

Document 8.1 The New Course

The main debate at this time was the new balance to be struck between heavy industry and consumer goods. Malenkov called for higher standards of living and a greater priority for consumer goods. He scaled back the drive for industrialisation and focused more on the dire situation in the countryside. One of his first acts was to reduce the level of compulsory deliveries to the state from the collective farmers' private plots by reducing delivery norms; the financial burden was also reduced by writing off past debts. In a speech to the Supreme Soviet on 8 September 1953 he outlined his views.

Up to now we have not had an opportunity to develop the light and food industries at those tempos as heavy industry. At the present time we can and are therefore obliged, to ensure the more rapid improvement in the people's material and cultural standards, to force the development of light industry . . . We must significantly increase investments in the light, food and in particular the fish industries, for the development of agriculture . . . the significant increase in the output of consumer goods . . . and the further rapid growth in the production of grain. We need to change the tax system on the *kolkhoz* peasant's personal plot . . . to reduce sharply compulsory deliveries from the personal plot . . . and reduce agricultural taxes.

Source: Izvestiya, 9 September 1953.

It was over the issue of consumer goods versus industrial investment that Malenkov was forced to resign as chairman of the Council of Ministers in February 1955. The collective leadership, about which so much was said after Stalin's death, was over. Malenkov was replaced by Nikolai Bulganin who at first shared prominence with Khrushchev, but he, too, was soon eclipsed.

Document 8.2 The Legacy of Stalinist Collectivisation: 'Crab Meat and Green Peas'

The following appeal to Khrushchev (he was not only party leader but responsible specifically for agricultural issues) reveals the scale of the problem.

Comrades think much of themselves and think little of people, of the common people. The people are living badly, and their state of mind is not to our advantage. The food situation throughout the country is dire. In practice one can only eat well in Moscow. In many regions in the shops there is only crab meat and green peas. In the countryside sugar is hardly eaten. The main thing is that the food situation from year to year does not improve.

We, Russia, buy meat from New Zealand. Just look at the yards of collective farm peasants, they are ruined. Isolated successes do not change the picture. Has it ever happened in history that people ran away from the land? And our countryside is depopulated . . .

Comrade Khrushchev! You are a bold person, gather once again your courage and admit directly that the twenty-six-year experience has demonstrated that collective farms have not justified themselves, a new organisation of agriculture is required.

Source: Izvestiya TsK KPSS, no. 6, 1989, pp. 148–9.

In September 1953 Khrushchev announced substantial increases (averaging 25–40 per cent) in the procurement prices (the fixed prices paid by the state for compulsory deliveries) and also increases in the purchase price of agricultural goods. He stressed, however: 'It should also be noted that the retail prices on livestock products, on potatoes and vegetables will not be increased, but, on the contrary, annually decrease. The policy of decreasing the retail prices of consumption items will be pursued into the future' (*Pravda*, 7 November 1953). Thus the USSR condemned itself to a reverse 'scissors crisis', with the prices paid by consumers heavily subsidised by the state, while state and collective farms were increasingly generously supported by cheap credits. Increasingly wasteful agricultural financing became a huge burden on the state budget. To the end of the Soviet period rural shops stocked little more than vodka, bread, tinned fish and Bulgarian peas.

Document 8.3 Khrushchev and the Virgin Lands Scheme

Unable to do much to improve the 'intensity' of farming, Khrushchev sought to overcome the chronic grain shortages by advocating its 'extension' to hitherto uncultivated areas, primarily the pasture-land steppe of the nomadic peoples of Kazakhstan, western Siberia, the lower Volga and (to a limited extent) in the north Caucasus. He sought within two years to expand grain planting by 13 million hectares, using intensive mechanisation. In these semi-arid terrains early successes soon gave way to serious dust-bowl problems. Later, the exploitation of these lands settled down to more sustainable levels. At this time Eduard Shevardnadze was a Komsomol (Communist Youth League) activist, and later became Georgian party leader from 1972 to July 1985, when he was made Gorbachev's foreign minister. His memoirs reveal both the enthusiasm of the period, and some of the problems with the campaign.

The campaign to develop the country's virgin lands and forests was beginning. Trains packed with young volunteers shuttled to Kazakhstan and the Altai range. I was assigned to lead the Georgian Komsomol brigade. We lived in the Kazakh steppes for several months, tilling the virgin earth, building homes and agricultural complexes. We got to know our peers from other republics. I owe much to this period of my life and retain bright memories of it. Perhaps people of my age are prone to idealise the vanished past, seeing their youth through a haze of nostalgia. But time does not distort the picture of those years or erase the remembered hardship of that life; nor do all my fellow travellers come out looking like heroes. I can clearly recall

this grandiose but poorly organised 'virgin land' era, the stupid decisions, and the ill-conceived strategies that cancelled out many successes. We watched helplessly as equipment brought to the new territories from all over the country began to break down. Thousands of people worked themselves ragged but failed to gather in the gigantic harvest. The crops rotted in the fields, and there was no place to store grain. Billions of roubles and vast amounts of equipment and manpower were squandered.

Sources: Eduard Shevardnadze, Moi vybor: v zashchitu demokratii i svobody (Moscow, Novosti, 1991), p. 57; The Future Belongs to Freedom (London, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), p. 22.

Although the Virgin Lands scheme, the opening up of the steppe to wheat production, from 1955 provided a massive boost to output, declining fertility soon reduced the value of the new lands. The country was forced to import grain from abroad, primarily the United States, and by the late 1980s the country was facing severe food shortages. The legacy of the coercive Stalinist agricultural system and botched attempts at its reform was one of the main themes of the last years of the USSR and was one of the major contributory causes for the collapse of the Soviet system.

Destalinisation

The problem of dealing with Stalin and his legacy was never satisfactorily resolved in the Soviet period. Khrushchev bravely started the process of what became known as 'destalinisation' in his 'secret speech' to the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956, but its limits were not greatly extended in the next thirty years. Much remained secret about Stalin's crimes, many victims (including some leading Bolsheviks like Nikolai Bukharin) were not rehabilitated, and the economic and political distortions imposed by the Stalinist system remained a permanent part of the fabric of Soviet life. The origins of the Stalinist system were allowed no sustained discussion, and the door remained open for attempts to rehabilitate Stalin himself.

Document 8.4 Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech'

The Twentieth Party Congress from 14 to 24 February 1956 was the first to be held after the death of Stalin. While many important matters were discussed in its sessions, the issue of Stalin was not placed on the agenda. With the final day's work completed on 24 February, the delegates were preparing to return home when, with the exception of foreign delegations and foreign guests, they were recalled in the evening for a closed session that lasted into the early hours of the next day. Without any preliminaries Khrushchev launched into a four-hour speech denouncing some of Stalin's excesses, above all the great purge of 1937–8 and his 'personality cult'. The speech did not remain secret for long, but although it was read to closed party meetings it was not officially published until the regime's final years.

Comrades! In the report of the Central Committee of the party at the Twentieth Congress, in a number of speeches by delegates to the Congress, as also formerly during the plenary meetings of the CC CPSU, quite a lot has been said about the cult of the individual and about its harmful consequences.

After Stalin's death the Central Committee of the party began to implement a policy of explaining concisely and consistently that it is impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics akin to those of a god. Such a man supposedly knows everything, sees everything, thinks for everyone, can do anything, is infallible in his behaviour.

Such a belief about a man, and specifically about Stalin, was cultivated among us for many years.

The objective of the present report is not a thorough evaluation of Stalin's life and activity. Concerning Stalin's merits, an entirely sufficient number of books, pamphlets and studies have already been written in his lifetime. The role of Stalin in the preparation and execution of the Socialist revolution, in the civil war, and in the fight for the construction of Socialism in our country is universally known. Everyone knows this well. At the present we are concerned with a question which has immense importance for the party now and in the future – (we are concerned) with how the cult of the person of Stalin has been gradually growing, the cult which became at a certain specific stage the source of a whole series of exceedingly serious and grave perversions of party principles, of party democracy, of revolutionary legality ... [Khrushchev here cites Lenin's 'last testament', see Document 4.13]

When we analyse the practice of Stalin in regard to the direction of the party and of the country, when we pause to consider everything which Stalin perpetrated, we must be convinced that Lenin's fears were justified. The negative characteristics of Stalin, which, in Lenin's time, were only incipient, transformed themselves during the last years into a grave abuse of power by Stalin, which caused untold harm to our party.

We have to consider seriously and analyse correctly this matter in order that we may preclude any possibility of a repetition in any form whatever of what took place during the life of Stalin, who absolutely did not tolerate collegiality in leadership and in work, and who practised brutal violence, not only toward everything which opposed him, but also toward that which seemed to his capricious and despotic character contrary to his concepts.

Stalin acted not through persuasion, explanation, and patient cooperation with people, but by imposing his concepts and demanding absolute submission to his opinion. Whoever opposed this concept or tried to prove his viewpoint, and the correctness of his position, was doomed to removal from the leading collective and to subsequent moral and physical annihilation. This was especially true during the period following the Seventeenth Party Congress, when many prominent party leaders and rank-and-file party

workers, honest and dedicated to the cause of Communism, fell victim to Stalin's despotism.

We must affirm that the party had fought a serious fight against the Trotskyites, Rightists and bourgeoisie Nationalists, and that it disarmed ideologically all the enemies of Leninism. This ideological fight was carried on successfully, as a result of which the party became strengthened and tempered. Here Stalin played a positive role. . . .

It was precisely during this period (1935-8) that the practice of mass repression through the Government apparatus was born, first against the enemies of Leninism - Trotskyites, Zinovievites, Bukharinites, long since politically defeated by the party - and subsequently also against many honest Communists, against those party cadres who had borne the heavy load of the Civil War and the first and most difficult years of industrialisation and collectivisation, who actively fought against the Trotskyites and the Rightists for the Leninist Party line.

Stalin originated the concept 'enemy of the people'. This term automatically rendered it unnecessary that the ideological errors of a man or men engaged in a controversy be proven; this term made possible the usage of the most cruel repression, violating all norms of revolutionary legality, against anyone who in any way disagreed with Stalin, against those who were only suspected of hostile intent, against those who had bad reputations. This concept, 'enemy of the people', actually eliminated the possibility of any kind of ideological fight or the making of one's views known on this or that issue, even those of a practical character. In the main, and in actuality, the only proof of guilt used, against all norms of current legal science, was the 'confession' of the accused himself; and, as subsequent probing proved, 'confessions' were acquired through physical pressures against the accused.

This led to glaring violations of revolutionary legality, and to the fact that many entirely innocent persons, who in the past had defended the party line, became victims. We must assert that in regard to those persons who in their time had opposed the party line, there were often no sufficiently serious reasons for their physical annihilation. The formula, 'enemy of the people', was specifically introduced for the purpose of physically annihilating such individuals.

It is a fact that many persons who were later annihilated as enemies of the party and people had worked with Lenin during his life. Some of these persons made errors during Lenin's life, but in spite of this Lenin benefited by their work, he corrected them, and he did everything possible to retain them in the ranks of the party; he induced them to follow him . . .

Stalin's wilfulness *vis-à-vis* the party and its Central Committee became fully evident after the seventeenth party congress, which took place in 1934 . . .

It became apparent that many party, Soviet and economic activists who were branded in 1937-8 as 'enemies' were actually never enemies, spies,

wreckers, etc., but were always honest Communists; they were only so stigmatised, and often, no longer able to bear barbaric tortures, they charged themselves - at the order of the investigative judges, falsifiers - with all kinds of grave and unlikely crimes. The commission [established by the Central Committee to investigate the mass repressions] has presented to the Central Committee Presidium lengthy and documented materials pertaining to mass repressions against the delegates to the seventeenth party congress, and against members of the Central Committee elected at that Congress. These materials have been studied by the Presidium of the Central Committee.

It was determined that of the 139 members and candidates of the party's Central Committee who were elected at the seventeenth congress, 98 persons, i.e., 70 per cent, were arrested and shot (mostly in 1937-8). (*Indignation in the hall.*) . . . The same fate met not only the Central Committee members but also the majority of the delegates to the seventeenth party congress. Of 1,966 delegates with either voting or advisory rights, 1,108 persons were arrested on charges of anti-revolutionary crimes, i.e., decidedly more than a majority. This very fact shows how absurd, wild and contrary to common sense were the charges of counterrevolutionary crimes made out, as we now see, against a majority of participants at the seventeenth party Congress. (*Indignation in the hall.*) . . .

These and other facts show that all norms of correct party solution of problems were invalidated and everything was dependent upon the wilfulness of one man. The power accumulated in the hands of one person, Stalin, led to serious consequences during the great patriotic war . . .

Documents which have now been published show that by April 3, 1941, Churchill, through his Ambassador to the USSR, Cripps, personally warned Stalin that the Germans had begun regrouping their armed units with the intent of attacking the Soviet Union . . .

Had our industry been mobilised properly and in time to supply the Army with the necessary material, our wartime losses would have been decidedly smaller. Such mobilisation had not been, however, started in time. And already in the first days of the war it became evident that our Army was badly armed, that we did not have enough artillery, tanks, and planes to throw the enemy back . . .

When the Fascist armies had actually invaded Soviet territory and military operations began, Moscow issued the order that German fire was not to be returned. Why? It was because Stalin, despite evident facts, thought that the war had not yet started, that this was only a provocative action on the part of several undisciplined sections of the German Army, and that our reaction might serve as a reason for the Germans to begin the war . . .

As you see, everything was ignored; warnings of certain army commanders, declarations of deserters from the enemy army, and even the open hostility of the enemy. Is this an example of the alertness of the Chief of the Party and of the State at this particularly significant historical moment? . . .

It would be incorrect to forget that after the first severe disaster and defeats at the front Stalin thought that this was the end. In one of his speeches in those days he said: 'All that which Lenin created we have lost forever.' . . .

However, we speak not only about the moment when the war began, which led to serious disorganisation of our army and brought us severe losses. Even after the war began, the nervousness and hysteria which Stalin demonstrated, interfering with actual military operations, caused our army serious damage.

Stalin was very far from understanding the real situation which was developing at the front. This was natural because during the whole patriotic war he never visited any section of the front or any liberated city except for one short ride on the Mozhaisk highway during a stabilised situation at the front. To this incident were dedicated many literary works full of fantasies of all sorts and so many paintings. Simultaneously, Stalin was interfering with operations and issuing orders which did not take into consideration the real situation at a given section of the front and which could not help but result in huge personnel losses . . .

We should note that Stalin planned operations on a globe. (*Animation in the hall.*) Yes, Comrades, he used to take the globe and trace the front line on it . . .

Comrades, let us reach for some other facts. The Soviet Union is justly considered as a model of a multinational state because we have in practice assured the equality and friendship of all nations which live in the great fatherland.

All the more monstrous are the acts whose initiator was Stalin and which are crude violations of the basic Leninist principles of the nationality policy of the Soviet state. We refer to the mass deportations from their native places of whole nations, together with all Communists and Komsomols without any exception; this deportation action was not dictated by any military considerations.

Thus, already at the end of 1943, when there occurred a permanent breakthrough at the fronts of the great patriotic war in favour of the Soviet Union, a decision was taken and executed concerning the deportation of all the Karachai from the lands on which they lived. In the same period, at the end of December, 1943, the same lot befell the whole population of the Autonomous Kalmyk Republic. In March, 1944, all the Chechen and Ingush people were deported and the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic was liquidated.

In April, 1944, all Balkars were deported to faraway places from the territory of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Republic and the Republic itself was renamed Autonomous Kabardyn Republic. The Ukrainians avoided meeting this fate only because there were too many of them and there was no place to which to deport them. Otherwise, he would have deported them also. (*Laughter and animation in the hall.*) . . .

The wilfulness of Stalin showed itself not only in decisions concerning the internal life of the country but also in the international relations of the Soviet Union.

The July Plenum of the Central Committee studied in detail the reasons for the development of conflict with Yugoslavia. It was a shameful role which Stalin played here. The 'Yugoslav Affair' contained no problems which could not have been solved through party discussions among comrades. There was no significant basis for the development of this 'affair', it was completely possible to have prevented the rupture of relations with that country. This does not mean, however, that the Yugoslav leaders did not make mistakes or did not have shortcomings. But these mistakes and shortcomings were magnified in a monstrous manner by Stalin, which resulted in a break of relations with a friendly country.

I recall the first days when the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began artificially to be blown up. Once, when I came from Kiev to Moscow, I was invited to visit Stalin who, pointing to the copy of a letter lately sent to Tito, asked me, 'Have you read this?' Not waiting for my reply he answered, 'I will shake my little finger - and there will be no more Tito. He will fall' . . .

But this did not happen to Tito. No matter how much or how little Stalin shook, not only his little finger but everything else that he could shake, Tito did not fall. Why? The reason was that, in this case of disagreement with the Yugoslav comrades, Tito had behind him a state and a people who had gone through a severe school of fighting for liberty and independence, a people which gave support to its leaders.

You see to what Stalin's mania for greatness led. He had completely lost consciousness of reality; he demonstrated his suspicion and haughtiness not only in relation to individuals in the USSR, but in relation to whole parties and nations . . .

Some comrades may ask us: where were the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee? Why did they not assert themselves against the cult of the individual in time? And why is this being done only now?

First of all we have to consider the fact that the members of the Political Bureau viewed these matters in a different way at different times. Initially, many of them backed Stalin actively because Stalin was one of the strongest Marxists and his logic, his strength and his will greatly influenced the cadres and party work . . .

Comrades: We must abolish the cult of the individual decisively, once and for all; we must draw the proper conclusions concerning both ideological-theoretical and practical work.

It is necessary for this purpose: . . . to return to and actually practise in all our ideological work the most important theses of Marxist-Leninist science about the people as the creator of history and as the creator of all material and

spiritual good of humanity, about the decisive role of the Marxist party in the revolutionary fight for the transformation of society, about the victory of communism.

In this connection we will be forced to do much work in order to examine critically from the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint and to correct the widely spread erroneous views connected with the cult of the individual in the spheres of history, philosophy, economy and of other sciences, as well as in literature and the fine arts . . .

[It is necessary] to restore completely the Leninist principles of Soviet Socialist democracy, expressed in the Constitution of the Soviet Union, to fight the wilfulness of individuals abusing their power. The evil caused by acts violating revolutionary Socialist legality, which have accumulated during a long time as a result of the negative influence of the cult of the individual, has to be completely corrected. Comrades! The twentieth congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union has manifested with a new strength the unshakable unity of our party, its cohesiveness around the Central Committee, its resolute will to accomplish the great task of building communism. (*Tumultuous applause.*) And the fact that we present in all their ramifications the basic problems of overcoming the cult of the individual which is alien to Marxism-Leninism, as well as the problem of liquidating its burdensome consequences, is evidence of the great moral and political strength of our party. (*Prolonged applause.*)

We are absolutely certain that our party, armed with the historical resolutions of the twentieth congress, will lead the Soviet people along the Leninist path to new successes, to new victories. (*Tumultuous, prolonged applause.*)

Long live the victorious banner of our party – Leninism! (*Tumultuous, prolonged applause ending in standing ovation.*)

Sources: The Dethronement of Stalin: Full Text of the Khrushchev Speech, published by the Manchester Guardian, June 1956 from the text issued by the US Department of State on 4 June 1956 and made available through the United States Information Service and British United Press, pp. 1, 6–7, 10, 18, 19–20, 21, 23, 24–5, 31, 33. The text is also available in N. S. Khrushchev, *The Secret Speech, introduced by Zhores Medvedev and Roy Medvedev* (Nottingham, Spokesman Books, 1976); and Khrushchev Remembers, introduced by Edward Crankshaw, translated by Strobe Talbott (London, Book Club Associates, 1971), pp. 559–618.

Document 8.5 Togliatti on Destalinisation

While Khrushchev's speech was courageous and devastating for what it did say, it was equally remarkable for what it omitted to discuss, above all how Stalin had managed to dominate the party so thoroughly. It might be noted, for example, that

the term 'enemy of the people' was not a Stalinist innovation but was in common usage under Lenin. Note also that there was no mention of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, or of the mass terror inflicted on ordinary citizens. The weaknesses of the speech were pointed out by Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

As long as we limit ourselves, in substance, to denouncing the personal defects of Stalin as the cause of everything we remain within the realm of the 'personality cult'. At first, all that was good was attributed to the super-human, positive qualities of one man: now all that is evil is attributed to his equally exceptional and even astonishing faults. In the one case, as well as in the other, we are outside the criterion of judgment intrinsic to Marxism. The real problems, which are why and how Soviet society could reach and did reach certain forms so alien to democratic life and from the legality it had set for itself, even to the point of degeneration, are evaded . . .

It must not be forgotten that even when this power of his was established, the successes of Soviet society were not lacking . . . No one can deny that the Soviet Union in 1953 was incomparably stronger, more developed in every sense, more solid internally, and more authoritative in its foreign relations than it was, for example, at the time of the first Five-Year Plan . . . What is more important today is to respond justly, using a Marxist criterion, to the question of how the errors denounced today may have been intertwined with the development of a socialist society, and hence whether in the very development of this society there may not have been introduced, at a certain point, disturbing elements, mistakes of a general type, against which the entire socialist camp must be put on guard . . .

What the CPSU has done remains, as I said, as the first great model of building a socialist society for which a deep, decisive revolutionary break opened the way. Today, the front of socialist construction in countries where the communists are the leading party has been so broadened (amounting to a third of the human race!) that even for this part the Soviet model cannot and must not any longer be obligatory. In every country governed by the communists, the objective and subjective conditions, traditions, the organisational forms of the movement can and must assert their influence in different ways. In the rest of the world there are countries where it is desirable to move towards socialism without the communists being the leading party. In still other countries, the march toward socialism is a goal on which the efforts of various movements are concentrated, but which often have not reached either an agreement or a reciprocal understanding. The whole system becomes polycentric, and even in the communist movement itself we cannot speak of a single guide but rather of a progress that is achieved by following different roads. One general problem, common to the entire movement, has arisen from the criticisms of Stalin – the problem of the dangers of bureaucratic degeneration, of the suffocation of democratic life, of confusion

between constructive revolutionary force and the destruction of revolutionary legality, of the isolation of economic and political leadership from the initiative, the criticism, and creative activity of the masses. We shall welcome competition between communist parties in power to find the best way of avoiding this danger. It will be up to us to work out our own way and method, so that we, too, may guard against the evils of stagnation and bureaucratisation, and we will learn together how to resolve the problems of freedom for the working masses and of social justice, and hence gain for ourselves ever increasing prestige and following among the masses.

Source: Palmiro Togliatti, Interview in Nuovi Argomenti, 16 June 1956, in Dan J. Jacobs, From Marx to Mao and Marchais (London, Longman, 1979), pp. 241, 243–4, 245, 248–9.

Document 8.6 The Impact of the Secret Speech in Georgia

While most of the country heaved a sigh of relief, in Stalin's native Georgia matters were seen somewhat differently. Several thousand demonstrators on 5–9 March 1956 in Tbilisi in support of Stalin's memory were dispersed with tanks and armoured vehicles, leading to dozens of deaths.

Criticism of Stalin's cult of personality dealt a painful blow to my national feeling. Not just because he was a Georgian. Deliberately or not, Khrushchev permitted himself to say things that were offensive to Georgian pride. It was not enough for Nikita Sergeevich to cite facts. He gave free rein to his emotions, like a person humiliated for too long, and descended to degrading attacks on his dead master. He depicted him not only as the tyrant that he was, but as a profoundly ignorant and stupid man. But if he really were so stupid, many asked, how did he build such a powerful state and compel so many millions to follow him? How could he become a worthy adversary and partner with the leading politicians of his era? By scheming, brutality, force, and trickery alone? Impossible!

Sources: Shevardnadze, Moi vybor, p. 54; The Future Belongs to Freedom, p. 20.

Document 8.7 The 'Anti-Party' Group

In June 1957 some of the figures associated with Stalin in the Presidium (the new name for the Politburo) sought to remove Khrushchev from the leadership, fearing the concentration of power in his hands and alarmed at his policies. Khrushchev successfully counter-attacked, convening a full Central Committee plenum on 29 June (delegates were brought in on military planes provided by Zhukov), which supported him. Khrushchev then accused Kaganovich, Malenkov and Molotov,

together with Dimitrii Shepilov (a member of the CC's Secretariat), of having formed an 'anti-party' group within the Presidium. They were charged with factionalism, of having undermined the course outlined by the Twentieth Party Congress, of having opposed broadening the powers of the union republics and of granting more rights to local soviets, fighting bureaucratism, resisting Khrushchev's economic reforms and opposing the denunciation of Stalin's personality cult, all matters at the heart of Khrushchevite reformism.

The Central Committee plenum of 22–29 June 1957 considered the question of the anti-party group of Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov, which had formed in the Presidium of the CPSU's Central Committee . . .

With the aim of changing the party's political line this group sought through anti-party factional methods to replace the party's leading bodies elected by the CC plenum.

This was no accident.

During the past three to four years, when the party has resolutely set its course at overcoming the errors and shortcomings fostered by the cult of personality, and has been waging a successful struggle against revisionists of Marxism-Leninism both in the international arena and within the country, when the party has made an enormous effort to correct past distortions of the Leninist nationality policy, the members of this anti-party group – discovered and fully exposed – kept up constant direct or indirect opposition to the course adopted by the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. This group, effectively, sought to reverse the Leninist course towards peaceful coexistence among countries with different social systems, towards relaxing international tension and establishing friendly relations between the USSR and all peoples of the world.

They were against broadening the rights of the union republics in economic, cultural and legislative matters, and also opposed strengthening the role of local soviets in resolving these tasks. In this way the anti-party group opposed the party's resolute course towards the more rapid economic and cultural development of the Union republics, designed to consolidate further Leninist friendship among all the peoples of our country. The anti-party group not only failed to understand, but even opposed, the party's struggle against bureaucratism, designed to reduce the size of the inflated state apparatus . . .

This group stubbornly opposed and tried to undermine such important measures as the reorganisation of industrial management, the creation of economic councils [*sovnarkhozy*] and economic regions . . . On agricultural issues the members of this group failed to understand the need to increase material incentives for the collective farm peasantry to stimulate agricultural output. They opposed the abolition of the old bureaucratic system of planning in collective farms and the introduction of the new system of planning to stimulate the initiative of the collective farms in running their

economic and cultural inequality inherited from the old regime has been liquidated.

Source: KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh, vol. 10, p. 91.

The Full-scale Building of Socialism

Having overcome the worst excesses of Stalinism, the Soviet Union appeared set on a flowering of the economy, society and culture. Economic growth rates were buoyant in the 1950s and the USSR's prestige in the anti-colonial world was high. The world youth festival held in Moscow in summer 1957 revealed a new openness. On 4 October of the same year an artificial satellite (Sputnik) first circled the earth, marking the beginning of the space age, and soon afterwards the dog Laika was the first animate object in space. On 12 April 1961 Yuri Gagarin orbited the earth for 108 minutes, becoming the most famous man in the world. The chief designer of the project was the legendary Sergei Korolev. Gagarin had been chosen rather than his backup, Stepan Titov, largely for political reasons: Gagarin came from a peasant background, whereas Titov's parents were from the intelligentsia. Perhaps the most vivid expression of the optimism of the period was Khrushchev's report to the Twenty-second Party Congress on 17 October 1961, and the new Party Programme adopted at that Congress.

Document 8.12 1961 Party Programme on Achieving Communism

The new programme adopted by the CPSU to replace the 1919 version was intended to reflect the achievements of 'building socialism' in the USSR. It also reflected Khrushchev's enormous optimism that the Soviet Union was in striking distance of overtaking the USA and of achieving communism within two decades. The programme grappled with the problem of reconciling the ideal of a participatory egalitarian society with the reality of a party-dominated bureaucratised industrial society. This was perhaps the most extended and idealistic discussion of what communism would look like in practice since *The ABC of Communism* in 1919.

Communism – The Bright Future of All Mankind

The building of a communist society has become an immediate practical task for the Soviet people. The gradual development of socialism into communism is an objective law; it has been prepared by the development of Soviet socialist society throughout the preceding period.

What is communism?

Communism is a classless social system with one form of public ownership of the means of production and full social equality of all members of society; under it, the all-round development of people will be accompanied by the growth of the productive forces through continuous progress in science and technology; all the

springs of co-operative wealth will flow more abundantly, and the great principle 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' will be implemented. Communism is a highly organised society of free, socially conscious working people in which public self-government will be established, a society in which labour for the good of society will become the prime vital requirement of everyone, a necessity recognised by one and all, and the ability of each person will be employed to the greatest benefit of the people.

A high degree of communist consciousness, industry, discipline, and devotion to the public interest are qualities typifying the man of communist society.

Communism ensures the continuous development of social production and rising labour productivity through rapid scientific and technological progress; it equips man with the best and most powerful machines, greatly increases his power over nature and enables him to control its elemental forces to an ever greater extent. The social economy reaches the highest stage of planned organisation, and the most effective and rational use is made of the material wealth and labour reserves to meet the growing requirements of the members of society.

Under communism there will be no classes, and the socio-economic and cultural distinctions, and differences in living conditions, between town and countryside will disappear; the countryside will rise to the level of the town in the development of the productive forces and the nature of work, the forms of production relations, living conditions and the well-being of the population. With the victory of communism mental and physical labour will merge organically in the production activity of people. The intelligentsia will no longer be a distinct social stratum. Workers by hand will have risen in cultural and technological standards to the level of workers by brain.

Thus, communism will put an end to the division of society into classes and social strata, whereas the whole history of mankind, with the exception of its primitive period, was one of class society. Division into opposing classes led to the exploitation of man by man, class struggle, and antagonisms between nations and states . . .

Communism represents the highest form or organisation of public life. All production units and self-governing associations will be harmoniously united in a common planned economy and a uniform rhythm of social labour.

Under communism the nations will draw closer and closer together in all spheres on the basis of a complete identity of economic, political and spiritual interests, of fraternal friendship and co-operation.

Communism is the system under which the abilities and talents of free man, his best moral qualities, blossom forth and reveal themselves in full. Family relations will be freed once and for all from material considerations and will be based solely on mutual love and friendship.

In defining the basic tasks to be accomplished in building a communist

society, the Party is guided by Lenin's great formula: '*Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.*'

The CPSU being a party of scientific communism, proposes and fulfils the tasks of communist construction in step with the preparation and maturing of the material and spiritual prerequisites, considering that it would be wrong to jump over necessary stages of development, and that it would be equally wrong to halt at an achieved level and thus check progress. The building of communism must be carried out by successive stages.

In the current decade (1961–70) the Soviet Union, in creating the material and technical basis of communism, will surpass the strongest and richest capitalist country, the USA, in production per head of population; the people's standard of living and their cultural and technical standards will improve substantially; everyone will live in easy circumstances; all collective and state farms will become highly productive and profitable enterprises; the demand of Soviet people for well-appointed housing will, in the main, be satisfied; hard physical work will disappear; the USSR will have the shortest working day.

The material and technical basis of communism will be built up by the *end of the second decade* (1971–80), ensuring an abundance of material and cultural values for the whole population; Soviet society will come close to a stage where it can introduce the principle of distribution according to needs, and there will be a gradual transition to one form of ownership – public ownership. Thus, *a communist society will in the main be built in the USSR.* The construction of communist society will be fully completed in the subsequent period.

The majestic edifice of communism is being erected by the persevering effort of the Soviet people – the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia. The more successful their work, the closer the great goal – communist society.

III The Tasks of the Party in the Spheres of State Development and the Further Promotion of Socialist Democracy

... All-round extension and perfection of socialist democracy, active participation of all citizens in the administration of the state, in the management of economic and cultural development, improvement of the government apparatus, and increased control over its activity by the people constitute the main direction in which socialist statehood develops in the building of communism. As socialist democracy develops, the organs of state power will gradually be transformed into organs of public self-government. The Leninist principle of democratic centralism, which ensures the proper combination of centralised leadership with the maximum encouragement of local initiative, the extension of the rights of the Union republics and greater creative activity of the masses, will be promoted. It is essential to strengthen discipline, constantly control the activities of all the sections of the

administrative apparatus, check the execution of the decisions and laws of the Soviet state and heighten the responsibility of every official for the strict and timely implementation of these laws. . . .

VII The Party in the Period of Full-scale Communist Construction

As a result of the victory of socialism in the USSR and the strengthened unity of Soviet society, the Communist Party of the working class has become the vanguard of the Soviet people, the party of the whole people, broadening its guiding influence on all facets of social life. The party is the mind, honour and conscience of our epoch, of the Soviet people, achieving great revolutionary transformations. It looks keenly into the future and shows the people scientifically motivated roads along which to advance, arouses titanic energy in the masses and leads them to the accomplishment of great tasks.

The period of full-scale communist construction is characterised by a further *enhancement of the role and importance of the Communist Party* as the leading and guiding force of Soviet society.

Unlike all the preceding socio-economic formations, communist society does not develop spontaneously, but as a result of the conscious and purposeful efforts of the masses led by the Marxist-Leninist party. The Communist Party, which unites the most advanced representatives of the working class, of all working people, and is closely connected with the masses, which enjoys unbounded prestige among the people and understands the laws of social development, provides proper leadership in communist construction as a whole, giving it an organised, planned and scientifically based character . . .

UNDER THE TRIED AND TESTED LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, UNDER THE BANNER OF MARXISM-LENINISM, THE SOVIET PEOPLE HAVE BUILT SOCIALISM.

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY, UNDER THE BANNER OF MARXISM-LENINISM, THE SOVIET PEOPLE WILL BUILD A COMMUNIST SOCIETY.

THE PARTY SOLEMNLY PROCLAIMS: THE PRESENT GENERATION OF SOVIET PEOPLE SHALL LIVE IN COMMUNISM!

Sources: Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *adopted by the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU, 31 October 1961* (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), pp. 59–60, 61–2, 92–3, 122–3, 128; *Materialy XXII s'ezda KPSS* (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1961), pp. 366–7, 367–8, 396–7, 423–4, 428.

The reaffirmation of the party's 'leading role' was a central element in the programme. A number of statements became classic slogans of the late Soviet period. In particular, the assertion that 'The party is the mind, honour and conscience of our epoch' was emblazoned on a thousand posters and walls. It was at this time that the Soviet Union was declared a 'state of all the people', signalling that class conflict in the country had given way to inclusionary policies.