THE SOVIET UNION AT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA: STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY AND THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE USSR

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It has become obvious to everyone that with the autumn of 1982 the Soviet Union entered into a new phase in its development, a phase which will differ substantially from the dreary Brezhnev era which has just concluded. We stand on the threshold of a new era, and this gives rise to a national desire to take a look back, even if only a cursory one, at the past and to review the main features of the path our country has traversed during the last few decades.

The periodisation of Soviet history can be based on various principles, because, depending on the purpose of the study, we can put in the forefront either this or that one from among the most important indicators of Soviet society. But it will not be a mistake to say, also, that, under the conditions of so highly centralised and authoritarian a state as the Soviet Union, each lasting administration creates its own era. From this standpoint we can, looking back, speak of four main stages in the development of our society, namely, the eras of Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev. It is important to make clear that what is involved here is a series of really different periods, which are distinguished one from another not only by the personal qualities and names of the Soviet leaders but also in respect of economic and social reality, the state of social well-being, the methods of political and economic government, the nature and characteristics of the ruling elite, the international situation the country was in and the priorities of its domestic and foreign policy, the predominant conception of military strategy, the level of technical equipment and the role assigned to the armed forces, the importance of these on those social and political institutions, the prevailing mood and world-outlook, the level of general culture, the style of behaviour and even the outward appearance and habits of both ordinary citizens and leaders, the character of art, architecture and literature, and many other values and phenomena of social life.

The idea that the Soviet Communist system is eternally immutable is false. If we consider only the most important changes in the nature of society we can perceive that each of the eras listed above was in many ways the negation of that which preceded it, while in other ways no less significant, it retained a link of continuity with the past, basing itself on the achievements of that past and the previously established social and
political institutions. Each successive administration solved numerous acute problems and contradictions inherited from its predecessor. At the same time, however, a heap of new problems and contradictions accumulated which it was difficult to solve within the framework of the given stage of development, for both objective and subjective reasons.

The few transitions which have occurred in our history from one administration to another have not been smooth and even but painful and difficult, and in this connexion it is fully appropriate to employ the concept of 'crisis'. Not only the development of capitalism but also that of socialism, in all the socialist countries, has proceeded up to now from crisis to crisis, although the character, circumstances and chief factors creating the socio-political crisis situations in a given country were, of course, different as between the 'camp' of capitalism and the 'camp' of socialism.

In the Soviet Union, as everyone knows, we do not have a sufficiently clearly-defined constitutional mechanism, determining the procedure for one administration to succeed another. A considerable accidental element often enters into this very important political process. And yet we see that the advancement of each new leader to the summit of the Soviet pyramid of power is to be explained not simply by the role of accidents or of personal ambitions, but also by a complex combination of social forces and socio-political moods, the influence of which proves to be stronger than the will of the outgoing leader. Lenin fervently opposed the promotion of Stalin as his successor. Yet all Lenin's letters and appeals on this matter were ignored. And it was the same, even though in different form, with the other successions in the Party and state administrations of the USSR.

The view exists that in our country the 'apparatus' itself, the establishment or ruling 'elite' decide upon and bring forward new leaders, in accordance with the interest and requirements of a system of government that suits the 'apparatus'. This view contains a considerable measure of truth. We have not yet seen an example of the advancement of a 'chief' who did not himself belong to the highest circles of the existing governmental machinery, or who was antagonistic to the prevailing interests and expectations in those circles. From this circumstance, however, it does not follow at all that the role of the leader in the Soviet system of government is insignificant. In the first place, the composition of the ruling 'elite' in the Soviet Union is heterogeneous: it does not constitute in any way a 'new class' the members of which are bound together by a sort of mutual responsibility. Second, the moods and expectations of the 'apparatus' may not coincide with those of the broad masses of the Soviet population, from which this 'apparatus' is not separated by any legal barriers or the distinctions that mask off one social estate from another, or by any other walls that are hard to surmount. These circumstances
may be made use of by the new leader—especially under the conditions of an authoritarian system of government. The new Soviet leader may gradually alter not just the style and methods of government, or the make-up of his immediate entourage, but also the entire composition of the ruling elite. He may create new institutions of government and exert influence on all spheres of social and cultural life, on the tempos and forms of development of the economy, and on the character of foreign and domestic policy. This circumstance, too, helps historians and political scientists to 'personify' the eras through which our country has passed. But historians cannot ignore such leaders, also, as, for example, Malenkov or Zinoviev, who were able to stay in power for only one or two years and turned out to be merely transient figures in a period of transition between two different eras. It is just such a transition period that has begun at the present time in our country. This is a time of hopes and fears. and I shall discuss it later.

The Lenin Era
It is not possible to discuss here in detail the comparatively brief but infinitely complex era of Lenin, with which the history of the Soviet state began. It was, in the first place, a time of revolution, of that twentieth-century revolution which has been more important in its consequences than any other. It was comparable only to the eruption of a mighty volcano, accompanied by a tremendous earthquake, which destroyed everywhere not only structures that were decrepit but also quite solid ones, and saw thrown up from the bowels of the earth red-hot rocks and thousands of millions of tons of volcanic ash that burned down or overwhelmed in their course many towns and villages reduced to ruin, creating in our country within a mere few weeks or months, a completely new social and political landscape!

It was, secondly, a time of cruel civil war lasting several years, a war of classes and parties that gave no quarter to each other and were prepared to use any means in order to gain victory over their opponents. Across the huge expanse of Russia battled armies of 'whites' and 'reds', 'greens' and 'blacks', nationalists and interventionists, leaving behind or ahead of them devastated towns and villages, and hundreds of thousands of people dying of disease or hunger. Even before the revolution, Lenin warned that revolution is 'a period in the life of a people when the anger accumulated during centuries. . . breaks forth into actions, not merely into words; and into the actions of millions of people, not merely individuals'.

Notions of violent revolution as 'festivals of the oppressed', notions of how only in open armed conflict between hostile classes and in prolonged civil war can the proletariat rid itself of 'all the old muck' and be morally reborn in order to create a new society—these romantic notions
of the young Marx and Engels were far from being confirmed by actual historical experience. It was found that revolutions not only 'clarify' the social atmosphere, they also 'darken' it. The protracted and cruel civil war that they engender not only pulverises the best element of the proletariat but also sanctions in a fight to the death the application of such methods of terror and coercion the employment of which does not so much elevate as morally pervert those who take part in the revolutionary struggle. The total ruin of the old society and the introduction everywhere of iron discipline does not only prepare the ground for the building of a new socialist society, it also creates the conditions for the appearance of a new despotism and a new 'revolutionary tyranny', to get rid of which sometimes proves still harder than to get rid of the vices of the previous society. This has been shown not only by the history of the French Revolution of the eighteenth century but also by that of the October Revolution, which brought to the peoples of Russia, along with social and national liberation, also the ordeals of Stalin's dictatorship.

It was not given to Lenin to see all the consequences of the revolution that he led. But even what he saw in 1921 did not inspire any particular optimism. Before the victors lay a country with a new social and political system, but also with a ruined economy and with a hungry and discontented population. The cities were deserted and the villages were disaffected. Lenin saw more clearly than anyone else the danger and instability of the situation that had come about. 'Our proletariat', he wrote at that time, 'has been largely declassed. The terrible crises and the closing-down of the factories have compelled people to flee from starvation. The workers have simply abandoned the factories—they have had to settle down in the country and have ceased to be workers. We must admit that at the present time the proletarian policy of the Party is not determined by the character of its membership but by the enormous undivided prestige enjoyed by the small group which might be called the old guard of the Party. A slight conflict within this group will be enough... to rob it of its power to determine policy.'

Lenin saw the way out of this very grave crisis, the first and most dangerous socio-political and economic crisis of Soviet power, as consisting in a system of concession and retreats which should have the effect of reducing tension, reassuring the peasant masses, cooling the atmosphere of hatred and intolerance, creating stimuli for economic growth and gradually consolidate the social basis and the political institutions of the new regime. But at the same time it was necessary to consolidate the Party to an even greater degree, binding it with hoops of discipline, forbidding the formation within it of any factions, or any discussion that might weaken Party unity. Lenin understood the danger of degeneration that threatened a party which had acquired enormous power and was deprived of the possibility of freely discussing its own problems. He tried
to create some forms of supervision of the activity of the Party's leaders, but was unable to find any effective solution to this problem. Thanks to Lenin's proclamation of the new economic policy (NEP), the crisis of the Soviet power was basically overcome, but Lenin died in January 1924 very well aware of the imperfection and incompleteness of the new state and the new society which had been created under his leadership.

The Stalin Era

The period when Stalin ruled was the longest and the most contradictory era of Soviet history to date. It had its own different phases, and Stalin himself, an experienced politician and actor, assumed different guises in the course of his struggle for unrestricted power.

Stalin came to power in the Party under the conditions of NEP, which enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the population of the USSR. It was natural, therefore, that Stalin at first supported NEP and even enlarged its scope, while at the same time increasing and strengthening all the organs of Party and state authority.

In doing this, Stalin gradually altered the relation between the organs of Party and of state leadership. It is well known that Lenin was the chief creator of one-party dictatorship and spoke more than once of 'dictatorship of the Party'. However, after the February Revolution the Bolshevik Party had to struggle with other parties for majority in the Soviets, which were organs of power elected at open meetings of workers (both blue-collar and white-collar) and peasants. Down to October 1917 this struggle was carried on mainly by political methods, but in 1918–1919 administrative and repressive methods were also used in order to oust other parties from the Soviets. To the slogans of creating 'soviets without Bolsheviks' the latter counterposed tacitly, the implicit slogan of 'Soviets without Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Anarchists', and this aim was gradually achieved. Already at the beginning of the 1920s we see operating in the Soviets only the Bolshevik Party, together with groups of non-party deputies. At first the Party exercised its dictatorship through the Soviets. In this phase the Soviets were not just formally but also in fact the principal organ of state power, with the Party as their political and ideological guide. Lenin assumed no official position in the Party—he was the head of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR (later of the USSR). In the provinces and districts the chairman of the provincial or district executive committee of the local soviet summoned to his presence, when necessary, the leaders of the Party organisation of that province or district, just as Lenin could summon to his office, the office of the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, any of the executives of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. After Lenin's death the situation changed. Now it was not A.I. Rykov, chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR, who summoned Stalin to his
presence, but J.V. Stalin, General Secretary of the Central Committee of
the Party, who summoned Rykov. Similarly, in the localities, the First
Secretary of the Party's provincial or district committee summoned to
his presence any of the leaders of the local soviets. Stalin transformed
the Party apparatus into the focus of power. The soviets now became
just one of the 'transmission belts' of the Communist Party's dictatorship.
The Central Committee of the Party finally became the chief directing and
legislative organ of the proletarian dictatorship.

Freedom of trade, freedom of private enterprise in small and medium
industry and also in agriculture, together with great efforts by the Party
and economic organs to restore large-scale industry led comparatively
quickly to improvement in the country's economic situation. Despite
many difficulties and disproportions, by 1926–27 the pre-war level of
industrial and agricultural production had been recovered and even exceed-
ed in the USSR. The Red Army had been reduced in numbers but
strengthened qualitatively, and the same was true of the Cheka-GPU. In
the mid-1920s Stalin resolutely abstained from the revolutionary experi-
ments that the Left Opposition was demanding. The country needed to
heal its wounds, to rest, to enjoy a period of relative stability. This period
of NEP and NEP-economy, which was to be remembered later by many as
the best and most liberal phase in the history of Soviet power, lasted a
comparatively short time. In the 1920s, in the towns, private industry
could not develop to any significant degree, because it was confronted by
large-scale state-owned industry and trade. The state also controlled the
entire financial system. In the countryside, however, socialist relations
and socialist enterprises were still very feebly developed. What pre-
dominated there was the spontaneous development of small private farms,
among which the leading position was held by relatively rich farms of the
'kulak' type. State regulation, and also the state system of procurement
and purchase of grain, which was unfavourable to the rich farms, en-
countered increasing resistance in the rural areas. When he found himself
in serious difficulties, Stalin was unable to find a compromise policy and
take the path of manoeuvring and concessions. Relying on the full might
of the state and Party apparatus, on the Army, the GPU and the poorest
section of the peasantry, Stalin undertook a radical reorganisation of
the countryside, which consisted in liquidating the well-to-do section of
the peasantry and evicting millions of peasant families to the North and
East of the USSR. What remained of the peasantry was grouped not so
much willingly as forcibly in collective farms (kolkhozy), which were
intended to take responsibility for the production of all the main forms
of agricultural produce, employing the most up-to-date methods of
mechanised agriculture.

This 'revolution from above' was accompanied at first by a decline in
agricultural production and a mass-scale famine in most of the producing
areas, which carried off millions of lives. The standard of living of the
town population was also lowered, but this did not prevent a relatively
rapid development of all branches of industry, and especially of engineer-
ing, heavy industry and defence industry. The feeble private industry in
the towns was liquidated, along with private trade, and measures of
repression were taken not only against various groups of traders and
'industrialists' but also against considerable sections of the old Russian
intelligentsia—engineers, specialists, scientists and scholars. They were
replaced by 'Red' specialists who had been trained in the numerous
institutions of secondary and higher education. Throughout the country
not only was illiteracy successfully abolished but universal primary school-
ing was introduced, soon to be followed by seven-year education. Thanks
to an influx of people from the villages and from other strata of the
population, the working class quickly grew in size. However, these were
mostly first generation workers, who differed substantially from that
nucleus of hereditary proletarians who had served as the Bolsheviks'
chief support in 1917.

Serious economic difficulties and discontent among the masses of
working people, on the one hand, and, on the other, an increase in bureau-
cratism, centralisation and the cult of Stalin's personality gave rise to
criticism from that section of the Party and state cadres who had been
formed under Lenin's leadership before the revolution and in the first
years after it. This opposition that was beginning to take shape con-
stituted a potential threat to Stalin's power. He did not wait for it to
develop into a real force. Slanderously accusing the Party's Old Guard
of 'treachery', Stalin carried out in 1936–8 an unprecedented campaign
of bloody terror directed against the Communist Party itself and its cadres.
Only in the first stages of this campaign of repression was it directed
against all who had participated in the inner-Party oppositions of the
1920s. Later on, the organs of the GPU-NKVD, increased to the dimen-
sions of a large army, rained their blows on the basic cadres of the
Communist Party, the Red Army, the Soviet and economic organs, the
Young Communist League and the Comintern, on all workers in science,
culture and art who were displeasing to Stalin, and also on the cadres
of the punitive organs themselves. Hundreds of thousands of Communists
were physically destroyed, millions of Communists and non-Party people
were put in prison or sent to forced-labour camps. To replace the Soviet
and Party leaders thus eliminated, Stalin promoted representatives of the
younger generation of Party and State cadres: they carried out un-
questioningly the will of the dictator, whose power became practically
unlimited. The combination of ideological demagogy, unrestrained cult
of the leader, lawlessness, terror and forced labour, on the one hand, and
particular institutions of socialist society on the other, constituted the
main features of the phenomenon which came to be called Stalinism.
The cruel terror of 1936–8 weakened all the organs of the Party and State and slowed down the country's economic progress. This was, though not the sole, yet one of the chief causes of the defeats suffered by the USSR in the first phase of the Patriotic war. By the autumn of 1942 the Hitlerite armies were in the foothills of the Caucasus, on the banks of the Volga and at the walls of Moscow and Leningrad: they had occupied territory inhabited by almost half of the population of the USSR and including about half of its industrial potential. Danger of annihilation hung not only over Stalin's dictatorship but also over the national existence of all the peoples of the USSR, their statehood and their culture, their lives and history. All the peoples of the USSR rose up to defend their country, the Army's losses were quickly replaced, and in the Eastern regions industry expanded on an immense scale the production of all kinds of modern weapons and war materials. During the fight against the aggressor thousands of talented military leaders and commanders came to the forefront in the Army, and the ranks of the Communist Party were reinforced by millions of patriotic young people. All this altered the course of the war. And the further westward the divisions and armies of the Soviet armed forces advanced the more powerful were the blows they struck and the more marked their superiority in military skill and techniques over the armies of Hitler, which had behind them the war-industry potential of almost all Western Europe. The United States and Great Britain, too, recovered from their initial setbacks and considerably increased their machinery of war and their pressure on the aggressive alliance of Germany, Japan and Italy. The resistance movement also grew in strength in nearly all the enslaved countries of Europe and Asia.

The Second World War ended quite otherwise than had been desired by those who began it and those who had long been encouraging Fascist aggression. Western Europe was devastated and weakened. The immense colonial empires created by the European countries began to break up, and many large countries in Asia were able, so early as the 1940s, to achieve political independence. In the capitalist, or Western world, unprecedented power and influence was acquired by the United States, which now possessed the strongest war machines. There were American military and air-force bases in every continent and the American navy dominated every ocean. The USA alone possessed the atomic bomb, the new super-power whose power had already been demonstrated in the destruction of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, the Soviet Union, too, despite all the losses and destruction suffered, had been transformed from a great power into a 'super-power' whose military might lagged not far behind that of the Western countries. The USSR wielded effective control over the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the eastern part of Germany. The influence of left-wing movements had increased in many parts of the world and especially in...
Western Europe. In Italy and France Communists were included in the first post-war governments.

Such an outcome of the war as this did not suit the leaders of the capitalist world. However, the 'cold war' against the USSR which was soon proclaimed by Churchill and Truman did not bring great successes for the West. The Communists were ousted from the governments of the Western countries, NATO formed, which was joined by the West German state created soon afterward. The Western countries recovered economically in a relatively short time. The Soviet Union was obliged to relax its pressure on Iran and Turkey. Some of the Western countries even tried to get back their colonies in Asia. France, for example, began its first war to recover Indo-China.

Nevertheless, on the whole, the policy of 'rolling back Communism' did not give the results its initiators wanted. In the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe the power of the Communist Parties was strengthened. A new, Communist government was formed in East Germany. Yugoslavia alone, which had thrown down a challenge to Stalin's tyranny, remained outside the Soviet bloc. In Asia, the changes were even more remarkable. Victorious after a civil war lasting twenty years, the Chinese Communists established effective control over the entire territory of mainland China and set up there in 1949 a new state, the Chinese People's Republic. American forces and the remnants of the Kuomintang armies maintained control, with considerable difficulty, only in the island of Taiwan. In order to keep control over South Korea the United States had to wage a bloody war lasting four years. By the end of 1949 the USSR had succeeded in making its own atomic bomb. Although the USSR had also managed to restore its industry, our country was still far from attaining the level of the USA: industrial production in the USSR in 1950 was about 10 per cent of industrial production in the USA. But it was in these post-war years that began that competition and rivalry between the USSR and the USA which largely determined the history of international relations in the succeeding decades.

The internal situation in the USSR in the post-war years was difficult and complex. The political and patriotic upsurge called forth by victory in the war was accompanied by a strengthening of Stalin's despotic regime. Already in 1941 Stalin had made himself head of the Soviet state not only de facto but also formally. The personal dictatorship of Stalin became more and more sharply defined. He hardly ever convened not only plenums of the Party's Central Committee but even sessions of the Political Bureau of the Council of Ministers of the USSR or else convened them without all their members being present. The holding of the Party's next congress was continually postponed. The Party's organs, including the apparatus of its Central Committee, all fell even further under the control of the punitive organisations, losing their guiding role in society. In the last
years of the war Stalin already began to resume 'selective' terror. Several nationalities of the Volga region, Northern Caucasus and the Crimea were deported to eastern parts of the country. (All persons of German nationality had been arrested or deported in 1941–2.) An anti-Semitic campaign gathered force and led in 1948–50 to the destruction of all Jewish national organisations, the elimination of most Jews from the ruling apparatus and the ideological organisations, and then to mass arrests among the Jewish intellectuals. Certain sections of the Party and state apparatus were also subjected to harsh repression (the case of N. Voznesensky and A. Kuznetsov, the 'Leningrad affair', and so on).

Industrial production was restored in the post-war years with comparative speed: the experience acquired during the war helped here. As early as 1952 the USSR's total industrial production was twice what it had been in 1940. Agriculture, however, progressed extremely slowly, even though the country's demand for agricultural produce had markedly increased. The gross production of agriculture in 1946–50 in annual averages was less than in 1940 and only a little more than before the revolution, in 1913. The system of requisitioning was, in practice, introduced into the countryside, and the collective farmers were bound to the soil and deprived of incentives to develop production. Most of the rural population lived in conditions of extreme poverty, economic and political pressure on the peasantry was intensified, and the work done by the collective farmers was practically not paid for. Extreme poverty was also characteristic of the life of most of the workers, blue-collar and white-collar alike. Very little was done to build houses in the towns. The workers were not allowed to change their place of work as they liked. Food supplies for the towns were poor, wages were low, and pensions were insufficient to cover the minimum needs of their recipients. All over the country, and especially in the North and East, there was a huge network of forced-labour camps. The very harsh conditions of life and work in these camps resulted every year in the death of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of prisoners. In the post-war years the ranks of the political prisoners of the 1930s—the once-rich peasants, the former commanders of the Red Army, the representatives of the technical intelligentsia—had thinned out: their places were taken in the camps by former prisoners of war, 'displaced persons', Jews and members of other national minorities, and Party and military executives of a new generation. Among this influx of innocent victims there was, of course, a streamlet of persons who really were guilty—not only ordinary criminals but also persons who had collaborated with the occupying forces during the war.

Altogether, at the beginning of the 1950s the Soviet Union was entering into a period of severe economic and political crisis, which Stalin's administration tried to resolve through intensifying its methods of pressure and terror. While the people were living in poverty, the privileges and
salaries of the leading executives of the state and Party administration were enormously increased. The gap between state and society widened. The executives of the apparatus of power, intimidated and bribed, were ready to carry out any orders Stalin cared to give. Nevertheless, although the driver's whip whistled ever more sharply, the enfeebled horses dragged the overloaded cart forward more and more slowly.

The Khrushchev Era

Stalin came to power not only thanks to his skill at political intrigue, but also through the feelings and expectations of a considerable part of the Party and Soviet apparatus in the 1920s, especially at its middle and lower levels. He did not, of course, leave this apparatus unchanged, but constantly chopped off one bit after another. Even persons who had always served Stalin with the utmost devotion could expect as 'reward' either a bullet in the back of the head or a bunk in a concentration camp. Nevertheless, Stalin sought to retain the backing and support of the main part of the apparatus of government which he renewed or refashioned, and the bureaucratisation of which took a big step forward under his rule.

But even this Stalinist apparatus grew tired, towards the end of his era, of the constant tensions and fears of repression. By giving Stalin false, embellished ideas of the real situation the bureaucratic apparatus set a trap for itself, as Stalin's ever-increasing demands in the last years of his life resulted from the false idea of reality which had become firmly fixed in his mind. This mutual self-deception could not go on for ever. Consequently, a considerable section of the huge Stalinist apparatus received the news of his death not only with sincere sorrow but also with carefully concealed relief.

We know that Stalin's accession to power was accompanied by a fierce struggle, at first with the 'Left' and then with the 'Right' opposition. But Khrushchev's accession to power, too, was preceded by a hard fight, in the first phase of which Khrushchev, supported by most of the leading men in Party and state and by the Army, smashed the top leadership of Stalin's punitive apparatus and gave back supreme power in the country to the Party leadership and, in particular, to the Party's Central Committee. In the second phase of this struggle Khrushchev, supported by the Army, by the renewed apparatus of the KGB and by a considerable section of the Party apparatus, ousted from power most of those who had formed Stalin's Political Bureau, that is, the men who were most seriously compromised by participation in Stalin's crimes. However, Khrushchev was not in a position to change completely the composition of the governing apparatus, and he was surrounded by people who had, in the previous era, held important posts in Stalin's bureaucratic hierarchy. This circumstance, together with the contradictory nature of Khrushchev himself, determined many of the contradictions in the activity of the new leader.
Khrushchev's activity was developed in several directions at once. He saw as one of his tasks the cessation of the Stalin terror and the liquidation of the monstrous machinery of terror which Stalin had created. Working towards that end, he curtailed considerably, already in 1953-4, the size, power and scope of the supreme organs of state security. Subsequently, he took steps to bring about a decisive change in the personal composition of the security organs. Cautious and selective rehabilitations began already in 1953 and were extended and continued in 1954-5. The decisive turning-point came after Khrushchev's famous secret speech at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, when he denounced many of Stalin's crimes and mistakes. Following that congress nearly all the political prisoners who were still alive were released and rehabilitated. To many millions rehabilitation came posthumously. Hundreds of forced-labour camps were closed down. In 1957 the Moslem and Buddhist nationalities of the Volga region and Northern Caucasus were rehabilitated and allowed to return to their homelands. The rehabilitation of the Volga Germans and the Crimean Tartars, however, was delayed, without reason, for several years, and even then they were not given the right to live where they had lived before and recover their former national autonomy.

The Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU, held in 1961, took a further step in the fight against Stalinism. At this congress the crimes of Stalin and of many of his henchmen were talked about not in secret but in open sessions. The congress resolved to remove Stalin's body from the Lenin mausoleum and at the same time to do away with all monuments to Stalin and to rename all towns, villages and enterprises which had been named after him. Criticism of Stalin and Stalinism began to be heard in literature, in films, in historical works and in the other social sciences. This deepening and broadening of the front of struggle against Stalinism and the attempts being made to find new, democratic forms of government had already evoked protest and alarm among a large section of the bureaucracy and the apparatus on which Khrushchev himself relied. Under the influence of these groups, the criticism of Stalin began to be played down even while Khrushchev was still in charge. Even the work of rehabilitating Party members was not carried to completion, and many prominent figures in the October Revolution and the civil war, Lenin's comrades-in-arms, remained un-rehabilitated. The men around Khrushchev feared that, even so, he had gone too far in his criticism of Stalin. Khrushchev himself was not sufficiently staunch where this matter was concerned and did not exploit all the opportunities inherent in the position he held. Employing the terminology of earlier epochs, one could say that the period when Khrushchev ruled was something half-way between enlightened absolutism and moderate liberalism. It was still far from being socialist democracy. Khrushchev's occasional impulses in the direction of developing greater democracy were effectively doused by the
Another line taken by Khrushchev's activity was his vigorous effort to overcome the crisis in the Soviet economy, and especially in the sphere of agricultural production. Reduction, and later abolition of a number of taxes which bore too heavily not only on the personal plots of the country-folk but also on the collective farms, and substantial increase in the procurement prices paid for agricultural produce—all this increased the incomes of the collective farmers and created new economic incentives for the development of farming. Within a short space of time Khrushchev broke up the collective-farm system in its Stalinist form though he failed to sweep away completely many of its vestiges. At the same time he made considerable efforts to bring under cultivation tens of millions of hectares of new land in the East and South-East of the Soviet Union. During Khrushchev's ascendency several measures were adopted to speed up the development of industry and transport, including the production of consumer goods. Particular attention was given to rapid expansion of house-building and lowering of its cost. Tens of millions of people were at last able to obtain flats of their own. Pensions for the elderly and the disabled were increased several times and wage-rises given to many categories of workers, both blue-collar and white-collar. On the whole, the material situation and food-supply of the broad masses had improved markedly before the end of the 1950s.

Many of Khrushchev's economic reforms and initiatives, however, were too hasty and poorly thought-out, and so remained ineffective. Some of them caused more loss than gain to the Soviet economy. Khrushchev's measures to decentralise the management of industry, abolish the ministries in charge of particular industries and create provincial and regional economic councils did not fulfil his hope. The hasty abolition of the state-owned machine-tractor stations (MTS) and sale of all agricultural equipment to the collective farms resulted in most cases only in worsening the financial position of the collective farms and collective farmers, while failing to improve the use made of agricultural equipment in the USSR. The enormous plantations of maize which were established, on Khrushchev's personal orders, in all parts of the country proved in most cases to be highly unprofitable investments of labour and capital. As a result of incorrect agricultural technique, millions of hectares of land in the virgin-soil regions became subject to erosion. Utter failure was the fate, too, of Khrushchev's widely-proclaimed campaign under the slogan: 'Within three or four years, catch up with the USA in production of meat per head of population.' Khrushchev was inexhaustible as a source of proposals for more and more reforms and initiatives. After a brief acceleration, however, the huge flywheel of the Soviet economy began, once more, to turn slower and slower.

Already in the 1950s Khrushchev made substantial changes in the
USSR's foreign policy. Under Stalin even the leaders of the new India, Gandhi and Nehru, were declared to be 'stooges of imperialism'. Khrushchev altered decisively the Soviet attitude to the independent countries of Asia and Africa which had been given, in world geopolitics, the collective name of 'the Third World', and whose number continually increased during the 1950s. As a result, the influence of the Soviet Union among these countries grew to a notable extent. Among the Arab countries the USSR's chief ally was the new Egypt. With the revolution in Cuba the USSR obtained a reliable ally in the Western hemisphere as well.

The year 1955 saw a decisive change for the better in relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia. In that year, also, the socialist countries of Eastern Europe formed a defensive military alliance, the Warsaw Pact Organisation, counterposed to NATO. The inter-state organisation of socialist countries called the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon) which had been set up in 1949 was strengthened: its members were the USSR, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Mongolia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In the Khrushchev era Soviet control over the external and internal policies of the European socialist countries was considerably slackened. However, the troubles in Poland in October 1956, which it proved possible to bring to order by mainly political means, and the revolt in Budapest, which was put down mainly by the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary, showed that the USSR's liberalism in relation to its allies in Eastern Europe had definite limits.

Soon after it came to power, Khrushchev's administration took energetic steps to relax the strained relations between the USSR and the USA and other advanced Western countries and put an end to the 'cold war'. These steps resulted in a weakening of that barrier between East and West which had been called 'the iron curtain' and which, in the past, had been erected by the efforts of both sides. But both the USSR's policy towards the Western countries and their policy towards the USSR and its allies were still full of contradictions. Consequently, short periods of improved relations alternated constantly with periods when these relations again deteriorated. Thus, for example, after the first 'summit' meeting attended by Khrushchev and the heads of Western great powers, which took place in 1955 and gave rise to great hopes, not only the events in Poland and Hungary but also the Anglo-French attack on Egypt led to renewed tension between East and West. Soon after Khrushchev's lengthy visit to the United States, which set in train a fruitful dialogue between the two countries, a fresh acute crisis arose, connected with the flight of American spy-planes over the USSR, one of which was shot down over the Urals by a Soviet missile. In Western Europe, after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the Federal Republic of Germany and the confirmation of a new status for Austria, and also the release of all German prisoners-of-war and the signing of a series of econo-
mic and trade agreements, a new Berlin crisis arose and the notorious Berlin Wall was erected. The Caribbean crisis, which was extremely threatening to the whole world, and was caused both by American menaces to Cuba and by the USSR's attempt to install on Cuban territory missiles with nuclear warheads, was succeeded by negotiations and the conclusion of an agreement on prohibiting nuclear weapon tests in three areas.

Few could doubt Khrushchev's sincerity in striving for peace. He really did try to end the arms race. On his initiative the Soviet Union in the 1950s substantially reduced the size of its army and ceased work on certain projects to expand its navy. But Khrushchev also strove to push ahead the development of Soviet missiles and nuclear weapons, because in that sphere the USSR was still well behind the USA. Although the Soviet Union had begun work on the creation of a hydrogen bomb later than the Americans, our country was the first to explode a nuclear device in the atmosphere. From the technical standpoint Soviet missiles were less perfect than their American counterparts. But the USSR was the first country to succeed in putting an artificial earth-satellite into space, and the first man to circumnavigate the earth in a space-ship was a Soviet citizen, Yuri Gagarin.

At the beginning of the 1960s, despite successes in some fields of foreign and domestic policy, a situation of socio-economic and political crisis began to take shape once more the the USSR. The currency reform of 1961, together with an increase in prices for many foodstuffs and some manufactured goods, led to a fall in the real wages of the workers. On Khrushchev's initiative a number of supplements to wages in the East and Northern parts of the country were abolished. Certain indicators of the economic efficiency of production started to decline and the rate of industrial progress to slow down. All this gave rise to discontent among the workers. Strikes took place in some big enterprises.

An especially bad situation came about in agriculture, which almost ceased to progress, in spite of the tremendous efforts made by the administration and of substantial investments. In 1963 the Soviet Union was for the first time in its history obliged to buy large quantities of grain abroad. In numerous cities people were having to queue even for bread and flour. The real incomes of the peasants shrank. Particular irritation was caused in the countryside by a fresh drive on the part of the authorities against the personal plots of the collective farmers, the workers on state farms and the workers in small towns. The creative intelligentsia, who had recently hailed the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU, were upset by intensified censorship and ideological pressure in 1963 and new 'worked-up' campaigns.

While the country at large was unhappy over Khrushchev's attempts to effect a further cut in the armed forces by about one-third, the regimental officers were angered by the abolition of a number of their privileges and
reduction in the amounts of pensions for servicemen. The salaries of officers of the militia were also reduced. The apparatus of the Party and the state was also extremely discontented with several of Khrushchev's reforms. Already some time before this Khrushchev had done away with many privileges and unjustifiably large payments enjoyed by the executives of this apparatus. The new Rules of the CPSU, adopted at the Twenty-Second Congress, swept away the principle of professionalism in Party work and limited the periods for which elective Party posts could be held. Highly unpopular also was the reform which split the Party organs into 'industrial' and 'agricultural' sections—a reform which merely brought confusion into the whole system of Party and state leadership. The number of executives employed in the apparatus rapidly increased, but their salaries and privileges were reduced.

The USSR economy experienced no small difficulties also through the excessive obligations which Khrushchev undertook abroad, as for example, in Egypt and other Arab countries. The conservative elements in the Party apparatus likewise blamed Khrushchev for the difficulties that appeared in the early 1960s in the international Communist movement and in consequence of the split with China. They were unhappy about the fresh denunciations of Stalin at the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU and about the enlivening of social and cultural activity in the country which this congress stimulated. By and large, Khmshchev lost his popularity and the social basis for his personal rule. He was able to rule only with the support of his colleagues in the Presidium (the Political Bureau) and the Central Committee of the Party. And when the majority of the Central Committee's members turned against Khrushchev he was easily ousted from power and sent into retirement.

The Brezhnev Era
The promotion of L.I. Brezhnev and consolidation of his influence and authority was accompanied by hardly any inner-Party conflict. In the first year of the 'Brezhnev era' there did occur, of course, both in the Political Bureau and the Central Committee and in the Council of Ministers, some contradictions and disputes between individual members of the leadership and Brezhnev. But these did not at all amount to the sort of struggle for power that Khrushchev or Stalin had to wage. Our country's Party and state apparatus backed Brezhnev almost unquestioningly, and potential rivals were left without hope. This apparatus was tired of strong leaders who would not let Soviet bureaucrats lead a quiet life. But Brezhnev, though vainglorious, was a weak and characterless man and lacked any distinct intellectual capacities. He did not try to raise himself above the apparatus, as Stalin had, nor did he wage that constant struggle against the bureaucratic apparatus which Khrushchev had waged. On the contrary, Brezhnev gave his complete confidence to that apparatus
and, it can be said, transferred to it a large share of the functions of
governing society and the state, only rarely displaying some sort of initia-
tive. Never had the grey and faceless mediocrity of bureaucratic govern-
ment achieved such triumphs in our country as in Brezhnev's time. But
never, either, had the sterility of the Soviet bureaucracy as a social stratum
been manifested so completely. Naturally, during the eighteen years of
Brezhnev's leadership our society and state made notable progress in
some spheres. But when we draw the balance of an era we must speak
not only of its successes but also of its omissions, and these were extreme-
ly big—bigger, perhaps, than the successes achieved under Brezhnev's
leadership.

The Brezhnev era can for convenience be divided into three periods.
The first of these cover the middle and last years of the 1960s. First and
foremost, the new leadership tried to put right everything that it thought
mistaken in the activities and reforms of Khrushchev. For example, his
splitting of the Party organisations between industry and agriculture was
cancelled and the old system of Party and soviet administration on a
district and regional basis restored. The economic councils were wound
up and the ministries, at all-Union and republic levels, which had been in
charge of particular industries were revived. Many of Khrushchev's reforms
in the sphere of education were gradually abolished. The new leadership
took a series of cautious steps towards a partial rehabilitation of Stalin.
Simultaneously with these 'counter-reforms', the leadership of Brezhnev
and Kosygin tried to alter the previous ways of administering industry
and agriculture, enlarging the role of economic incentive and manage-
ment factors. This was the intended purpose of the decision taken at the
March 1965 Plenum of the Central Committee with regard to agriculture,
and those of subsequent Plenums concerning the implementation of what
was called 'the economic reform'. The protracted period of stagnation was
replaced by a quickening in both industry and agriculture. Between 1966
and 1970 gross industrial output increased by nearly 50 per cent and that
of agriculture (calculated in annual averages) by about 20 per cent. How-
ever, this economic reform was itself put into operation by bureaucratic
methods, and its effect on the country's economy, far from deepening,
grew weaker and weaker and had almost vanished by 1970.

The international situation of the USSR worsened markedly in the
1960s. From the outset of the 'cultural revolution' in China Soviet-
Chinese relations became extremely strained. In 1969 armed clashes
began to occur on the border between the two countries, and their scale
became greater in 1970. China started to make extensive military prepara-
tions in the northern parts of her territory, and pressed ahead with the
creation of nuclear weapons and missiles. In place of an ally there had
suddenly appeared on the eastern and southern borders of the USSR a
new adversary of strategic importance. This called for a review of Soviet
military plans and the taking of costly measures for strengthening defence in the East of the country. The situation in Asia became further complicated as a result of the escalation of the war between the USA and North Vietnam. The USSR steadily increased its military aid to the latter.

Awkward problems also arose for the USSR in Eastern Europe. After adopting a pro-Chinese attitude, Romania was only in a formal sense a member of the Warsaw Pact. The liberal-socialist movement in Czechoslovakia brought to power in that country a group of Communist reformers headed by A. Dubcek. Frightened by the scale of the changes being made in Czechoslovakia, the conservative leadership in the USSR, Poland and the GDR resolved to send the forces of the Warsaw Pact into that country. This occupation of a neighbouring country against the clearly-expressed will of its people and government was a gross violation of the fundamental norms of international law and socialist internationalism. The USSR's actions strained relations with the Western countries and evoked condemnation from almost all the Communist Parties of Western Europe. The defeat suffered by the Arab countries in the 'Six-Day War' complicated the position of the USSR in the Middle East. It had to incur very heavy expense in order to restore the armed forces of Egypt and Syria. During the 1960s the USSR's relations with several countries of the 'Third World' took a turn for the worse. A number of regimes in Asia and Africa that were friendly to the Soviet Union were overthrown in military coups. Relations with Cuba deteriorated. The number of active and sincere friends of the USSR throughout the world decreased markedly during the 1960s, with a simultaneous growth, in all parts, of anti-Soviet and anti-American sentiments. An acute political crisis arose in 1970 in Poland, leading to the fall of Gomulka's government. The worsening of the USSR's international position was accompanied by a considerable increase in Soviet military expenditure. It was decided to carry out a series of new, large-scale arms programmes.

So far as internal affairs were concerned, the Brezhnev leadership had to reckon with the appearance and development of the 'dissident' movement, which gained strength during the 1960s in spite of repression. For the first time in many years, a public opinion independent of the state began to form and an opposition to emerge. This opposition movement was variegated: reformist-socialist and radical-communist, religious and nationalist, liberal-democratic and so on. All these different groups were at one, however, in protesting against the rehabilitation of Stalin. Although the opposition groups in the USSR had a relatively insignificant number of active participants, they found many sympathisers among the intelligentsia and produced a significant echo abroad.

The years 1971–9 must be seen as the second period of 'the Brezhnev era'. In many respects this was the calmest decade in our country's twentieth-century history. The chief watchword of this period was:
'stability'—stability in foreign and domestic policy, stability where Party and state cadres were concerned, stability in economic development. To a large extent this watchword was fulfilled, though stability often meant stagnation, with the country's leaders refusing for the sake of a quiet life and 'stability', to implement many wise innovations or to replace executives who were obviously useless or senile.

During the 1970s the USSR's industry made notable progress, and the inhabitants began to receive more goods and services. However, the rate of growth of industrial production declined considerably, first to 5 per cent per year, and then by the end of the decade to 3.5 per cent. Neither the ninth (1971–5) nor the tenth (1976–80) five-year plan was fulfilled.

By the end of the 1970s the Soviet Union had outstripped the USA in production of coal, iron ore, cement, diesel locomotives, tractors, combines, iron and steel, mineral fertilisers, steel tubes, metal-cutting machine-tools, woollen and cotton fabrics, leather footwear, industrial timber and many other products. The USSR led the world in the peaceful use of atomic energy, in the technique of constructions for the use of water-power, in electric welding, in the technology of blast-furnaces and open-hearth furnaces, in space research, in the transmission of electric power over long distances, in the amount of medical services provided for the population and in many other fields.

Of enormous importance was the fact that it was in the 1970s that the Soviet Union drew level with the USA in all the main types of strategic weaponry. The USSR substantially enlarged its navy and created some new types of weapon which were not inferior to the best Western examples.

Nevertheless, the USSR lagged well behind the USA in productivity of labour and in gross national product. Not only the USA but also Japan and West Germany were still ahead of the USSR in such key branches of industry as electronics, instrument-making, oil-technology, the production of programme-controlled machine-tools and the production of up-to-date means of communication, and also in the quality of most machines and consumer goods.

Investment in agriculture increased markedly during the 1970s. In those ten years agriculture received nearly 230 milliard roubles in investments—more than in all the previous five-year plan periods put together. Yet the annual increase in agricultural production stuck at about 1.5 per cent, and exceeded only slightly the increase in the country's population. Consequently, the cost of production of agricultural produce increased considerably while the food supplies reaching the towns worsened to a notable extent. The population's total money income increased in the last ten years faster than the volume of production of consumer goods, including agricultural produce. This resulted, on the one hand, in inflation, which attained a rate of between 2 and 3 per cent per year, and, on the
other, in an increase to not less than 250 milliard roubles in the population's unsatisfied demand (as expressed in deposits in savings-banks and other forms of monetary accumulation). The quantity of grain purchased abroad also increased greatly. Other foodstuffs as well were purchased in large quantities—e.g., meat and butter.

During the 1970s the Soviet Union escaped from that state of international isolation in which it had found itself towards the end of the 1960s. The basis of Soviet foreign policy in this period was 'detente', which was also backed by influential circles in the West. The USSR's relations gradually improved with all the major countries of Western Europe, especially France and West Germany. Relations with the USA also improved to a considerable degree. American Presidents visited the Soviet Union on three occasions and Brezhnev visited the USA. Numerous political and economic agreements were concluded with Western countries. Of particular importance was the agreement on limiting strategic weapons—SALT I. Negotiation for the signing of another such pact—SALT II—went forward successfully. The USSR's trade turnover with the developed capitalist countries increased seven times during the 1970s, and in 1980 exceeded 31 milliard roubles. The culmination of 'détente' was the agreement on security and cooperation in Europe signed in 1975 in Helsinki, in which the leaders of 36 countries of Europe and North America took part. The outcome of this agreement was the Final Act, in which a number of important principles of international relations were proclaimed.

The influence of the Soviet Union in the Third World was strengthened. The only major success achieved by the USA in the Third World was probably an improvement in relations with Egypt and the Camp David agreement. But the USA suffered defeat in Vietnam. A serious blow to all the Western countries was the substantial increase in oil prices effected by the organisation of petrol-exporting countries (OPEC). The USA's position in the Middle East was markedly weakened by the fall of the Shah's regime in Iran, and its position in Central America by the defeat of Somoza's regime in Nicaragua. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union strengthened its friendship with Vietnam and the other countries of Indo-China. In Africa the USSR acquired new allies—Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique. Relations were strengthened with India, Libya, South Yemen, Benin and a number of other countries, big and small, in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Whereas in the first half of the 1970s the 'dissident' movement in the USSR grew in strength, while assuming a variety of new forms, by the end of the decade we observed a definite decline in this movement. This was due to several causes. There was the mass emigration of Jews from the USSR and also the emigration or deportation from our country of most of the active members of the Soviet opposition at the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s. Repressive measures taken by the authorities also had
their effect, of course, together with weariness and disappointment on the part of a section of the oppositionist intelligentsia. Nevertheless, the dissident movement continued, even though on a smaller scale, in all its chief manifestations.

Brezhnev's personal authority and influence notably increased during the 1970s. An apparatus serving this personal power gradually came into being. Brezhnev united in himself the posts of General Secretary of the Party's Central Committee, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and Chairman of the Supreme War Council of the USSR. However, the administration of the country became more and more bureaucratic, and the glorifying and eulogising of Brezhnev himself grew more and more grotesque, without finding any echo among the mass of the population. Official propaganda became less and less effectual and the gap between state and society widened. In the sphere of culture the 1970s were a period of patent stagnation. All the same, if Brezhnev had departed from leadership of the USSR in 1979, he could have had grounds enough to speak of many important achievements by his administration.

Alas, we now have to speak of the third period of 'the Brezhnev era', which began at the end of 1979, and which was undoubtedly a period of renewed social and economic crisis.

None of the plans of economic development drawn up in 1979–82 was fulfilled. The rate of growth of industrial production fell once more, to between 2.5 and 3 per cent per year. The Soviet economy had exhausted the principal factors of extensive development and had not proved able to utilise effectively enough the factors of intensive development. Productivity of labour in the last year hardly increased, while at the same time a shortage of labour-power began to make itself felt. Great difficulties arose in the power and fuel industries. After 1979 the output of coal and production of iron and steel began to decline. An extremely acute situation came about in transport. With the small growth in goods-turnover in 1979–83, all the main indicators of utilisation of rolling-stock on the railways deteriorated. Particularly great difficulties were experienced in agriculture, with harvest-failure in all four of the last years of the era. According to plan, the average annual production of grain was to have amounted to not less than 230 million tons, but in fact it amounted in 1979–82 to no more than 180 million tons. The yield of all the principal crops except cotton declined. The annual average production of meat fell in the last few years and that of butter and milk in the last five years. In the majority of the country's industrial centres, various forms of rationing had to be introduced in the distribution of foodstuffs and the system of commercial trade at higher prices had to be extended.

The USSR's international position worsened again. The decision by NATO to 'arm up', the American Senate's refusal to ratify the SALT II agreement and the attempts by the Carter administration to form a
military and political alliance between the USA and China were all factors which in 1979–80 led to a definite deterioration in relations between the USSR and the West. When the more conservative Reagan administration came to power in the USA, this made relations still worse. America announced the deployment of new systems of nuclear-missile weaponry and a substantial increase in military expenditure. To the East of the USSR there appeared the intractable problem of Afghanistan, and to the West the no less intractable problem of Poland. The Sino-Vietnamese conflict, the problem of Cambodia, the Western countries' boycott of the Moscow Olympics, the economic crisis in Romania, the accession of a more conservative government in West Germany—all these events complicated the conduct of Soviet foreign policy in 1979–82. In one sphere alone did Brezhnev accomplish some 'big successes' in the last few years, namely that of struggle against the dissidents inside the country. By the end of 1982 this movement had practically ceased to exist as a noteworthy factor in domestic and foreign policy. However, while showing 'strength and firmness' in the fight against the dissidents, Brezhnev's administration showed increasing feebleness in the solution of other problems. During the last year a number of resolutions were adopted which nobody thought of carrying out. All the symptoms of bureaucratism and corruption in the state organs became more marked. Dissidents were fewer and fewer, but discontent among the masses increased rapidly and the prestige of the supreme governmental institutions decreased. Such ulcers of Soviet society as criminality and alcoholism grew worse. Of course, if we speak not just of the last years of Brezhnev's administration but of its entire activity over eighteen years, we can point to considerable improvements both in the standard of living of the Soviet people and in the international situation of the USSR. But people usually compare their position not with how it was twenty years earlier but with how it was five or six years earlier. This was one reason why many citizens of our country received the news that 'the Brezhnev era' had ended not only with apprehension but also with a certain feeling of relief and hope.

The Changing of the Guard in the Kremlin

The end of the Brezhnev era, like that of any other era in the history of our country, provides plenty of opportunities for forecasts and prophecies of one kind or another. What can we expect of the new era now beginning? What will our country be like in the year 2,000?

It is possible to say a lot about the changes that would be desirable for our country in the next few years. Although viewpoints on this subject vary widely, most observers are probably agreed that it would be highly desirable for the Soviet Union to make a turn towards a broad and deep democratisation of social and political life and the creation of conditions
for normal activity by the different oppositional groups and tendencies. It is a mistake to say that the population of the USSR has no possibilities of participating in the country's political life. Such possibilities exist, but they are offered exclusively to those who agree with the ideology and policy of the Communist Party, if only so far as its most important aspects are concerned. There is no possibility of participation in the country's political life for those who disagree with the policy and ideology of the Communist Party, either as a whole or in some of its principal aspects. In our country there are no facilities for political activity by an opposition or by political minorities. We usually talk of democracy for the majority—although we have no completely reliable mechanism for determining this majority. But the authorities in our country are against democracy for the minority, even though respect for the rights of the minority is essential in determining the quality of any true democracy. In the last analysis this is the most important knot that needs to be untied if health is to be restored to all sides of Soviet life. It is not very probable, though, that this will be understood in the years immediately ahead. Any prognosis has to take account of the actual state of things, the possibilities, the capacities and even the interest of the already existing hierarchy and its most influential groups, the country's traditions and the level of political consciousness and culture of the bulk of its population. It is not only the fifteen or twenty members of the Political Bureau and the Secretariat of the Party's Central Committee, and not only the 500 members and candidates for membership of that Central Committee who take a hand in the government of the Soviet Union, but also millions of people at all levels. These people possess not only power but also political influence over the tens of millions who constitute the political activists of the Soviet order. When solving any acute problem of domestic or external policy one cannot ignore the feelings, views and abilities of this entire hierarchy and this entire body of activists. Without the participation of these people it is not now possible to overcome the political and economic crisis in which Soviet society has found itself in recent years. But the overwhelming majority of persons at all levels of leadership fail to appreciate the value of democracy: they cannot, they do not know how to work under democratic conditions. These persons are therefore capable of supporting only very small steps in the direction of democracy. It may be supposed that Andropov and his circle will not be so petty in their dealings with the intelligentsia and the heterodox as their predecessors were. But it will not be problems of democratisation that will be given priority in the near future.

We may expect, however, that the new leadership will wage a resolute struggle against the corruption which in the last 15 or 20 years had penetrated so deeply into the ruling apparatus, and constitutes one of the chief causes of discontent among the people. Covering himself with the
watchword: 'stability', Brezhnev notoriously winked at many abuses of power, even in his own immediate entourage.

We may expect, further, that the new leadership will wage a struggle against the *nepotism* which in the last 15 to 20 years has also deeply penetrated the ruling apparatus and has become a serious obstacle to effective leadership of the state and society. Unfortunately, in the course of the last few years an ever-greater number of persons have been appointed to the highest posts in the Party and state apparatus, not on practical or political grounds, but because of their family connexions, their acquaintances, their devotion to certain individuals and so on. Brezhnev acted here in accordance with that rule of which Famusov spoke long ago, in Griboydev's comedy *Woe From Wit*:

_Each time one must present a post or decoration,_
_Well, how can one neglect the man that's a relation!_

We may expect that in the next few years there will be a weakening of that bureaucratisation of the whole system of government which has gone so far in our country. This will not mean democratisation. But it can be hoped that the near future will see the giving of a bigger role to specialists, experts and scientists in the solving of fundamental political and economic problems. The leadership that was formed in the 1970s often lacked mere competence, as well as vigour and persistence. The bureaucratic leaders were interested not so much in seeing that things were going well as in maintaining an appearance of well-being. For them, reports were more important than reality. The numberless good decisions and resolutions taken were not backed by vigorous activity to ensure their fulfilment. There were so many promises and decisions that Brezhnev's last offspring, the so-called 'Foodstuffs Programme' was received by the population of the USSR with indifference or even mockery rather than with enthusiasm. The new leadership will be able to win prestige among the people not by adopting fresh resolutions but by real measures to alleviate the position of the country and the people.

The Brezhnev leadership lacked firmness, especially in the last years of its career. The weakness of the central leadership facilitated weakness and even lack of discipline in many departments of local government. Discipline grew slack in the state apparatus, in the factories, on the building sites and on the farms. Any work that is done for the benefit of society should be done well and diligently. Otherwise, it is not possible to improve the living conditions of the people and solve urgent problems. In recent years the demand for *order* has become one of the most popular demands among persons who are concerned about the interests of society. This demand finds expression even in the distorted forms of praise for *Stalin*—frequently uttered by individuals who never lived under him. 'Why have
you stuck Stalin's portrait on the windscreen of your car?' I asked a young driver recently. 'Under Stalin there was order', he replied. There can be no doubt that the new leadership, if it reckons to overcome the present crisis, will have to take measures to restore discipline and order in all parts of the state and economic mechanism. Their success in this campaign will depend on the methods used.

Especially difficult tasks confront the leadership in the sphere of the country's economy. Without doubt, the basic principles of centralised leadership and planning will be retained. Within this framework, however, attempts will continue to be made to find new schemes and methods of management. It can be supposed that the new leadership will refrain from carrying out any radical reforms in the sphere of economic administration but that it will encourage some important changes and experiments aimed at greater decentralisation of the management of secondary branches of production, by enlarging the role and scope of the heads of enterprises and big production units as well as those of provincial and regional administrations. The market cannot serve as the principal regulator of the functioning of the Soviet economy. Nevertheless, we may suppose that some experiment in expanding the role of the market will again be undertaken, in the spirit of the economic reform of 1965. Something that is increasingly necessary from the economic standpoint is a decision to widen the opportunities for individual and cooperative initiative in the sphere of services and small-scale production. The taking of such a decision has been held up until now only by fears of a political character, but the pressure of economic factors is becoming more and more powerful. In the last analysis it is upon intelligent decisions in this sphere that depend not only improvement in important branches of the economy immediately connected with the needs of the population, but also the mood of the population itself.

The new leadership will naturally show vigour in seeking ways, methods and incentives for decisive improvement in the condition of agriculture. One 'Foodstuffs Programme' is not enough for that purpose.

I do not think that there will be any changes in the main lines of Soviet foreign policy. We may only assume that this policy will become more flexible and that some fresh opportunities will be found for bettering relations both with the USA and other Western countries and with China. That depends on both sides. One can repeat back to Mr Reagan his own recent maxim: 'It takes two to tango'. Concessions are needed, but these concessions can only be reciprocal.

The watchword of 'stability' in cadres policy cannot be a watchword for the new leadership. Even apart from the question of nepotism, bureaucr- cratism and corruption, it is impossible not to notice that in many of the most important branches of state and Party leadership the cadres are now too old and no longer capable of energetic work—and still less of solving
any new and unusual problems. It is therefore to be hoped that in the next few years there will be a serious renewal in all the leading departments of government, and that younger, more intelligent, more highly qualified and bolder persons will be promoted to the leading posts. If this is not done, the crisis which our country is now experiencing will not only not be overcome, it will grow deeper. This renewal of cadres must be accompanied by broader and more profound discussion of many painful problems of our political and economic reality. This will not yet be democracy in the generally accepted sense of the word, but it will be the first step towards that democracy.

I am writing here, of course, only of what Soviet people expect as a result of the changes of administration in the USSR. Moreover, these are only the absolute minimum of expectations. One cannot forget how many of the expectations of Soviet people have not been met during the last 65 years or whenever a new era began in the development of Soviet society. Will the coming decades prove an exception to this not too reassuring experience? Stern reality demands that all statesmen throughout the world now show greater responsibility and greater ability to cooperate. Otherwise there will be no future for anyone on this Earth.

Translated by Brian Pearce

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