'the achievements in Soviet science and technology' and asserted that 'they show the progress made by a people that has won its freedom from capitalist slavery.' This is a recurrent theme. On 15 May 1958, he announced the launching of a third Soviet sputnik weighing 1,327 kilograms and compared it derisively with the 'orange-sized American artificial satellites.' Again, speaking in Halle, East Germany, on 8 July 1958, he said, 'The Americans launched three of their orange-sized sputniks. But their sputniks are a hundred times smaller than the third Soviet sputnik. And what does this imply? It implies that

Soviet science has surpassed American achievements. That is a big victory for us, comrades. It is an expression of the will of the working class and the wisdom of the Communist movement.'

Competitive Coexistence.

Chairman Khrushchev has been going up and down the earth handing out tomato-sized replicas of the Soviet emblem that was deposited on the moon. President Eisenhower received one, as did President de Gaulle, and President Sukarno. Such pride is normal. It is even legitimate, given the world we live in and Moscow's attitude to competitive coexistence, to use sputniks as military-diplomatic demonstrations. 'The weight of the three artificial earth satellites placed in orbit by the Soviet Union,' he told a Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship meeting in Moscow on 12 July 1958, 'is a symbol of our country's weight in international affairs.' In science, however, weight and size are not synonymous with utility. One leaves it to the physicists to determine whether the heavier Russian satellites or the lighter and more numerous American varieties, which reached beyond five million miles into space, are photographing the weather above the atmosphere, and have been sending back other data, made bigger contributions. As to the relationship between sputniks and 'freedom from capitalist slavery,' it might be helpful to recall that great astronomers, city builders, and architects worked for ancient oriental despotisms, that through the ages tyrants have fostered science, that Russia under tsarist autocracy produced eternal literature and music, and that Dr. Zhivago, the Soviet Union's finest novel, could not be published there.

Silence on Personality Cult.

Mr. Khrushchev, orbiting around the globe and travelling far and wide at home, is the heaviest sputnik of all. His boasts about Russia's achievements and 'the wisdom of the Communist movement' boost his own prestige and power. He won international renown with the secret speech at the twentieth Communist Party congress in February 1956, condemning Stalin. When I asked Anastas I. Mikoyan in the Summer of 1956 why the speech had not been printed in the Soviet Union, he replied, 'It is too early.' Apparently it is still too early. In fact, the existence of the address used to be denied angrily by Kremlin spokesmen. But now the biography of Khrushchev in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia states that 'on February 25, at a secret session of the Congress, he delivered a report "On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences"'.

Popularity as Policy

Today, however, Khrushchev has himself become the object of a cult of personality. The Soviet book, Face to Face with America, written about Khrushchev's stay in the USA by 12 Soviet editors and journalists including the editor of Pravda, and his son-in-law, the editor of Izvestia, is full of worshipful adulation of the Soviet Chairman, and incidentally, just as full of anti-American venom. The Soviet press drips with his praise. A new poster to be seen in Moscow shows Khrushchev

by the side of Lenin whom he never knew. Stalin, the loathed paranoic, needed the orgy of saccharinal glorification to make him the officially 'beloved' father figure. Khrushchev, who is not noticeably neurotic, needs the new cult to efface the widely-held view that though he is an improvement on Stalin he lacks the dignity and stature to be Russia's foremost leader. His cult of personality serves a political purpose. He has opponents in the Kremlin and more in China, and the two forces wash one another's hands. Since Khrushchev can deal with neither through secret police executions, he appeals over the heads of inner power groups to the public. This use of popularity to advance policy is unique in the Soviet Union's history. Lenin appealed to the party. Stalin appealed to no one. Khrushchev, irrepressible and gifted salesman, courts the party and the people.

Bread, Sausage...and Beer.

Khrushchev's primary task is to convince the Soviet population and the world that communism must win in the coexistence war with capitalism. 'Up to now', he told the congress of the Socialist Unity Congress of East Germany on 11 July 1958, 'socialism has been completed in only one country - in the Soviet Union.' He thus announced that China was not yet Socialist, much less Communist. But 'we' - the Soviet Union - 'are now advancing successfully to a Communist society.' He gave the proof two days earlier to another East German audience when he reported that the next Soviet harvest would be good, with the result that 'we shall be able to eat both bread and sausage and have enough to spare for beer.' To German ears, at least, bread and wurst and beer spell capitalist poverty. 'The national income,' Khrushchev replied to a Polish journalist's question on 10 March 1958, 'which is the most general index of the people's well-being, has risen in the USSR fourteen-fold per head of population since 1913...' If people's well-being is synonymous with national income, we must assume that a worker's family which lived in one room under the Tsar now has fourteen rooms; each child that had one pair of shoes now has fourteen; every woman who possessed one dress in 1913 now owns fourteen. How wonderful, but, alas, how untrue. In the United States on the other hand, Khrushchev said to M. Groussard, Le Figaro correspondent, on 19 March 1958, millions of people 'can die from want and privation or drag out a miserable existence and none of the millionaires and billionaires will be worried about it.'

Wolf versus Wolf

'The main thing to be borne in mind,' Khrushchev insists, 'is the noble aims and principles of communism. Under capitalism man is to man a wolf'. This recalls an anecdote I heard from a Soviet citizen in Moscow in 1956. 'Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man. Communism is just the reverse.' Khrushchev has apparently forgotten his secret speech of 25 February 1956. For twenty-five years, Stalin was a wolf to millions of men. Things are better now, but the Soviet state is still an untamed wolf devouring a tremendous percentage of the national income and subtracting it from the people's well-being. The real choice is between the grey capitalist

wolf, chained, checked and balanced by government regulations, trade unions, civil liberties, non-capitalist parties, etc., and the red wolf over which the citizenry has no control.

Part of the high cost of the Soviet system is due to its inefficiency. Bureaucracy tends to corrupt and absolute bureaucracy corrupts absolutely. This is true in Soviet industry and farming. Khrushchev has endeavored to lift the heavy hand of the bureaucrat from village collectives by introducing personal peasant incentive, but the state still owns and manages them, and the state is run by bureaucrats.

Another part of the high cost of the Soviet system is due to its foreign policy. Khrushchev devotes an ever-increasing segment of his public addresses to international affairs. He must realize that the tension with the West and the problems created by Russia's domination of her satellites increase the national armaments budget and reduce the Soviet standard of living. This produces a Kremlin cancer. Khrushchev's proposed cure is slogans: 'peaceful co-existence'; 'end the cold war'; 'total disarmament'. He does not suggest friendship. When M. Groussard of Le Figaro informed the Soviet chairman that he had Communist friends and 'the fact that they are Communists, whereas I am not, does not weaken our friendship', Khrushchev commented, 'I have different views on that matter. Friendship is real and strong when people see eye to eye on developments, history, and life. If you do not share the philosophy of the Communist party...it would be hard for you to have deep friendship as we understand it.' Instead of friendship and cooperation, Moscow advocates relaxation of tensions: the Soviet Union, said Khrushchev, saw the summit conference, 'as a step toward relieving international tensions.' Yet on the eve of that conference he increased tensions by attempting to undermine the Western position in Berlin, and finally wrecked it.

'One one hand...and the other'

Khrushchev's foreign policy is an 'one the one hand and on the other hand' amalgam. On the one hand (24 May 1958), he proposed that the West 'try the way of partial disarmament...'. On the other hand, at the United Nations in September 1959, he, and in 1960 at Geneva, his diplomats, stubbornly demanded total disarmament in four years. On the one hand (11 June 1958) Khrushchev affirmed that the Soviet Union 'continues to advocate restoration of the national unity of the German people'. Moreover (11 July 1958,) 'Among these questions is the reunification of Germany. The Western powers insist that the summit conference should take up this internal affair of the German people. It is perfectly clear, however, that this question is an internal matter for the German people and does not come within the competence of an international conference. To put forward this question for the conference agenda is to wreck the calling of such a conference.'

To this Khrushchev statement, the Western powers might very well have replied, 'Good. Since the reunification of Germany is not the business of other countries, we will not discuss it but merely recommend to the West and East German governments that they set up a commission to deal with the matter. In the meantime, of course, summit conferences should not discuss Berlin, for if Germany is reunified, there will be no Berlin problem.'

NOT TO BE MICROFICHED

The Two Germanys

It is not for me to prompt Khrushchev or to predict his reaction to such a Western gambit. But whereas he states, on the one hand, that he favors German unity and would leave the matter to Germans only, on the other hand, he declares (11 June 1958) that 'the Soviet Union is ready to help the German people actively in creating a single peaceful and democratic Germany' - read a single communist Germany - 'and to support such proposals as the creation of a confederation of the two German states.' Furthermore (8 July 1958), 'we believe that if today it is only the German Democratic Republic that is socialist, the time will come when all Germany will follow the socialist path...' Finally (9 July 1958), 'Herr Adenauer and his colleagues... want to...make us exert pressure on the government of the German Democratic Republic so that it will agree to reunification at the price of abolishing the G.D.R....If any leader in the Soviet Union were so much as to think that way, people in our country and our party would say that such a leader be placed in a lunatic asylum and have his head examined.' Is Khrushchev for German reunification? At a banquet in his honor in Washington, D.C., on 24 September 1959, Khrushchev said, 'If we will find a common language on questions of disarmament, if we will have a peace treaty with both German governments - that means we will see that you want to live in peace. If not - it means you want war.' A peace treaty 'with both German governments': in other words, Khrushchev wants a divided Germany.

A Puzzling Smile

On the one hand, coexistence. On the other hand (9 July 1958), 'capitalism and socialism are antagonistic social systems.' On the one hand (9 July 1958), 'We say, it is necessary, as the diplomats put it, to recognize the status quo.' On the other hand, drive the West from West Berlin, disrupt NATO, and foster communism in all continents.

Stalin's face was grim but clear; Khrushchev's is smiling and puzzling. Stalin, the monolith, decided and acted. Khrushchev manoeuvres to satisfy diverse forces within and mystify the adversary abroad. In coping with divisions inside the Communist bloc he cleverly seeks to divide the Western bloc. In some ways, Khrushchev is a more dangerous opponent than Stalin. Post-war Stalinist aggression could be checked by NATO. To check Khrushchev NATO needs to become more than a military defence pact. It must be the foundation of an integrated Europe.

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